

Human Rights, Religious Freedom and Spirituality: Perspectives from the Dharmic and Indigenous Cultures

Human Rights, Religious Freedom and Spirituality: Perspectives from the Dharmic and Indigenous Cultures

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FORWARD



**Padma Bhushan
Prof. Ved Nanda**

- *Distinguished University Professor, University of Denver,*
- *Founding Director, International Legal Studies Program,*
- *Director, The Ved Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law, University of Denver Sturm College of Law;*
- *Honorary Professor of Law, University of Delhi Faculty of Law, India*

Two eminent scholars I have long known and admired for their stellar accomplishments have edited this pathbreaking compilation, “Human Rights, Religious Freedom and Spirituality: Perspectives from the Dharmic and Indigenous Cultures.” I have enjoyed working on several projects with both Professor Pathak and Dr. Adityanjee and I can personally attest to the high quality of their scholarship, which is insightful and reflects intellectual rigor.

Yashwant Pathak, an associate dean at the college of pharmacy at a prestigious U.S. university, and Adit Adityanjee, a widely respected executive medical director, are both expert exponents of Dharmic traditions as scholars and practitioners. They are also actively engaged with issues related to human rights and indigenous communities.

I have been teaching human rights for fifty years and was a graduate student at Yale Law School in the first ever human rights law class taught in the world. And the subjects covered in the book are of special interest to me. I have served for over a decade as chair of the Board of Trustees and am now an honorary Trustee of the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies, whose goal is to enhance awareness and appreciation of Dharmic traditions in North America. Currently I also serve on the Board of Directors of the International Commission for Human Rights and Religious Freedom (ICHRRF).

Professor Pathak was instrumental in establishing the International Center for Cultural Studies (ICCS), a pioneering international organization that brings together indigenous people it calls “elders” from all over the world. He has visited indigenous groups

on every continent and I have attended gatherings bringing them together in an international congress every four years. Dr. Adityanjee serves as founding chair of international organization mentioned above, ICHRRF.

The book's singular achievement lies in its contributors' ability to present various aspects of human rights, religious freedom, and spirituality and to shed light cogently on the nuances that are often missed. This is an extraordinary group of renowned authors, including several scholars who are known nationally and internationally for their expertise in the areas covered in the book. Represented are all the Dharmic traditions – Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhi – and the traditions of several indigenous groups.

These scholars include Dr. Arvind Sharma, a giant among academic experts on human rights and Hindu philosophy and its treasured traditions. He writes on human dignity, a topic that is lately getting the recognition it deserves and which he considers to be the foundation of human rights, suggesting that “human rights [should] be anchored in human dignity.” He notes the advantages of doing so: (1) “the concept of human dignity allows one to intermesh rights and duties,” and (2) the concept of human dignity is similarly able to connect several generations of human rights discourse, those consisting of “first generation civic and political rights, second generation social, cultural, and economic rights, and third generation environmental and developmental rights.” Also included in the book is a chapter on “African Perspectives on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere.”

Dr. Yashwant Pathak and Dr. Adit Adityanjee begin this compilation with the first chapter they

wrote on “Human Rights With Responsibility to Work in the Welfare of All Beings.” Dr. Gurpreet Singh Bhullar discusses “Understanding self from Eastern Philosophies with special focus on Human Rights, Spirituality and Religious Freedom.” Dr. Bin Li discusses “The Scientific Meanings of Spirituality and humanity: How Can a Human Be Modeled ‘Alive.’” Dr. Anil Sooklal presents a South African perspective on “Human Rights and fundamental freedom.” An attorney of the High Court of South Africa, Raksha Singh Semnarayan, presents “Religion used as a political tool to embed colonialism and Apartheid.” Dr. Alex Perereia de Araújo discusses “Human Rights: Religious Freedom and the anti-racist fight in the Latin American Black Diaspora, and another chapter reviews “30 Basic Human Rights” included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Dr. Bal Ram Singh, Dr. Rita Sharma, Dr. M.S. Reddy, Dr. Debidatta Mahapatra, and Jean C. MacPhail / Sister Gayatri Prana, study Dharmic issues related to Hinduism. They write on topics related to Karma, Bhagavad Gita and Human Rights, “Vedanta Perspective in Understanding Human Beings and Human Rights, Religious Freedom and Spirituality,” Shri Aurobindo's “Ideal of Human Unity in a Polarizing World,” and “Vedic Perspectives on the Human Being With a Focus on Human Rights, Spirituality, Religious Freedom, and Ecological Sustainability.”

Dr. Yashwant Malaiya explains “Freedom of Thought and Human Rights in Jain Tradition,” and Dr. Sulekh Jain clearly articulates “Bhagwan Mahavir: A Crusader for Women's Rights.” Dr. Frank Tedesco presents “A Buddhist Perspective on Human Rights, Spirituality and Religious Freedom,”

and Dr. Nirmal Singh and Dr. Devinder Pal Singh provide Sikh perspectives on these topics.

On indigenous people and human rights, Dr. Yashwant Pathak studies the “United Nations View: Who Will Talk About Religious Freedom of Indigenous People.” Dr. T. Mocke- Maxwell and Dr. M. Gott share Maori perspectives on the “Right to Cultural and Spiritual End of Life Care.” Dr. Elizabeth Haroop, Dr. Samuel Hyde, and Dr. Olivia Roman discuss “How integrated conceptions of earth rights and human rights in Indigenous spiritual traditions can teach the West about true sustainability.” Mr.

Carl Clemens enlightens the reader on “Paganism, Polycentricity and Human Rights in the United States.” And Dr. Olubukola (“Bukky”) Olayiwola discusses “Making Sense of Animist Philosophies: Enhancing Spirituality and Religious Freedom Through the Practice of Prayer Mountain Visit.”

I enthusiastically recommend the book not only to those interested in human rights, religious freedom, and spirituality, but also the general readership who may have little or no interest or background in this area.



■ **Brief bio of Prof. Ved Nanda**

Ved P. Nanda is a Distinguished University Professor and Thompson G. Marsh Professor of Law at the University of Denver, where he founded the International Legal Studies Program in 1972 and now directs the Ved Nanda Center for International and Comparative Law. The Center was established in his honor by alumni and friends, who have endowed a professorship in his name. He has received Honorary Doctorates of Law from Soka University, Tokyo, Japan, and Bundelkhand University, Jhansi, India, and has taught and lectured at several universities in the U.S. and abroad. He is also an Honorary Professor of Law at the University of Delhi, India. Professor Nanda holds many leadership positions in the global international law community, including the World Jurist Association, American Society of International Law, International Law Association, American Law Institute, and the American Bar Association's Human Rights Center and Section of International Law. He has served as U.S. delegate to the World Federation of the United Nations Associations in

Geneva and on the governing council of the United Nations Association of the USA. He is an officer and board member in several international and national NGOs. He is the Chair of the Uberoi Foundation for Religious Studies. He has received numerous national and international awards, has authored or co-authored 24 books and over 225 chapters and law review articles in international and comparative law, writes a column for the Denver Post, and is a regular commentator in both the electronic and print media. In March 2018, President Ram Nath Kovind presented Professor Nanda with the Padma Bhushan, one of the highest civilian awards given by the Government of India. And in April, the American Bar Association International Law Section conferred on him the Louis B. Sohn Award, for “distinguished, longstanding contributions to the field of public international law.”

Professor Nanda is recipient of many International and national awards, Hon PhD's and Government of India recognized him by Highest Civilian Award Padma Bhushan.

PREFACE

Human rights are rights we have simply because we exist as human beings - they are not granted by any state, authority, elite or any other power structure. These universal rights are inherent to us all, regardless of nationality, gender, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, language, or any other status.

They range from the most fundamental - the right to life - to those that make life worth living, such as the rights to food, education, work, health, and liberty. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, is considered to be the first legal document to set out the fundamental human rights to be universally protected. The UDHR, which turned 70 in 2018, continues to be the foundation of all international human rights law in the post-World War II scenario. Its 30 articles provide the principles and building blocks of current and future human rights conventions, treaties and other legal instruments.

The principle of universality of human rights is the cornerstone of international human rights law. This means that we are all equally entitled to our human rights. This principle, as first emphasized in the UDHR, is repeated in many international human rights conventions, declarations, and resolutions.

Human rights are inalienable. They should not be taken away, except in very specific situations and according to due process.

The basis of the so called modern human rights and religious freedom concepts had their origin of the concept of human rights to ancient Greece and Rome, where it was closely tied to the doctrines of the Stoics, who held that human conduct should be judged according to, and

brought into harmony with, the law of nature. A classic example of this view is given in Sophocles play *Antigone*, in which the title character, upon being reproached by King Creon for defying his command not to bury her slain brother, asserted that she acted in accordance with the immutable laws of the gods.

In part because Stoicism played a key role in its formation and spread, Roman law similarly allowed for the existence of a natural law and with it—pursuant to the *jus gentium* (“law of nations”)—certain universal rights that extended beyond the rights of citizenship. According to the Roman jurist Ulpian, for example, natural law was that which nature, not the state, assures to all human beings, Roman citizens or not.

On the contrary, when it comes to religious freedom, it is perceived differently in different countries. For example, in USA, it says, “Religious freedom is a fundamental human right and the first among rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution “It is the right to think, express and act upon what you deeply believe, according to the dictates of conscience”

US constitution incorporated this as first amendment:” Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

It is said that everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching practice and observance.

But in the Western World no one talks about the right of the non-Abrahamic religions to protect their religions and bring back their folks to original religions who have been converted to Abrahamic religions. This is where the conflict starts.

However, when it comes to Dharmic traditions and Indigenous cultures and traditions, they have very different perspectives about human rights and religious freedom. The first proclamation in the Hindu scriptures and Bhagwad Geetha is “Sarva Bhuta Hite rataha” for the benefits of everyone including the humans, animals and plant kingdoms and mother earth at large. Humans have responsibilities for the rights of all these creations. So human rights come with human responsibilities towards not only animals, plants and all the creatures and Mother earth but also towards the space and galaxies. Indigenous traditions have an interesting concept when it comes to mother earth, they say you borrow the mother earth from the next generation. In their thinking also Human rights are associated with Human responsibilities with others. Religious freedom not only allows practicing one’s religion but also entrusts the protection of their religion, practices and their people who are coerced by the other Abrahamic religions with vested intentions.

This book is the first of its kind and a unique contribution to bring about perspectives of Dharmic

traditions and indigenous traditions on human rights and religious freedom. The book is a collection of 24 chapters written by experts in their respective areas. It brings in the views from Hindu, Jain, Buddha, and Sikh Dharmic traditions about human rights and religious freedom. It also talks about Human Rights with Responsibility to Work in the Welfare all Beings. It covers African perspectives on human dignity for everyone and everywhere, indigenous people and human rights, enhancing spirituality and religious freedom from animist philosophies, rights to cultural and spiritual end of life care from Maori perspectives.

We think this will be a very good reference book for students of human rights and religious freedom and also it will initiate more discussion on different perspectives on the concepts of human rights and religious different from the western outlook.

We express our sincere thanks to all the chapter authors who have contributed their wisdom to this book as well as our special thanks to Prof Kshitij Patkule and Prof Aniket Patil of Bhisma School of Indic Studies Pune to publish the book. Our sincere gratitude to the printing press staff-members and the administrators who made this book possible.

We have many people who have inspired us to edit this book and we express our deep gratitude to all.

Yashwant Pathak and Adit Adityanjee

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1

Human Rights with Responsibility to Work in the Welfare all Beings

सर्वभूतहिते रताः
Sarva-bhūta-hite-rataha

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■ **Abstract:**

In order to understand the Human rights with responsibility in the welfare of all beings, one has to understand how the oneness between individual soul (Atman) and Super soul (Paramatman) are connected with each other and the existence of the same spirit (super soul) in all the well beings. That is why Human rights discussion will never be complete unless there is a responsibility which Humans have for the other wellbeing. There are several explanation provided by the seers and sages (as part of the Hindu Philosophy) who have proclaimed that the individual soul and super soul are one and connected with other beings.

■ **Introduction:**

In Chandogya Upanishad (3.14.1) it says

सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म तज्जलानिति शान्त उपासीत ।

अथ खलु क्रतुमयः पुरुषो यथाक्रतुरस्मिँल्लोके पुरुषो भवति

तथेतः प्रेत्य भवति स क्रतुं कुर्वीत ॥ ३.१४.१ ॥

Meaning:

All this is Brahman (Supersoul/Paramatman) everything comes from Brahman, everything goes back to Brahman, and everything is sustained by Brahman. One should therefore quietly meditate on Brahman. Each person has a mind of his own. What a person wills in his present life, he becomes when

he leaves this world. One should bear this in mind and meditate accordingly.

Everything, both matter and spirit, is non-different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead who is the Supreme Brahman. Hence, every beings carry the same Brahman whether it is human being, Animal, plants or other creation of God.

■ Chandogya Upanishad further says (7-52-2)

अथात् आत्मादेश एवात्मैवाधस्तादात्मोपरिष्ठादात्मा पश्चादात्मा पुरस्तादात्मा दक्षिणत आत्मोत्तरत आत्मैवेदं सर्वमिति स वा एष एवं पश्यन्नेवं मन्वान एवं विजानन्नात्मरतिरात्मक्रीड आत्ममिथुन आत्मानन्दः स स्वराड्भवति तस्य सर्वेषु लोकेषु कामचारो भवति अथ येऽन्यथातो विदुरन्यराजानस्ते क्षय्यलोका भवन्ति तेषां सर्वेषु लोकेष्वकामचारो भवति ॥ ७.२५.२ ॥

The Self is below; the Self is above; the Self is behind; the Self is in front; the Self is to the right; the Self is to the left. The Self is all this. He who sees in this way, thinks in this way, and knows in this way, has love for the Self, sports with the Self, enjoys the company of the Self, and has joy in the Self, he is supreme and can go about as he likes in all the worlds. But those who think otherwise are under the control of others. They cannot remain in the worlds they live in, nor can they move about in the worlds as they like [i.e., they are under many limitations]. It clearly says the self is part of the whole creation and exists everywhere. We are interdependent. There cannot be only rights for human and but every being has right to live and let live.

So when you watch the waves on the ocean, you see them growing and they fall back. So also every beings a part of the waves which rise and fall back and merges in to the Parmatman (Super soul). Once we know the Self, the phenomenal world no

longer exists for us and we start understanding the oneness within all the beings. Realizing oneself is considered to be most important in Hindu spiritual experiences.

Bhagwadgeetha clearly says (Chapter 2-20)

न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः ।

अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे ॥ २० ॥

Meaning:

For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain. This explains the eternal existence of the supersoul and the mortal nature of all the beings. That is why we all see all being are dead at some point of time whether human or animals or plants or other materials. The most certain thing in human life is death so also in other beings. Human being with discretionary powers should be made responsible for all the other beings. Human rights cannot be possible without the responsibility.



Who is responsible for my wellbeing and about my Rights to live? (Endangered species)

■ In Katha Upanishada 1.2.20:

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायां ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुः प्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥ २० ॥

**aṅoraṅīyānmahato mahīyānātmāsya
jantornihito guhāyām
tamakratuḥ paśyati vītaśoko dhātuḥ prasādān
mahimānam ātmanaḥ**

“Both the Supersoul [Paramātmā] and the atomic soul [jīvātmā] are situated on the same tree of the body within the same heart of the living being, and only one who has become free from all material desires as well as lamentations can, by the grace of the Supreme, understand the glories of the soul.” Subtler than the subtle, greater than the great, in the heart of each living being, the atman reposes. One free from desire, with his mind and the senses composed, sees the glory of the atman and becomes absolved from grief. A beautiful description about the relationship between the beings and super souls.



Rainforest Destruction Surged in 2020, at 12 Percent Increase From 2019

(taken from <https://www.greenmatters.com/p/rainforest-destruction-2020>)

**Are not we humans responsible for this destruction
Existence of the Parmatman in all beings (oneness
in all the beings):**

Katha Upanishad says:

नित्योऽनित्यानां चेतनश्चेतनानामेको बहूनां यो विदधाति कामान् ।
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वतीनेतरेषाम् ॥१३॥

Meaning:

Eternal among the ephemeral, conscious among

the conscious, who, being one, dispenses desired objects to many, the intelligent who see him seated in their selves, to them, eternal peace, not to others.

Again, deathless among mortal things, conscious among the conscious, such as Brahma and other living beings. As the power of burning in water and the rest, which are not fire in themselves, is due to fire, so, the intelligence of others is due to the intelligence of the atman; again, he, omniscient and lord over all, dispenses to those having desire, i.e., to those in samsara, according to their respective karma, the fruits of karma and desired objects, according to his grace, himself one, to many, without effort. To such intelligent men as see him seated in their selves, eternal peace accrues, not to others, i.e., to those who do not see so.



Don't we have our right to live? Endangered Species Jigsaw Puzzle

■ Brihad-aranyaka Upanishad 4.3.8:

स वा अयं पुरुषो जायमानः-शरीरमभिसम्पद्यमानः-पाप्मभिः
संसृज्यते; स उत्क्रामन्-प्रियमाणः-पाप्मनो विजहाति ॥ ८ ॥

That man/ being when is born, or attains a body, is connected with evils (the body and organs); and when he dies, or leaves the body, he discards those evils. This is common for all the beings. The existence of soul is in every beings and when leaves the body, body is destroyed but the super soul moves on.

Just as in this world a man, in the same body,

is identified with dreams and in that state lives in the light that is his own self, transcending the body and organs, so is that man who is being discussed, when he is born, connected with evils, i.e. with their inseparable concomitants or effects, the body and organs, which are the support of merit and demerit. How is he born? When he attains a body, with the organs and all, i.e. identifies himself with it. When that very person dies, or leaves the body, to take another body in turn, he discards those evils, i.e. the body and organs, which are but forms of evil and have fastened themselves on him. The phrase 'leaves the body' is an explanation of 'dies.' Just as in his present body he, resembling the intellect, continuously moves between the waking and dream states by alternately taking and giving up the body and organs, which are but forms of evil, so does he continuously move between this and the next world by alternately taking and giving up the body and organs, by way of birth and death, until he attains liberation. Therefore it is proved from this injunction and disjunction that the Light of the self about which we have, been talking is distinct from these evils, the body and organs. This is applicable to Human beings as well as all other living beings.

It may be contended that there are not those two worlds between which the beings can move alternately through birth and death as between the waking and dream states. The latter of course are matters of experience, but the two worlds are not known through any means of knowledge.

■ Relationship between Human and all other beings;

In order to understand the relationship between all the creation, Hindu Philosophy has offered four Mahavakyas. These are famous Mahavkyas

proclaimed the oneness within the Atman and Parmatman.

A Mahavakya is a **grand, profound saying that has great importance to a spiritual yogic practice.**

The word translates as "grand saying" or "great pronouncement." These are typically very short and highlight the main point or wisdom of spiritual texts or concepts.

The 4 Mahavakyas

1. प्रज्ञानम् ब्रह्म | Prajnanam Brahma

■ Meaning : Consciousness is Brahman

Brahman is that which is Absolute, fills all space, is complete in itself, to which there is no second, and which is continuously present in everything, from the creator down to the lowest of matter. It, being everywhere, is also in each and every individual. This is the meaning of Prajnanam Brahma occurring in the Aitareya Upanishad.

2. अयम् आत्मा ब्रह्म | Ayam Atma Brahma

This Self is Brahman, which is the substance out of which all things are really made. That which is everywhere, is also within us, and what is within us is everywhere. This is called 'Brahman', because it is plenum, fills all space, expands into all existence, and is vast beyond all measure of perception or knowledge. On account of self-luminosity, non-relativity and universality, Atman and Brahman are the same. This identification of the Self with Absolute is not any act of bringing together two differing natures, but is an affirmation that absoluteness or universality includes everything, and there is nothing outside it.

3. तत् त्वम् असि | Tat Tvam Asi

Meaning : Thou art That , You are the one

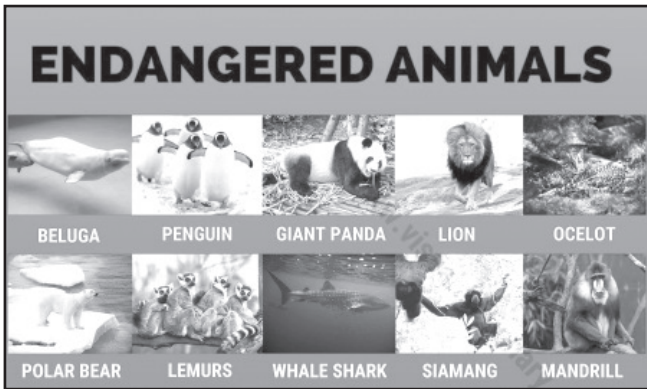
The term Tvam stands for that which is in the innermost recesses of the student or the aspirant, but which is transcendent to the intellect, mind, senses,

etc., and is the real 'I' of the student addressed in the teaching. The union of Tat and Tvam is by the term Asi or are. That Reality is remote is a misconception, which is removed by the instruction that it is within one's own self. The erroneous notion that the Self is limited is dispelled by the instruction that it is the same as Reality.

4. अहम् ब्रह्म अस्मि । Aham Brahma Asmi Meaning : I am Brahman , I am Divine

In the sentence, ' Aham Brahmasmi,' or I am Brahman, the 'I' is that which is the One Witnessing Consciousness, standing apart from even the intellect, different from the ego-principle, and shining through every act of thinking and feeling. This dictum is from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

This clearly establishes the oneness between the atman present in all the beings and the Paramatman which is none other than the Creator of the world. So also in the global world Human have definitely a responsibility towards all the wellbeing of all other beings. If we do not take care of this we will be irresponsible. We have seen in the last century loss of many species, dried many rivers, and polluted the seas and soil, destroying the global balance. And as human we keep on talking about Human Rights then it will be a great injustice to other beings, unless we take the responsibility for others.



Who is responsible for my rights to live?

Understanding the responsibility of Human beings in the world:

In order to understand the role of Human being in relation with other beings, at several places in many Hindu scriptures the other Mahavakya exists with different contexts is

सर्वभूतहिते रताः

For the welfare of all the beings.

In Bhagwadgeetha there are several references to this concepts, some of these are discussed here:

लभन्ते ब्रह्मनिर्वाणमृषयः क्षीणकल्मषाः ।

छिन्नद्वैधा यतात्मानः सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥ २५॥

labhante brahmanirvāṇam ṛiṣhayaḥ

kṣhīṇakalmaṣhāḥ

chhinnadvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarvabhūtahite

ratāḥ

Those holy persons, whose sins have been purged, whose doubts are annihilated, whose minds are disciplined, and who are devoted to the welfare of all beings, attain God and are liberated from material existence.

Shree Krishna in Bhagwadgeetha explained the state of the sages who experience the pleasure of God within themselves. In this verse, He describes the state of the sages who are actively engaged in the welfare of all beings. The Ramayan states:

**para upakāra bachana mana kāyā, santa sahaja
subhāu khagarāyā**

“The trait of compassion is the intrinsic nature of saints. Motivated by it, they use their words, mind, and body for the welfare of others.”

Human welfare is a praiseworthy endeavor. However, welfare schemes that are only committed to bodily care only result in temporary welfare. A person is hungry; he is given food, and his hunger is satiated. But after four hours, he is hungry

again. Spiritual welfare goes right to the root of all material suffering, and endeavors to revive the God-consciousness of the soul.

Hence, the highest welfare activity is to help a person unite his or her consciousness with God. This is the kind of welfare work that elevated souls with purified minds engage in. Such welfare activity further attracts God's grace, which elevates them even further on the path. Finally, when they have achieved complete purification of the mind and perfected their surrender to God, they are liberated to the spiritual realm and the divine Abode.

Another interesting mentions is as follows

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥ २९॥
sarvabhūtaṣṭham ātmānaṁ
sarvabhūtāni chātmani

ikṣhate yogayuktātmā sarvatra samadarśhanaḥ

The true yogis, uniting their consciousness with God, see with equal eye, all living beings in God and God in all living beings.

During the festival of Diwali in India, shops sell sugar candy molded in various forms, as cars, airplanes, men, women, animals, balls, caps, etc. Children fight with their parents that they want a car, elephant, and so on. The parents smile at their innocuousness, thinking that they are all made from the same sugar ingredient, and are all equally sweet.

Similarly, the ingredient of everything that exists is God himself, in the form of his various energies.

eka deśhasthitasyāgnirjyotsnā vistāriṇī yathā
parasya brahmaṇaḥ śhaktistathedamakhilam
jagat (Nārada Pañcharātra)[v22]

“Just as the sun, while remaining in one place, spreads its light everywhere, similarly the Supreme Lord, by his various energies pervades and sustains

everything that exists.” The perfected yogis, in the light of realized knowledge, see everything in its connection with God.

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥ ३०॥

yo māṁ paśhyati sarvatra sarvaṁ cha mayi paśhyati
tasyāham na praṇaśhyāmi sa cha me na praṇaśhyati

For those who see Me everywhere and see all things in Me, I am never lost, nor are they ever lost to Me.

To lose God means to let the mind wander away from him, and to be with him means to unite the mind with him. The easy way to unite the mind with God is to learn to see everything in its connection with him. For example, let us say that someone hurts us. It is the nature of the mind to develop sentiments of resentment, hatred, etc. toward anyone who harms us. However, if we permit that to happen, then our mind comes away from the divine realm, and the devotional union of our mind with God ceases. Instead, if we see the Supreme Lord seated in that person, we will think, “God is testing me through this person. He wants me to increase the virtue of tolerance, and that is why he is inspiring this person to behave badly with me. But I will not permit the incident to disturb me.” Thinking in this way, we will be able to prevent the mind from becoming a victim of negative sentiments.

Similarly, the mind separates from God when it gets attached to a friend or relative. Now, if we train the mind to see God in that person, then each time the mind wanders toward him or her, we will think, “Shree Krishna is seated in this person, and thus I am feeling this attraction.” In this manner, the mind will continue to retain its devotional absorption in the Supreme.

Sometimes, the mind laments over past incidents. This again separates the mind from the divine realm

because lamentation takes the mind into the past and the present contemplation of God and Guru ceases. Now if we see that incident in connection with God, we will think, “The Lord deliberately arranged for me to experience tribulation in the world, so that I may develop detachment. He is so concerned about my welfare that he mercifully arranges for the proper circumstances that are beneficial for my spiritual progress.” By thinking thus, we will be able to protect our devotional focus. Sage Narad states:

loka hānau chintā na kāryā niveditātma loka vedatvāt (Nārad Bhakti Darshan, Sūtra 61)[v23]

“When you suffer a reversal in the world, do not lament or brood over it. See the grace of God in that incident.” Our self-interest lies in somehow or the other keeping the mind in God, and the simple trick to accomplish this is to see God in everything and everyone. That is the practice stage, which slowly leads to the perfection that is mentioned in this verse, where we are never lost to God and he is never lost to us.

सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः ।

सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥ ३१॥

sarvabhūtasthitam yo mām bhajatyekatvam āsthitaḥ sarvathā vartamāno ’pi sa yogī mayi vartate

The yogi who is established in union with Me, and worships Me as the Supreme Soul residing in all beings, dwells only in Me, though engaged in all kinds of activities.

God is all-pervading in the world. He is also seated in everyone’s heart as the Supreme Soul. In verse 18.61, Shree Krishna states: “I dwell in the hearts of all living beings.” Thus, within the body of each living being, there are two personalities—the soul and the Supreme Soul.

Those in material consciousness see everyone as the body, and make distinctions on the basis of caste, creed, sex, age, social status, etc.

Those in superior consciousness see everyone as the soul. Thus in verse 5.18, Shree Krishna states: “The truly learned, with the eyes of divine knowledge, see with equal vision a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.”

The elevated yogis in even higher consciousness see God seated as the Supreme Soul in everyone. They also perceive the world, but they are unconcerned about it. They are like the hansas, the swans who can drink the milk and leave out the water from a mixture of milk and water.

The most elevated yogis are called paramahansas. They only see God, and have no perception of the world. This was the level of realization of Shukadev, the son of Ved Vyas, as stated in the Śhrīmad Bhāgavatam:

**yaṁ pravrajantam anupetam apeta kṛityaṁ
dvaipāyano viraha-kātara ājuhāva
putreti tan-mayatayā taravo ’bhinedus
taṁ sarva-bhūta-hṛidayam munim ānato ’smi
(1.2.2)[v24]**

When Shukadev entered the renounced order of sanyās, walking away from home in his childhood itself, he was at such an elevated level that he had no perception of the world. He did not even notice the beautiful women bathing in the nude in a lake, while he happened to pass by there. All that he perceived was God; all that he heard was God; all that he thought was God.

In this verse, Shree Krishna is talking about the perfected yogis who are in the third and fourth stages of the above levels of realization.

आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।

सुखं वा यदि वा दुःखं स योगी परमो मतः ॥ ३२॥

**ātmaupamyena sarvatra samam paśhyati yo ’rjuna
sukhaṁ vā yadi vā duḥkhaṁ sa yogī paramo mataḥ**

I regard them to be perfect yogis who see the true equality of all living beings and respond to the joys and sorrows of others as if they were their own.

We consider all the limbs of our body as ours, and are equally concerned if any of them is damaged. We are incontrovertible in the conviction that the harm done to any of our limbs is harm done to ourselves. Similarly, those who see God in all beings consider the joys and sorrows of others as their own. Therefore, such yogis are always the well-wishers of all souls and they strive for the eternal benefit of all. This is the sama-darśhana (equality of vision) of perfected yogis.

योगिनामपि सर्वेषां मद्गतेनान्तरात्मना ।

श्रद्धावान्भजते यो मां स मे युक्ततमो मतः ॥ ४७॥

**yogināmapi sarveṣhām madgatenāntarātmanā
śhraddhāvānbhajate yo mān sa me yuktatamo
mataḥ**

Even amongst yogis, there are karm yogis, bhakti yogis, jñāna yogis, aṣṭāṅg yogis, etc. This verse puts to rest the debate about which form of Yog is the highest. Shree Krishna declares the bhakti yogi to be the highest, superior to even the best aṣṭāṅg yogi and haṭha yogi. That is because bhakti, or devotion, is the highest power of God. It is such a power that binds God and makes him a slave of his devotee. Thus, he states in the Bhāgavatam:

**aham bhakta-parādhīno hyasvatantra iva dvija
sādhubhir grasta-hṛidayo bhaktair bhakta-jana-
priyaḥ (9.4.63)[v27]**

“Although I am supremely independent, yet I become enslaved by my devotees. They conquer my heart. What to speak of my devotees, even the devotees of my devotees are very dear to me.” The bhakti yogi possesses the power of divine love, and is thus most dear to God and considered by him to be the highest of all.

In this verse, Shree Krishna has used the word

bhajate. It comes from the root word bhaj, which means “to serve.” It is a far more significant word for devotion than “worship,” which means “to adore.” Here, Shree Krishna is talking about those who, not merely adore him, but also serve him with loving devotion. They are thus established in the natural position of the soul as the servant of God, while the other kinds of yogis are still incomplete in their realization. They have connected themselves with God, but they have not yet situated themselves in the understanding that they are his eternal servants.

**muktānām api siddhānām nārāyaṇa-parāyaṇaḥ
su-durlabhaḥ praśhāntātmā koṭīṣhv api mahā-
mune (Bhāgavatam 6.14.5)[v28]**

“Amongst many millions of perfected and liberated saints, the peaceful person who is devoted to the Supreme Lord, Narayan, is very rare.”

Another way of understanding this verse is that bhakti yog provides the closest and most complete realization of God. This is explained in verse 18.55, where Shree Krishna explains that the bhakti yogi alone understands the true personality of God.

बाह्यस्पर्शेष्वसक्तात्मा विन्दत्यात्मनि यत्सुखम् ।

स ब्रह्मयोगयुक्तात्मा सुखमक्षयमश्नुते ॥ २१॥

**bāhyasparśheṣvasaktātmā
vindatyātmani yatsukham
sa brahmayogayuktātmā
sukhamakṣhayam aśhnute**

Those who are not attached to external sense pleasures realize divine bliss in the self. Being united with God through Yog, they experience unending happiness.

The Vedic scriptures repeatedly describe God as an ocean of unlimited divine bliss:

ānando brahmeti vyajānāt (Taittirīya Upaniṣhad
3.6) “Know God to be bliss.”

kevalānubhavānanda svarūpaḥ parameśhvaraḥ
(Bhagavatam 7.6.23)

“God’s form is made of pure bliss.”

ānanda mātra kara pāda mukhodarādi (**Padma Purāṇ**)

“God’s hands, feet, face, stomach, etc. are all made of bliss.”

jo ānand sindhu sukharāsī (**Ramayān**)

“God is an ocean of bliss and happiness.”

All these mantras and verses from the scriptures emphasize that divine bliss is the nature of God’s personality. The yogi, who absorbs the senses, mind, and intellect in God, begins to experience the infinite bliss of God who is seated within.

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥ १८॥

**vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śhuni chaiva śhwapāke cha paṇḍitāḥ
sama-darśhināḥ**

The truly learned, with the eyes of divine knowledge, see with equal vision a Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater.

When we perceive things through the perspective of knowledge, it is called prajñā chakṣhu, which means “with the eyes of knowledge.” Shree Krishna uses the words vidyā sampanne to the same effect, but He also adds vinaya, meaning “humbleness.” The sign of divine knowledge is that it is accompanied by a sense of humility, while shallow bookish knowledge is accompanied with the pride of scholarship.

Shree Krishna reveals in this verse how divine knowledge bestows a vision so different from physical sight. Endowed with knowledge, devotees see all living beings as souls who are fragments of God, and are therefore divine in nature. The examples given by Shree Krishna are of diametrically contrasting species and life forms. A Vedic Brahmin who conducts worship ceremonies is respected, while a dog-eater is usually looked down upon as an

outcaste; a cow is milked for human consumption, but not a dog; an elephant is used for ceremonial parades, while neither the cow or the dog are. From the physical perspective, these species are sharp contrasts in the spectrum of life on our planet. However, a truly learned person endowed with spiritual knowledge sees them all as eternal souls, and hence views them with an equal eye.



If you look for Human rights take care of our rights to live too!

■ Understanding the reality:

There are four major realities we cannot ignore. Every being including the human being undergo these realities:

1. We are forever changing
2. Awakening is a shift in perspective
3. We don’t matter
4. Nothing matters, eventually

1. Are we changing forever?

When you are a child and move forward and become adult or senior citizens, things change drastically, physically, intellectually and mentally too. We are in ever changing scenario. The world around us also keeps on changing. We need to be aware of these changes and also understand these are not only for humans but are applicable to all beings. And hence, when we talk of Human rights, includes

rights for children, rights for women, and rights for senior citizens and so on. Similar thought process needs to be developed for the other beings also. Then only it will be human rights with responsibility towards other beings.

2. A shift in perspective is awakening !

When we discuss the Human rights, religious freedom and spirituality, we need to shift our perspectives about the relationship between all the beings and human beings. Once we realize the oneness existing amongst all, then our thought process will change. It will be an awakening of all of us with responsibility for everyone.

3. Do we matter in the Universe?

I could be the greatest inventor, the richest man, the most educated person, the greatest athlete, a multiple Nobel laureate or whatever. I could be old or a woman who gave birth to fourteen children in one go and then went to work straight after that. I could be the wisest person, a self-made millionaire, or anything unimaginably great. Ultimately, my existence or presence doesn't make an iota of difference in the workings of the Universe and the world moves forward with or without me. I am a little drop in the ocean.

Every living physical body will perish one day, decompose and get destroyed. We can believe whatever stories we want to believe but we can't deny that even the most accomplished spiritual beings died like any other person. The cause may vary from person to person or beings to beings. In other words, we don't matter to the universe nor universe cares for an individual.

4. Eventually nothing matters!

We spend a lot on our beliefs, possessions, or achievements, but ultimately nothing matters. All that gives you happiness or grief today, one day it will just not matter. The things you are attached to,

the people you keep fondly in your heart, there will arrive a moment when any of this will simply cease to hold any value or importance.

■ Conclusions:

Ultimately we need to understand the oneness between all the beings, think about the rights of all the beings and also responsibilities of Human being towards other beings. Humans being fully developed intellect and mental abilities, the other beings are solely dependent on the attitude of the human beings towards other beings. If I am changing every day, in the larger context our existence as human being does not matter in the universe, neither our possessions have any relevance and eternity, we just losing everything the moment we are dead, then why we should cling to such things. Rights without responsibility will be a pathway to destruction. We definitely need to change our perspective and awakened ourselves for the benefit of all the beings. The more we think about others, more the possibilities becoming happy in our own life. So the motto of our life needs to be

सर्वभूतहिते रताः Sarva-bhukta-hite-rataha

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Intrinsic Human Value in Integral Vedanta and Its Potential for Infinite Understanding, Inclusion, and Expansion as Expressed in a Dialog in Five Levels of Consciousness

A review article on Religion for a Secular Age: Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda, and Vedānta
Thomas J. Green. (2016). Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

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■ ABSTRACT

Religion for a Secular Age presents the efforts of noted philologist and Orientalist Max Müller (1823-1900) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), Vedantic monk and scholar, to salvage an empiricist, naturalistic, historically sensitive spirituality from the burgeoning of reductionistic materialism sweeping through science in the mid nineteenth century. Müller aimed to instill into religion the importance of personal interior experience that alone can withstand the onslaught of ever-proliferating, scientific theses based on purely external, materialistic assumptions. His mature view was that such interior power is most fully developed in Indian non-dualism (Advaita Vedanta).

As Müller selected as the prime living exemplars of Vedanta Vivekananda and his spiritual teacher

Ramakrishna (1836-1886), Green undertakes to present the resonances between Müller's thought and that of Vivekananda, supported by the literature generated by Indian reformers contemporary with Müller. The result is an interesting thesis, but one that cannot explain the obvious deviations of the worldview of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda from traditional Advaita (non-dualism) which, emphasizing the purely transcendental, declared "the world" to be "unreal", thus creating for humanity a situation as problematical in its own way as the paradigm dominant in the West today that the physical world is the only reality, and all other alternatives are at best "epiphenomena".

Green's presentation appears to conform to the sequence of consciousness known in Advaita Vedanta as the chatuspad, or four levels of consciousness,

from the physical to the purely transcendental. In this way he arrives at a workmanlike insight into the parallels between Müller and Vivekananda. However, as the levels “expand” in sequence towards the transcendental and Vivekananda’s thought becomes visibly non-conformist to traditional Advaita, Green is obliged to introduce as an explanatory model the notion of “immanent monism”.

I suggest that the difficulties arise from the lack of inclusion of the actual, subjective experiential data and their meaning behind Vivekananda’s work. In this review article I offer the missing data behind the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda paradigm as presented here, including the evidence for an emerging fifth level of consciousness—*turiyatita*, literally “beyond the fourth”. This level of consciousness presents a continuum in which the physical and transcendental levels are part of a total picture and can, even must, work together harmoniously for real “non-dualism” to exist in the form of secularized spirituality. I offer a matriceal model that seems to correspond to the structure of this level of consciousness.

■ INTRODUCTION

Max Müller and Swami Vivekananda as Bulwarks against Scientistic Materialism

Religion for a Secular Age: Max Müller, Swami Vivekananda, and Vedānta by Thomas J. Green, focuses on the issue of religion being separated from cultural contexts, scriptures, and institutions in order to ensure its survival (Green, 13). Specifically, it deals with a mid-nineteenth century cross-cultural attempt to respond to the threat to established religion from the rise of frank, scientistic materialism, as in the work of Ludwig Büchner (beginning 1855) and Karl Vogt (1817-1895). The remainder of the century saw the rapid rise of empirical experimental psychology

under Wilhelm Wundt (1879), as well as Darwinian evolutionary theory, beginning in 1859 and promoted by Thomas Huxley (1825-1895), Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), based on natural selection and survival of the fittest.

The counter-attempt as presented by Green was spearheaded in Europe by Professor F. Max Müller (1823-1900), a reputed leader in comparative philology and Oriental religions at Oxford University (Green, 18), and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), a Vedantic monk and charismatic speaker and leader in both India and the West. Green presents both as perceiving that people generally could no longer believe in religion (Green, 2) and as espousing the position that rather than religion itself being swept away by secular logic, religion would remain, but necessarily incorporating the secular imperatives of naturalism, historicism, and empiricism (Green, 14).

Both men believed that religion and science could in fact be reconciled (Green, 5). In Müller’s case, the notion was expressed through his development of what he called scientific or comparative religion and in Vivekananda’s in the conviction that the experiential discoveries of Vedānta, the indigenous Indian religion in existence since millennia BCE, could hold their own with those of Western science, although in the inner subjective world as opposed to the resolutely external, physical world studied by the West.

Another comparison that sets the scene for the whole presentation of this book is that, despite the similarity of Vivekananda’s goals to Müller’s, his presentations were to Western scholars “unsystematic and often inconsistent”, making him “a challenging figure to interpret” (Green, 8). Green dwells on the fact that educated circles in India at that time were

open to the kind of systematism that Western culture took for granted (Green, 8-9) and were therefore quite able to grasp the work of Müller, now recognized as probably the premier Western communicator with India. This latter fact has apparently led to schools of Western thought asserting that Vivekananda had merely absorbed Müller's ideas and was presenting them in his own mode.

This assertion naturally raises the question: was Vivekananda an authentic voice of the Indian tradition? Or, as the West would frame the issue, a voice of especially the non-dual (Advaitic) tradition that so strongly insists on the absolute priority of the inner world over the outer world? This was the system of religious philosophy that had captured Müller's attention and after him a large number of Western philosophers and progressive religious people, because it offers an aerie within the human soul that the power of rationalism and the scientism built upon it cannot touch.

Vivekananda's presentations, particularly in the West, did indeed emphasize Advaita and its philosophy, but as we progress through this book it becomes more and more clear that he embraced many apparently different and even conflicting points of view and seemed to do so without any sense of discomfort or inconsistency. To a Western audience this would naturally give rise to the sense of a lack of system and inconsistency. For Green, it raises the issue of what he calls immanent monism, a worldview he attributes to the combination of the vision of the contemporary German philosopher Hegel (1770-1831) with Tantra and transmitted to Vivekananda by the Bengali sage Ramakrishna (1836-1886).

Green deserves credit for documenting this

aspect of Vivekananda's work and for tentatively suggesting as we go along that Vivekananda was indeed marching to the tune of his own inner drummer, almost certainly installed there by his spiritual teacher Ramakrishna. To his further credit, Green even goes so far as to point to two historically documented epiphanies or samadhis that Vivekananda had experienced during his training with Ramakrishna, implicitly suggesting that these were in some way related to his decidedly non-Western worldview. But as Green's portfolio is to deal with ideas, not experiences, the meaning of these samadhis is not explored.

The purpose of this review article is to explore in each of the four contexts Green presents the corresponding depth experience in Vivekananda's training and the radical view of consciousness that lay behind it. I shall also demonstrate how Vivekananda filtered the meaning of these experiences and the underlying system of consciousness in different ways to the West and to India, while introducing the possibility of an additional, fifth context with the potential to resolve the counterintuitivities perceived in traversing the previous four.

■ CONTEXTUALIZATION

Vivekananda's Apparently Incoherent Position

Green's difficulties with Vivekananda's position (Green, 8) are not surprising, given that much of Vivekananda's agenda is immersed in the millennial experiential culture of India. Bringing to bear on that background Western or Westernized evidence and lines of thought that emerge from the highly conceptual traditions of Europe, including of course the dominant discourse of science, it seems inevitable that Green is often stumped or brings forward

interpretations that question Vivekananda's cogency and coherence. In this section I shall present five elements that almost certainly have direct relevance to this apparent failure to communicate.

1. The Impact of the Indian Education Bill, 1836

Green's awareness that the educated Indians of Vivekananda's day were quite familiar with the conceptual notions of the West does not seem to take into account that this familiarity had been superimposed on them by the ruling British Government on the passage of the Indian Education Bill presented by Lord Thomas MacAulay in 1836. This compulsory, draconian system abolished the Indian languages as media of education and was intended to turn educated Indians into "a class of Indian trained in English language and thought, interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect."¹ Through these middlemen the whole of India would soon become a willing and intelligent partner with Britain in her ongoing enterprises, including the despoilment of Indian resources. Vivekananda, one of probably the third generation of Indians subjected to this regime, was saturated with the "superiority" of the Western materialistic paradigm, a sense of European history and humanism, and a rock-solid belief in science, attested by his prolonged correspondence with none other than Herbert Spencer and Vivekananda's own translation into Bengali of Spencer's book on Education (Prabhananda, 2003). And also an intense

awareness of the suffering of the Indians.

2. Abrahamic Conquest of India and Attempts to Destroy Aryan Culture

The education bill, an unimaginable experiment in total sublation of a whole culture, was in a way the final step in a historical process that had started in the twelfth century with the Muslim invasion of India. The Muslims brought with them the Abrahamic worldview which contrasted strongly with the native Aryan culture, carried in perhaps its most advanced form as Vedanta. Although this battle was fought out in massive bloodletting and persecution, for our purposes here I present an overview of the radical differences between the ideals of the two cultures. The essence of Abrahamism according to Dorff, 2013, 111: "The limitations of human intelligence and the infinite character of God make it impossible for us to know the nature of God altogether." Dorff explains that this view results in the sense of a gulf between human and divine that can be bridged only by imagery, including language. The ultimate authority of any image is its ability to evoke experience of God. Finally, the criteria for selecting any image as true and good are: It must be clear, touch us emotionally, existentially and in action, acceptable to the community and therefore supportive of ethics and ethical activity to support and help the world. Above all, any image must not represent the part for the Whole, which is the essence of idolatry (Ibid., 121-122).

This contrasts radically with the Indo-European, Aryan or Vedantic view that the core reality of any human being is divinity itself, as embedded in the canonical texts, the Upanishads: "He who has known Brahman [Ultimate Reality] has become Brahman"

1. Lord Thomas MacAulay's Address to the House of Commons, 19.18, July 10, 1833. <http://languageinindia.com/april2003/macaulay.html>

(Mundaka Up, III.2.9)² and what is called for is to reveal that deity through consciously and voluntarily undertaken practices validated over millennia and coming with strict criteria of performance and evaluation. This is what is known as yoga—the transcendence of materialism and the human limitations that come with it—which was introduced to the West both theoretically and practically by Vivekananda. Here, “God” is not “out there”, but ineluctably embedded in the human soul, the diametric opposite of the basic Abrahamic position.

On this subject of two radically different and opposing cultures Green goes into some detail (Green, 65-68), as it certainly seems an important ingredient in the whole dialog of India and the West. He presents Müller’s view that Aryanism was not a racial issue, but one of language and culture. Green’s assertion that Vivekananda’s quite extensive discussion of this issue was almost certainly influenced by Müller’s analysis might well be true; but his conclusion that Vivekananda regarded the issue as one of racial identity and limitation to India is not correct. In *Gayatriprana*, 2020, 57-51 Vivekananda’s own words make it clear that for him, too, the issue is not one of race at all, but of cultural values related to a core shared language, at least between North India (Sanskrit) and the countries west of India, including outstandingly ancient Persia, Greece, Rome, and modern Europe, including the Baltic and Slavic cultures.

Despite the fact that the Indians were no match militarily for the Muslims, they contrived to keep their deeply experiential religion alive even as the British invasion of India (beginning in the

seventeenth century), defeat of the Muslims and complete takeover of India’s economic resources took place, aided and abetted by a fundamentalist Christianity of imperialist proportions and rabidly against the principles of Vedanta. During this entire time Vedanta had been steadily developing into ever new forms that could be seen as bulwarks against Western dualism and materialism.

What emerged from it were Indians with minds well-trained in Western cultural forms, and also still with a grasp on their native spirituality, though by this time deeply tinged with Western presuppositions. Intensely aware of the damage being done to the spirituality of India and the self-respect of young Indian men,³ Vivekananda emerged as the warrior to fight for Vedanta on the world stage. As it happened, the situation itself provided an “ally” from the Western camp: As the Indians were being forced to the wall, the rising power of Western materialist science had begun its frontal assault on the monotheistic religions, closing the doors of the churches, but opening the forward minds of the West to the potential of a spirituality based on the interior structure of the human psyche.

3. Differences in Language and Presentation

The result of the above in both Müller and Vivekananda was an amazing ability to speak the language of both Asian experience and Western culture and science. In relation to Vivekananda’s alleged inaccessibility, the short ten years of his teaching career took place equally in India and in the West, where he was spectacularly successful in conveying substantive meaning to his audiences, as I see it because of his ability to speak to each in its own mode or “language”. Paying attention as to

2. Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (CW), Vol. 4: Reply to the Madras Address, 342.

3. Complete Works, Vol.4: My Master, 158.

where and to whom each item was delivered serves to demonstrate the fact that, as he developed any theme, his Indian presentation was more conceptual and the Western one more experiential (MacPhail, 2013, 1008-1012). As this relationship holds good throughout, it seems to be a deliberate feature of his work, indicating that he was intending to turn the West to a more experiential outlook and India to a more analytical and instrumental one.

A second issue is that Vivekananda's work was presented from five different points of view/levels of context at all stages of his work. This article presents as briefly as possible what these were, how they originated, and how they can be integrated with each other, serving to demonstrate, in a coherent sequence, the difference between Classical Advaita Vedanta and the Integral Vedanta of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

A third issue that creates frequent misunderstanding of Vivekananda's utterances, especially in public, is that, in any context/level whatever, there is clear evidence over time of a deepening of meaning of the materials. I shall present more on this aspect later, but here I comment that unfortunately in terms of improved understanding, the official Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (CW) have not yet taken these facts into account in their mode of presentation.⁴

4. The Scope of Vivekananda's Understanding of the History of Vedanta.

Green attempts all the way through the book to hold Vivekananda's feet to the fire of Advaita (non-dualistic) Vedanta in compliance with Müller's

4. A series of nine books published by Swami Brahmavidyananda in Hollywood, U.S.A. presents Vivekananda's Western work in the format I suggest here. Seven of these were posted until recently on Amazon under the generic title *The Western Works of Swami Vivekananda*. They may now be out of print.

conviction, at least at the beginning of his quest, that it was this category of Vedanta that alone would nullify the claim of science to supplant religion. As we shall see, as Müller's views were forced to change when encountering Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, Green does entertain other views on the subject and comes remarkably close to what was actually going on, but without a full explanation of how these other modes of Vedanta evolved and came up with a form that in essence goes beyond Classical Advaita itself.

Without going into detail as to the import of Advaita Vedanta, I present here the classic statement of its overall view, purportedly from Shankaracharya, one of its foremost proponents:

Brahma satyam jagan mithya—Brahman [Ultimate experiential Reality] is the only truth, the world is unreal,⁵

an uncompromising dictum that emanates from the direct intuitive experience known as nirvikalpa samadhi, which totally sublates: 1. The physical world; 2. Emotion and imagination; and 3. Discerning intellect. These three levels were seen as a developmental series of levels of consciousness in early Vedanta (MacPhail, July 16, 2022), but were considered by Gaudapada (6th Century CE), the primary proponent of Advaita, as mere preliminaries to final, experiential truth (MacPhail, 2015a). They are included by the proponents of what was considered the all-important "fourth" (turiya) level, the "flagship" consciousness in non-dualism (Advaita) in the notion of "four steps" (chatuspad) of the transcendental Atman or inner Self, as in the Mandukya Upanishad, verse 2. However, they were considered "lower", "earlier" or "dualistic" levels of consciousness, to be ignored and transcended as

5. Vivekachudamani, verse 4. Attributed to Shankaracharya.

quickly as possible.

Vivekananda states that the European assumption that Vedanta implies only Advaita is incorrect. For him, it includes qualified non-dualism and also dualism (Gayatriprana, 2020, 234-235), the founders of which he regarded as important benefactors of the Indian people. Vivekananda takes this position because he sees the proponents of the philosophically “lesser” levels as more compassionate and accessible to, as well as supportive of, the spiritual growth of the vast majority of Indian people, who were essentially shut out from Classical Advaita Vedanta (Gayatriprana, 2020, 211, 397).

In the materialistic West the caste barriers of India did not exist, but the fourfold path to transcendence was inexorable and was all but totally obstructed by the extreme aspects of Abrahamism and the rabid rejection by scientism of the existence, far less the importance, of the subjective human world.

There was, therefore, an urgent need to introduce the understanding of the inner structure of consciousness in an unbroken ontological series or continuum. In India, this project had worked itself out naturally in the utterances of the Upanishads, where over millennia, the sequence of the worlds of matter—imagination—deep discernment—non-dual intuition had appeared without polemical overlay until the advent of Gaudapada and Advaita Vedanta. In the Indo-European West a similar model arose in the Common Era with the Greek Plotinus (204-270CE), soon to be eradicated by Christian Abrahamism. Nevertheless, the Abrahamic traditions later produced Islamic Sufism (ca 8th-9th C CE), the Kabbalic sefirot (its later form in the 12th C CE), and in the Christian tradition The Interior Castle of Teresa of Avila (1577), based on experience but

taking, in Abrahamic manner, extensive conceptual and verbal forms. This rising tide in the West was to be summarily obliterated by the widespread oppression of the Jews, the suppression of the Sufis, and the Protestant rejection of the Catholic Church, followed in due course by the surge of materialistic science that took the form of reductionist acceptance of only the physical world as real and a summary “deletion” of even the existence of all other levels of consciousness.

In such a historical framework, Müller’s highly principled project can be seen as an attempt to interconnect the two extreme “ends”—non-dualism and physical materialism—of what had at one time been an open and highly explorative paradigm in both India and in the West. In this article I shall present the evidence, both experiential and conceptual, for the Vivekananda model, integrating all possible levels into a continuous sequence, with no superimposed barriers or even a hierarchical imperative. Nor is it a theoretical, academic, or organizational exercise, but something that occurs naturally within any given human being rather than as occurring “outside” in rigidly organized theories or movements. I regard these criteria as offering a more secular and democratic mode of procedure than in most existing religions or academic institutes, empowering anyone who wishes to take advantage of it and do the work required. These criteria perhaps are the backbone of the secular religion of which Green speaks, and of which Walach’s book (2015) might be an attempt at actualizing.

However, returning to the issue of Advaita in the West, it may be said that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries non-dualism was much less known, especially experientially, in the West than

in India. It therefore had great interest as something new (and also to quite an extent in the Abrahamic traditions, verboten), which may account for a preponderance of Vivekananda's utterances about it in the West. At the same time, the various methods of self-transcendence traditionally developed in the West, such as care of others, love of the divine and intense discerning intellect, were valuable steps towards transcendence and were to be preserved; while in India, so long immersed in metaphysics, they were to be emphasized in a culture Vivekananda saw as severely lacking in a sense of democracy and social service. From this we conclude that in Vivekananda's work the West's understandable interest in transcendence and methods to attain it, as well as India's crying need for democracy and principled social service came not as "standalones", but as part of an overall system of ideals, to all of which Vivekananda give value and importance in a closely interrelated way.

In view of this pre-existing structure of consciousness (chatuspad) in Vedanta, I propose to utilize it in my presentation in this article. As I hope to demonstrate, including it helps to throw much light on most of the issues raised in Green's book and also offers insights into how it is developing even as I speak.

5. Turiyatita or Beyond the Fourth as an Integrative Mode That Can Be Applied Globally

Here we approach what we might call, not just Vedanta, but a definitely a newly emerging view of it, as seen from the conceptual position. But that this view is not arbitrary nor a product of fantasy, can be predicated on the fact that Ramakrishna transmitted to Vivekananda, not only the realization

of the classic fourth level, but also one that goes beyond it—turiyatita—in which Brahman is actually manifest and visible in all levels, all worlds, all possible forms and to be responded to as such. This position was what Vivekananda himself called Practical Vedanta, Ramakrishna's vijñana. This view "releases" the rigid barrier between Brahman and the world in Classical Vedanta and comes as relief to the people of India, who are now permitted to function on any level whatsoever, including "the world" without losing gravitas and indeed being able to develop intense spirituality even in the most physical of work. For this, of course, it is necessary to work with this conviction and using the methodology prescribed for it.

The West was and still is in the direct opposite condition: it is so embedded in materialism, i.e. the acceptance of the physical world as the one and only reality, that its need is to somehow break out from the suffocating concrete overlay and get into the inner world of vastly greater freedom and meaning that can radically transform "the world" as we know it. Müller's primary focus was that by emphasizing the utterly transcendental nature of the Atman in Advaita, religion would be taken completely out of the range of materialism and therefore able to develop independently. Vivekananda's agenda to take the West from its obsession with an external and essentially unknowable God, as in the Abrahamic religions, took its focus on dealing with our own minds. Here the onus is upon us to discipline those minds through time-tested methods in order to perceive for ourselves where the areas of interconnection are in the whole spectrum of Reality. This agenda differs from traditional Vedanta in placing the individual human being at the center of the whole effort and in emphasizing the innate

power of that individual to work the whole thing out through directed effort combined with truthfulness of purpose and sincerity of execution.

The Connecting Link: Ramakrishna

The source of Vivekananda's view of Vedanta was his deep relationship with Ramakrishna, 1836-1886 (MacPhail, 2013). Müller, on the other hand, discovered him through his scholarly investigations. Despite these different approaches, they both saw Ramakrishna as "a modern exemplar of authentic Hinduism, which in their eyes was grounded in the ancient philosophy of the Upanishads or Vedanta" (Green, 141).

Specifically, Müller discovered him in the literature of the Brahmo Samaj, an Indian group seeking to protect Hinduism (a development of Vedanta on the demise of Indian Buddhism) from the onslaught of English materialism. Vivekananda started out as a member of the Samaj and an avid supporter of their efforts to modernize the social norms of traditional Hinduism, which was crushing the life of India through the caste system and other archaic usages. His contact with Ramakrishna, like Müller's, was through the Samaj. They saw in Ramakrishna—a man totally innocent of Western conceptualism and trained to the hilt in the highly experiential transformational systems of both Vedanta and Tantra—a harbinger of the "new religion." Here "newness" means that he was so totally grounded experientially that he could accept with ease the experiential evidence of all of the Indian and other world religions.

Although Müller did not meet Ramakrishna, he conceived such a strong devotion to him as a universalist embodiment of Vedanta (Green, 154), that by 1896 he had resolved to publish an article

on him in England. On Vivekananda's side, after five years of intensive self-transformation under the guidance of Ramakrishna and seven years of further education in native Indian mode, he had arrived in the West in 1893 with his "evangel of the Self [Atman]" (Christine, 1983, 149) and carried all before him with great *éclat*. Large audiences came to his lectures on spiritual humanism and classes on yoga as a practical science tied into the message of universal spirituality and religion. Thereafter, as a close friend of William James, (Burke, 1896, 51-105) he was received with great cordiality at Harvard University where he began his teachings on *maya*, the mysterious Vedantic riddle of why we do not see reality properly and continuously scramble up our lives through wrong perception. Almost immediately thereafter, on May 28th, 1896, he met Müller in Oxford (Burke, 1896, 168-172).

Müller then went ahead with his publication of his article and set about writing a full book on Ramakrishna—*Ramakrishna: His Life and Sayings*—which came out in 1898, the first biography of Ramakrishna by a Westerner.

■ **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

In his recent book Swami Medhananda (2022) makes the case for Vivekananda's ability to overarch and resolve some of the major issues in Western philosophy that have so far not reached resolution, including most of the topics in this present book. In the first chapter he brings out how Vivekananda's understanding was developed by his training from Sri Ramakrishna. There he mentions the *samadhis* or moments of transcendence that Vivekananda went through, with special emphasis on *nirvikalpa samadhi* (Level IV in my work) that is associated with non-dual Vedanta, but also two others that preceded it.

The inference seems to be that it was these moments of heightened awareness that underly Vivekananda's ability to so magisterially and effectively address so many of the apparently irresolvable issues ever under discussion in the West.

In this present article I demonstrate explicitly how all five of Vivekananda's samadhis were instrumental in resolving the ever-heightening discrepancy between Vivekananda's stance and that of his distinguished senior contemporary, Professor Max Muller of Oxford University, whose views were so empathetic in principle to Vivekananda's, though not factoring in the fifth or integral (vijñana) level that goes beyond the fourth (turiya) to which Western Vedantins have tended to hitch their star.

A Comparison of the Proposed Internal Structure of Green's View of Müller's Work and That Which Seems to Apply to the Work of Vivekananda

The thesis of our book is laid out in five chapters, each one of which focuses on a level of discourse in Müller's thinking on universal religion. These are, in sequence:

Chapter 1: Müller's humanistic quest for universal religion.

Chapter 2: Müller's science of religion (comparative religion).

Chapter 3: Müller's focus on the Vedantic notion of maya or metaphysical ignorance that for him established "the limitations of the empirical knowledge regarded as the only source of truth by positivist philosophers" (Green, 91).

Chapter 4: The emphasis of Müller and his colleague Paul Deussen (1845-1919), the German Sanskritist and Vedantic scholar, on

finding an ethical content in Advaita, which by its basic stance that the world is unreal poses an obstacle to the development of a humanistic ethics.

Chapter 5: Muller's credo that "We, as sentient beings, are in constant contact with the infinite, and . . . this contact is the only legitimate basis on which the infinite can and does exist for us. . . . We are concerned with . . . how the finite mind has tried to pierce further and further into the infinite, to gain new aspects of it, and to raise the dark perception of it into more lucid intuitions and more definite names" (Green, 28).

It seems clear that each succeeding context contains the one prior to it and also carries the content of the process to deeper and deeper and more and more abstract and inclusive interpretations of the whole process. While this arrangement of contexts in this book may have been purely fortuitous, I was struck by its correspondence to the typical sequence of the various exemplifications of progression of consciousness in the major world's traditions, and particularly in the Vedantic chatuspad, as well, apparently, as in physical science, where the term *invariance principle* is invoked (MacPhail, 2017).

Turning to the work of Vivekananda, I had already discerned five such levels in my study of Vivekananda's commentaries on mantras from the canonical texts of Vedanta: the Vedas, *Upanishads*, and *Bhagavad Gita* and presented this insight in an organized form in articles in the Indian journal, *Vedanta Kesari* (Gayatriprana, 1995-1998). I later carried this idea forward into a more advanced level of analysis in my doctoral thesis (MacPhail, 2013), which covers the five years from 1881 to 1886 in

which Vivekananda underwent his training with Ramakrishna, i.e. long before Vivekananda's personal acquaintance with Müller. There I demonstrate how Vivekananda came to grasp the content as well as the context of these levels from cues, both experiential and conceptual, from Ramakrishna, and how he molded up this understanding into his teachings for both India and the West. As will be seen, these five levels are unusual juxtapositions or combinations of Eastern and Western memes, which I shall present here simply as complementarities to Müller's work, before delving a little deeper in subsequent sections into their genesis in Vivekananda's mind as well as their significance in his work and the difficulties they raise in Müller's context as well as the Western mind generally:

- I. *Spiritual Humanism*. This, along with Müller's humanistic quest for universal religion in Chapter 1: *Foundations* can be seen as a response to the threat of science and secular morality (Green, 171) that is the main preoccupation of our book.
- II. *Yoga as a Science*. I align this meme with Müller's *Science of Religion* as presented in Chapter 2.
- III. *Maya as an Attitude of Mind* can be related to Müller's focus on the Vedantic notion of maya or metaphysical ignorance discussed in Chapter 3: Müller's *Vedanta in Defence of Religion*.
- IV. *Hololution*: An affirmation of the basic Vedantic stance that the core of humanity is the divine itself, as in the Upanishadic mantra tattvamasi: you are That [Ultimate Reality or Brahman]. This apparent basis for Vedantic ethics is worked through by Vivekananda's resolution of the apparent dichotomy of Western evolution from matter to spirit, and India's core

concept of involution from spirit to matter, filling out the content of Chapter 4: *Vedanta and the Religious Foundation of Ethics*.

- V. *Holism*: I juxtapose Vivekananda's direct experience of Ramakrishna's "operating system" that underlies not only Müller's concept of universal religion but which Vivekananda himself also lived to the hilt and explicates in his highly integrative and all-inclusive work from 1892-1902. I align this material with Chapter 5: *Ramakrishna, Vedanta, and the Essence of Hinduism*.

These correspondences and the similarity of the sequence may be totally fortuitous, but that it appears to have been part of Müller's *modus operandi* and certainly of the presentation of Green, suggests that it has value in understanding the thought of Vivekananda. I shall now look at each of these levels, focusing on Müller's position and some misunderstandings that seem to be extant about Vivekananda's position, before introducing what I see as the important experiential explanation of Vivekananda's point of view as developed during his training with Ramakrishna.

Chapter 1 and Level I: Max Müller's *Foundations and Vivekananda's Spiritual Humanism*

Chapter 1 of this book sets out to explore the materials supporting the main themes of the book and the intellectual context behind the work of both Müller and Vivekananda. As the first, "materialist", presentation of this book it naturally deals with the history of physical encounters and worldviews as seen through the filter of physical facts and Western humanistic ideas and categories of thought, which are naturally taken as the norm.

The Formative Encounters of Müller and

Vivekananda in Vedanta

The account of Müller's gradual development into Vedanta and his magnificent work in bringing the Rig Veda and other ancient texts into contemporary languages makes fascinating reading which prepares us for his highly unusual interest and involvement in Indian culture and its contemporary developments, particularly the Brahma Samaj.

With regard to Müller's mature convictions, although his background was in Christianity with its echoes of Abrahamism, he believed that we are in constant contact with the Infinite and was interested in how humanity had evolved ideas about it (Green, 28). His belief had arisen from his own experience of the indwelling Christ in his Lutheran practice and also his seeing through the lens of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who promoted the idea that "true religion lies in the individual's experience of God" (Green, 36).

Müller's approach was to build up a deeply researched and closely worked-out theory of how to take religion completely out of the domain of materialism by focusing on the experience as well as the concept of the Vedantic Atman/Brahman (Ultimate Reality as experienced respectively as the human soul and as cosmic Reality in the indigenous tradition of India, going back to millennia BCE).

Vivekananda also came from a mixed background: his family Hindu pietism and acquired Western-style rationalism, at both school and in the Brahma Samaj. Green admits to what he finds a paucity of materials on Vivekananda's early intellectual development and understandably chooses to focus as his primary source on the testimony of Brajendranath Seal, one of Vivekananda's brilliant classmates at Presidency College. From there we learn what Western ideals

and reductionist preconceptions Vivekananda was learning and actively working to digest, as also the notion of an amalgam of "pure monism of Vedanta, the dialectics of the Absolute idea of Hegel, and the Gospel of the Equality, Liberty and Fraternity of the French Revolution" (Green, 21). In terms of Vivekananda's involvement with the Brahma Samaj, Green concludes—and with some reason, given Vivekananda's enduring focus on social issues—that the Samaj was the major influence on Vivekananda's intellectual approach to Vedanta. Green also places Vivekananda's interest in and knowledge of non-dualism here, along with an alleged rejection of scripture in favor of spiritual experience as the source of revelation (Green, 41).

Unfortunately, as far as their agenda on religion went, Vivekananda himself stated that though he was "a great sympathizer with [the Brahma Samaj] reforms, the "booby" religion could not hold its own against the old "Vedanta."⁶ This attitude to the Brahma Samaj stands in stark relief to the innumerable times Vivekananda stated that Ramakrishna's worldview was the one he represented and the one he felt had the most to offer to humanity. At the age of nineteen Vivekananda had to face the inevitable conflict of the highly conceptual materialistic paradigm with his natural tendencies as a Hindu. After meeting Ramakrishna, illiterate by Western standards, but saturated in the highly experiential Indian traditions, he went through a five-year, rigorous transformational process (MacPhail, 2013) and directly experienced Atman/Brahman in classical Indian mode. In this way, he actually provided the experiential balance of Müller's core belief. Vivekananda's later commentaries on the

⁶ CW Vol.7: Letter to Professor Henry Wright from Chicago, May 24, 1894, 467.

sacred texts of Vedanta demonstrate that it is possible to integrate the conceptual paradigm of the West with the highly experiential paradigm of Vedanta. I introduce this corpus of work in my recent article on Vivekananda's commentaries on the mahavakyas (MacPhail, 2022).

As far as concepts go, Vivekananda was most assuredly committed to a highly humanistic and democratic agenda in India, sweeping away entrenched caste privileges and empowering women and the working classes as well as building up individual self-identity and respect, morale, and the ability to act effectively, something that a world-denying philosophy such as Advaita cannot support. In the West he perceived the overdevelopment of such identity into dangerous ego as evidenced by the activities of capitalist industrialists and others who were rapidly breaking down the bonds of human interdependence that had created the Western juggernaut itself and thereby laying the foundations for ongoing turmoil and aggression.

Idealism/Romanticism and Pietism/The Brahma Samaj as Influences on Müller and Vivekananda

Green goes into an interesting disquisition on how Vivekananda's worldview contrasts with the emerging analyses of the capabilities of the human mind by Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer, and their impact on Müller's thinking (Green, 22-35). All of these are seen as stages in the effort to transcend our "normal", rational mind in the effort to arrive at final reality, truth, or what the West generally accepts as irrefutable fact. In particular, what seems to have attracted the attention of European savants was the insight of Hegel:

The rise of thought beyond the world of sense, its passage from the finite to the infinite, the leap

into the supersensible which it takes when it snaps asunder the chain of sense.

. . . Say there must be no such passage and you say there is to be no thinking (Green, 25).

This statement can be seen as an outright rejection of Kant's belief that the *ding an sich* (Reality) is beyond the grasp of the human mind, or alternatively a restatement of the presuppositions of Western mystics who outlined trajectories from human to divine, often against the opposition of the Abrahamic establishment. One can understand the impact such thinking had on a culture groaning under scientism's vehement restriction of human consciousness. And also the enthusiasm of the Brahma Samaj on finding Müller, a European who seemed to be embracing the central reality of non-sectarian (pre-Advaita) Vedanta, which I here am correlating with the "unexpurgated" *chatuspad*.

Despite this general enthusiasm about an apparent meeting of East and West in Hegel's thinking, Müller, on account of his adherence to Advaita could not accept the claim of the German absolute idealists that:

There is no distinction between reason and nature; in fact, nature in fact is the extension of mind and mind the highest development of nature (Green, 26).

From Vivekananda's side, perceiving all of the stages of the process as of equal value, the objection to Hegel was:

Hegel's one idea is that the one, the absolute, is only chaos, and that the individualized form is the greater⁷.

For Vivekananda, this was a totally unacceptable
⁷ CW, Vol.3: The Vedanta in All Its Phases, 342-343.

position and one he rejoiced had been effectively thrown out of India, though he does not state by what means. Given that the whole thrust of his work was to make known to the world the facts, cogency, and coherency of India's view of consciousness, he was determined that India's authentic voice should be heard, and its thinking take place within its own frame of reference untouched by Westernism, especially materialism.

Green remarks that Vivekananda was aware of the work of these thinkers and is presented as holding some views that in many ways seem to reflect their content, but the decisive difference in approach with Müller is (Green, 34):

While Müller proposed to understand the true nature of religion through a history of human experiences of the infinite, Vivekananda argued that religious truth could best be grasped by following the yogic methods which had produced experiential proof of monism [i.e. non-dualism].

This contrast could be seen as Western conceptual historicism versus Indian experientialism, a contrast that can be said to have characterized the history of the two cultures from time immemorial.

Evolutionary Theory in the Thought of Müller and Vivekananda

One of the major theories promoting materialist reductionism was the theory of evolution as propounded by Darwin, along with the notion of natural selection which was winning out and was a bulwark of the attack on religions. It was therefore a central issue for both Müller and Vivekananda.

Müller never visited India and therefore focused his work exclusively on the need of the West to ground itself in Spirit, while at the same time following

Western scientific principles of investigation. In keeping with Western methodology, his approach was to study religious testimony on a historical time scale, thereby bringing out the evidence for the internal changes within the traditions, which in his estimation demonstrated a process of evolution, not primarily in the physical world, but in interior perception and development of understanding (Green, 43-44). Vivekananda spent half of his tragically short working life in the West and the other in India, resulting in an interrelated East-West agenda. Green characterizes Vivekananda's Western teachings as abstract and compatible with private religion (presumably yoga), while in India he created political forms (Green, 12).

With regard to the theory of evolution, Vivekananda's focus was less on the theory itself, which in principle he accepted, on account of the established view in the schools of yoga that a process of evolution in human consciousness is a given in self-transformation, aided and accelerated by appropriate practice. Noteworthy here is the correct view of Green that this position of Vivekananda on yogic evolution was not compatible with traditional non-dualism, of which a cardinal tenet was that the world is not real and therefore any form of evolution is a non-entity (Green, 45-46). However, although Vivekananda's acceptance of the Western theory of evolution and his Brahmo-induced involvement in social improvement was somewhat of an apostasy to élitist Hindus, he steadfastly aimed to keep Western materialism out of India, along with the kind of abuses related to the likes of Social Darwinism, eugenics, savage competition (Green, 45), as well as its breakdown of social cohesion (Green, 46).

Vivekananda Experiences Full Subjective Reality

for the First Time

If we accept that at the beginning of his “campaign” Müller was embracing pure non-dualism and we seek to correlate this with the opening stages of Vivekananda’s development, we have to look at experiential fact rather than theory. As I see it, Green himself gives us a clue in his oblique mention (75) of the power of Ramakrishna’s touch on Vivekananda. However, although Green dilates on the Brahmo conviction of the importance of direct experience, he does not supply us with the actual data of Vivekananda’s first major experience with Ramakrishna.

Its omission could well be due to the fact that this episode is not found in Vivekananda’s *Complete Works*, but it is chronicled in common domain in *Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master* (Saradananda, 1952), the primary, eyewitness and interpretive biography of Ramakrishna and description of Vivekananda’s transformational process. As with all of the materials utilized in my study, the author of this work was, like Vivekananda, an adept in both Western thought and Indian spiritual practice, highly esteemed in both India and in the West. He was a keen observer of facts with a mind well-balanced between Indian noeticism and Western scientific fact and held in esteem when interacting with the staff and students at Harvard University in 1896.

In *The Great Master* we learn that at one of the first meetings of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda in early 1881, when Vivekananda—saturated with Western materialistic rationalism and disbelief in the validity of the interior world—was vigorously contesting Ramakrishna’s alleged psychic power, a simple touch by Ramakrishna shattered all of the young man’s perception of reality. Houses, sky,

grass, river, and all the paraphernalia of the temple garden where they were, melted away completely and Vivekananda’s psyche went beyond all physical or mental forms, revealing to him nondual, formless reality. This was *samadhi*, the direct experience of Ground Reality within and permeating the universe. As the ascent was so unanticipated and rapid, Vivekananda was thrown into what he perceived as a death experience and was extremely perturbed before disappearing completely as a player into the whole experience (Saradananda, 1952, Chapter IV, 737).

That it completely cut across Vivekananda’s conceptual notions and Brahmo agendas is clear from his later statement that:

Ramakrishna would hypnotize anyone who came to see him, and in two minutes know all about him. From this I learned to count our consciousness a very small thing (Basu, 1982, Vol.2, 1263).

In terms of Vivekananda’s previous agenda, this cataclysmic experience was the first “rending of the veil” of materialism, or a saltation from purely conceptual notions of what is what into the direct experience of What Is, precisely what Müller—following his transcendental predecessors—was aiming for without knowing how to actually do it. It was the shifting into a totally different key of all of Müller’s laboriously and meticulously worked out theses, turning them from beautiful constructs into an actual engagement with the transpersonal realm, thereby performing the precise function they were aiming to accomplish. And in the context of interior evolution, this experience was definitely the first step in what was to be a fivefold “*evolutionary*” pattern within the psyche of Vivekananda, as presented in MacPhail, 2013.

In addition, rather than sublating Vivekananda's humanistic concerns, as we might expect from Müller's positions based on Advaita Vedanta, this event grounded them in the context of *Spiritual Humanism*, the notion that human individuality based on Vivekananda's conviction of the innate divinity of humanity (Green, 104) is of supreme importance. That worldview highlights the capacity of any individual to self-transform and thereby access direct experience of spirit or the deepest levels of human consciousness, a notion that reductionist science could never conceive of, far less countenance. Nor could its meaning be accessed by a traditional Vedantin who rejects reality to physical matter and human individuality. The full portent of this point of view is reviewed in Gayatriprana, 2015.

This insight is, of course, highly counterintuitive, as is the term Spiritual Humanism at first sight. This type of permanent conjunction of apparent opposites is a hallmark result of samadhi, what Vivekananda called the superconscious: "Perfect superconscious . . . which gives us freedom. . . . There is no safeguard until the soul goes beyond nature, and beyond conscious concentration" (Vivekananda, 1896, 117)⁸. In my thesis I develop the insight that these samadhis are moments of total self-transcendence in which integrations are made that would not be at all possible in the "normal" (conceptual) world, and with them the power to make their content manifest in words and actions. I see this insight as helping to explain why Vivekananda was able to work in both the physical and the spiritual realms without conflict, a situation that is difficult to understand if we restrict ourselves exclusively to the purely conceptual or purely experiential domains. What emerged from

8 CW, Vol.1: Raja-yoga, Chapter 1: Concentration: Its Spiritual Uses, verse 18, 212.

his ongoing interactions with Ramakrishna were the viewpoints within the overview of Spiritual Humanism: in India the development of Humanistic Vedanta and in the West of Spiritualized Democracy (MacPhail, 2013, 189-190).

Chapter 2 and Level II: Müller's Science of Religion and Vivekananda's Yoga as a Science

Vivekananda's Emphasis on Yoga or Self-transformation Vis à Vis Müller

With regard to Müller's influence on Vivekananda, Green asserts (50) that Vivekananda did not carry out a systematic study of religion and that his presentation of the historical development of religions, the essence of religion and its supernatural origins and theory are similar to Müller's. However, he admits that although Vivekananda read Müller's books, it is difficult to prove that Vivekananda borrowed from Müller and concludes that Vivekananda's integration of religion was not passively derivative of Müller's thought. A somewhat ambivalent assessment, as is true of much of what is said about Vivekananda in this book. The cogency of Green's remarks may now be explored in the light of Gayatriprana (2020), a compilation of all of Vivekananda's remarks on the history of Vedanta from its earliest Vedic stages up to the beginning of the twentieth century.

In passing, Vivekananda does refer, though often obliquely, to Müller and other Western Orientalists and their theories, which would be in keeping with his respect for their work and his Westernized ability to gladly present some of their seminal ideas. In the same vein, he does not refrain from calling them out when their views simply make no sense in the Indian context. Further, it may be somewhat of a superimposition of Müller's thought

on Vivekananda that Vivekananda was primarily moved by conceptual influences rather than by his own experience.

These two positions could be further finessed by saying that Vivekananda saw that India desperately needed contemporary social consciousness and modern institutions to support its people if they were to gain independence from Western imperialism and gain a place in the global community. Such institutions were not to be built on Western presuppositions, but on the principles of indigenous thinking, including Vedanta and the practice of traditional yoga. On the other hand, his mission to the West was to introduce the time-tested methods of self-transformation (yoga) so that the West could find its “soul” without necessarily having to kowtow to outmoded religious forms or rejecting science, its crown jewel.

Rather than relying on any conceptual analysis, this bipartite program arose more from Vivekananda’s personal experience, supporting Green’s other suggestion that Vivekananda’s worldview was heavily influenced by his spiritual teacher, Ramakrishna. As we already know, it was at Ramakrishna’s hands that Vivekananda had been thrown into the world of pure subjectivity, a rather terrifying samadhi or saltation from the objective physical world to the totality of what Vivekananda would later call the superconscious, where any recognizable features of our material, rationalistic world—including the categories of exegesis by scholars—cease totally to exist, thereby bypassing any quibbles about established criteria of anything. This experience, occurring in what was to the Advaitins the “lowest” step of the chatuspad, can be said to throw a first monkey wrench into the apotheosis of Advaita and certainly is an illustration

in actual life of the kind of process on which all of Vedanta, including Advaita, is built. It therefore supports Müller in the most radical of ways.

The Emergence over Time of Human Experience as the Core of Spirituality

The next step seems to be the issue of just how is this kind of experience accessed and how do we learn how to validate it? For Müller, it was the quest for “universal religion”, as derived from the study of religions. Although Vivekananda went along with this approach, his own central position was that what was most important was that the experiences on which were built the traditions Müller studied so intently must be re-experienced in contemporary times and repeatedly in order to demonstrate their validity (Green, 51).

Vivekananda took his presentation further, making the case for the scope, range, and results of yoga in his statements on raja yoga. He asserted that it was the possession and perfecting over millennia of these techniques that gave Vedanta its edge over all other religions on account of its impersonal and humanistic orientation, its dependence on interior validity independent of external systematization and dogma, its coherent progression of development in a systematic manner, its openness to validation by others, and by the spectacular results it produced.⁹ This led him to characterize yoga as *scientific* in the level of human function I have dubbed *Yoga as a Science*. This is a rather more accurate nomenclature than the *religion as a science* Green chooses to bestow upon it.

Both men upheld the idea of eternal principles informing these projects, a stance that, interpreted from the standpoint of existing religions, opened

9 CW, Vol.1: Raja-Yoga: Introductory, 129-136.

them up to the criticism of essentialism, or making one worldview or another central to the exclusion or diminution of others. In the West the dominant fear was and still is that Vivekananda was going to import Advaita or at least a primarily experiential religion as the prime principle that trumped all others (Green, 54). In India Müller's embrace, at least in his earlier work, of "true Christianity" did not bode well for the followers of the Indo-European religions derived from Vedanta. It is likely that their distaste for this position is based primarily on the Western validation of conceptual structures as of primary importance.

From perhaps a more experiential position, both men agreed that priestcraft and all that that brings with it—such as rituals—should be diminished or removed, as they provide what might be considered obstacles or distractions from the real issue: the direct experience by the individual of spiritual reality (Green, 59). Müller rejected the position that experiential religion evolved as language evolved, partially because of the apparent collapse in India of spiritual experience after the period of the Upanishads and later after Buddha (Green, 61). He was deeply disappointed to find in the India of his day rampant ritualism and superstition (Green, 61), with apparently no capability of resisting Western imperialism and its underpinnings of Judeo-Christianity.

Vivekananda saw this period, ultimately connected with foreign invasions of one kind or another, as a time of protecting their native traditions from hostile attack. In that context, Vivekananda sees qualified non-dualism and frank dualism, which were strongly related to devotionism and all of the rituals and so on associated with it, not as an ignominious "descent" down the chatuspad, but

as all guaranteeing spiritual liberation and, in their own way, as necessary and valuable for the Indian masses. Nevertheless, it should not take much imagination to see that the British attempt in 1836 at mass deculturation of the Indians, Hindu, and Muslim, could only lead the Indians to batten down the hatches even more, resulting in the dismaying spectacle that Müller so deplored.

Natural Religion and Two Ways of Understanding and Applying It

Whatever the underlying analysis, both Müller and Vivekananda distance themselves from the innate dualism of Abrahamism, including the notion of revelation from an external source, and focus on what Müller called Natural Religion, which he regarded as a natural outgrowth of the human mind. In such a framework the notion of God is itself a product of the human mind (68), as is the notion of an external providence. For Müller, the Infinite is intuited and revealed in human religious experience, which naturally sees things beyond the senses, pace scientific belief that there is actually nothing beyond the senses to be revealed. And for Müller, the highest point in this development was nothing short of the views of Shankaracharya, which I take to mean the attainment of the fourth level in samadhi as established by Gaudapada in Advaita Vedanta.

Vivekananda's position here is stated to be that the similarity of the world's religions indicate that their essence is one. Both he and Müller emphasized that this whole worldview involves an active struggle to transcend the limitations of the sense world, in Müller's case through the perception of the Infinite by human faculties, and in Vivekananda's by overcoming human limitations through the force of will (Green, 72). Green places these two approaches

in the interesting framework of Max Weber (1864-1920), which delineates two approaches (Green, 72) in science: the conceptual approach, attributed to Plato, and the experimental developed in the Renaissance control of experience. In our study, Müller's systematic approach is said to conform to concept, and Vivekananda's to experiment, a comparison that is clearly another way of delineating the nature of the differences in their attitudes across the board. Other contemporary authors of this line of thought are Whitehead's *Process and Reality*; Goswami's classical, reductionist brain and the quantum brain and (1995); and McGilchrist (2009 and 2021), whose clinical documentation of the neurological underpinnings of this phenomenon are all but overwhelming. In my doctoral thesis, before reading that literature, I discerned that Ramakrishna's teaching of Vivekananda was in both modes, and that Vivekananda carried that mode of teaching forward, using what I termed the conceptual method in India and the experiential in the West.

Within the experiential Indian framework that Vivekananda advocates, Green focuses on the discipline known as yoga, the discipline necessary for the development of insightful experiential knowledge. Raja yoga, one such discipline selected here by Green, entails gaining control over the forces of nature and mind, leading to samadhi, in Vivekananda's words:

A state beyond reason which can provide answers to all religious and moral questions and wherein "the yogi will find himself as he is and as he always was, the essence of knowledge, the immortal, the all-pervading" (Green, 74).

This is another characterization of the kind of high-water mark of consciousness that is described

by Vivekananda not only in Advaitic practice, but also in various forms of yoga. His own first samadhi also opened the door for the subsequent development of yoga within the whole line of experience and thought in Level I, the realm of embodied human experience. At that level what was required was nothing more than a burning intent to grasp what is real within any experience in the physical world and to make it the center of all activities whatsoever. The deep impression is that such a person can penetrate beyond predetermined dogmas, paradigms, or received opinions and see directly to the very core of what he or she is working with. This is Vivekananda's interpretation of karma yoga or the yoga of work.

In bringing forward this kind of material, the Brahmo Samaj had maintained that this kind of experience overshadowed in importance the texts of the Vedantic tradition, which were so overlaid with sectarian commentary as to be all but incomprehensible. From this, Green suggests that Vivekananda also rejected scripture, but my own study of his commentaries on the core texts of the Vedas, Upanishads and Bhagavadgita demonstrates that this is not the case. Everything he says can be related to these canonical texts—as seen from the fifth level of consciousness, which was Vivekananda's unique contribution to Vedanta. Himself stating the problem of traditional commentators (Gayatriprana, 2020, 237-241), Vivekananda follows his own advice and brings to bear on these texts his own massive interior realizations, acquired from his dialogs and interactions with Ramakrishna. Contrary to the impression of Green, Vivekananda does not limit the discovery and teaching of this experiential truth only to Advaita (Green, 77), a position in keeping with the holistic vision of Ramakrishna and also Patanjali,

who predated Advaita by about a millennium. Just how this position was arrived at emerges when we look at the facts of what followed Ramakrishna's second touch on his young acolyte, material that is perhaps the least well known of Vivekananda's samadhis, but none the less available in common domain in Saradananda, 1952, 769.

Vivekananda's Second Samadhi

Now grounded by his first samadhi in Spiritual Humanism, the next step for Vivekananda was to undertake the process of self-transformation through which the inner meaning of Spiritual Humanism was to be explored, not only through time-honored precepts, but also his own direct experience. In so doing, he was not going to experience just one of the many forms of yoga that the Indian tradition had developed, but all four of them, à la Ramakrishna, who was by this time had clearly revealed himself not a one-sided yogi, but an embracer of all forms of yoga as valid. As I demonstrate in my doctoral thesis, Ramakrishna trained Vivekananda, not only in the yoga of work (karma yoga), but also in the other three yogas—bhakti, raja, and jnana—to the point of samadhi and beyond.

Before proceeding here, I comment on the rather universal image of Ramakrishna as essentially devotional. This notion is expressed in Green's book as follows:

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Ramakrishna viewed Advaita as largely inimical to the pursuit of what he saw as the main end of religious practice, namely the ecstatic experience of union with the Divine Mother (Green, 20).

These opinions are based on the thinking of

Western scholars. From Vivekananda himself we learn:

It was given to me to live with a man who was as ardent a dualist, as ardent an Advaitist, as ardent a bhakta, as a jnani.¹⁰

And, in connection with his own training from Ramakrishna:

He used generally to teach dualism. As a rule, he never taught Advaitism—but he taught it to me. I had been a dualist before.¹¹

This indicates that Ramakrishna was much more versatile than his Western observers realize. The text that is most focused on is the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, which is a wonderful record of Ramakrishna's interactions with visitors in the last five years of his life. However, it seems to be generally assumed that this is the one and only text of importance. What is not always borne in mind is that M, the acclaimed recorder of this precious material, was a householder, a family man who came to see Ramakrishna at certain times, mostly during the day. For the most part, the others visiting Ramakrishna at those times were men similar to himself, "Bengali babus" or middleclass gentlemen, whose primary focus was on devotional attitudes to the Hindu deities. These were the people that Vivekananda refers to here. What is known from oral tradition in the Ramakrishna Order¹² is that Ramakrishna's monastic disciples came to him late at night and to them he spoke quite differently, which would include Vivekananda, who himself tells us that Ramakrishna trained him in Advaita. Ramakrishna was, in short,

10 CW, Vol.3: Vedanta in Its Application to Indian Life, 233-234.

11 CW, Vol.7: On Sri Ramakrishna and His Views, 411-412.

12 Swami Pavitrananda, senior monk of the Order in the nineteen-seventies in New York.

“all things to all people”, (Bible, 1 Corinthians 9:22), responding directly to the needs of whomever was before him and in need in some way. I myself (MacPhail, 2020b) have drawn attention to the variety of ways Ramakrishna is presented in the primary literature, from the most humanistic and adorable to the pinnacle of Integral Vedanta, “the coming religion”¹³. There I suggest that the most complete view of Ramakrishna is that of Swami Vivekananda in the Complete Works. This more comprehensive approach is likely to revolutionize Ramakrishna studies.

After about two years after his first samadhi, Vivekananda was an avid believer in non-dualism/ Advaita, which by its rejection of reality to anything other than the fourth level, totally disdained any form of yoga other than its own discipline of intense study of the non-dual scriptures and the resultant saltation from “lower reality” into the deep intuition of undivided, non-material reality. During this time Vivekananda mocked Ramakrishna’s apparent delusions about immanent Reality and its action upon the worlds of discerning intellect, imagination/creativity, and the physical world, the “lower three” in the view of Gaudapada. This attitude stood in the way of Vivekananda accepting the notion of an immanent divine that is central to the practices of Buddha, which were utterly despised and attacked by Shankaracharya and regarded by the non-dual Hindu elite of Vivekananda’s day as utterly contemptible.

Once again Ramakrishna’s touch changed the young man’s whole being quite radically. While he conceptually retained the non-dual experience

13 Inadvertently, I omitted from that study the important biography by Ramachandra Datta (2014) that was the flash-point for the scurrilous American text *Kali’s Child* (1995), though reading it failed to support the contentions of the American work.

as valid in and of itself, the experience also shifted Vivekananda’s mind from exclusively Classical Advaita Vedanta to a direct—and at the time, highly confusing—experience of divine immanence in all possible physical, emotional, or intellectual objects and the yogas that sought to transform the perception of them (Saradananda, 1952, 769).

Ramakrishna’s Integrative Inclusion of All Forms of Yoga in Vivekananda’s Training

In my thesis (MacPhail, 2013, 420-494) I present how Ramakrishna, taking advantage of this newfound flexibility, introduced Vivekananda to and trained him in the classical four yogas—of work, devotion, discerning intellect, as well as the intuitive faculty central to non-dual experience. With roots going back millennia, these yogas had over time and especially when India was dominated by foreign invaders, been traditionally at war with each other. For Vivekananda, who saw yoga as India’s special contribution to human welfare, this was a tragedy of the first degree, and he sought to find reconciliation between them.

There were several issues in the matter: Following the intuition of Gaudapada, the context or substrates of the yogas seemed to form a hierarchy. In the yoga of work the focus is on the physical world; in devotion on the emotions, imagination, and creativity; in the yoga of self-knowledge, discerning intellect on the innermost vision of Reality possible from a human standpoint; and in the yoga of truth or jnana on That which transcends the human or any other discernible context. If subjectivity was what was most valued—and it was, in fact, in India—this was a clear hierarchy, and the yogas had tended to be related to the caste system, still enduring from Neolithic times in India. Work was the lot of

laborers, very low in rank, and its *karma yoga* for the most part not much discussed in the extant Vedantic texts. The devotees who practiced bhakti yoga or devotion were largely merchants and businessmen, important in the Indian economy, but not highly regarded overall. The cultivation of discerning intellect or *raja yoga* was sought after by the higher castes, noteworthy in the case of Buddha, and was associated with monasticism, which gave it a better overall appearance. Finally, the practice of non-dual knowledge—*jnana*—as presented by the Shankara order was restricted largely to the highest caste—brahmins, and at that, unmarried, celibate men.

It was inevitable, it seems, that each discipline would develop its own techniques independently of the others and that over time and the inevitable disagreements and clashes that had occurred between these different disciplines, that animosity and exclusion would arise. Attitudes that the foreign rulers could readily utilize in divide and conquer mode.

In the course of his own training, Ramakrishna had learned from top teachers in the traditional world the ideas and practices of both Advaita and Tantra. In both he was recognized as an accomplished adept, and certainly a very unusual teacher. He was able to relate in a seamless vision of reality and aspiration for human wholeness two traditions that had been at each other's throats for centuries. This interrelatedness is what he passed on to Vivekananda, whose Western humanism, sense of social justice, and quite likely knowledge of the hierarchical organization of the human nervous system as envisioned in the Tantric kundalini and the discoveries in Western neurosciences, immediately envisioned the whole process of yoga as related, not to scholastic schools

of thought and practice, but as the organization and layout of transformational potential in any conscious being whatsoever:

Each soul is potentially divine.

The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal.

Do this either by work, worship, or psychic control, or philosophy—by one, more, or all of these—and be free.

This is the whole of religion. Doctrines, or dogmas, or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.¹⁴

Limitations of space preclude going into detail about these yogas here. In my thesis I study how Vivekananda's insights about the yogas are directly related to what Vivekananda accessed during his training from Ramakrishna (MacPhail, 2013, Chapters 21-22). In *Gayatriprana 2020*, xxix I present a table which lays out the primary aspects of these yogas and how they relate to each other in Vivekananda's thinking. The systematic array of consciousness across the four yogas, themselves arranged in the classical hierarchy of matter-emotions-mind-spirit (I-IV), produces a definite sense of overall coherence, progression of meaning and inbuilt consistency and systematism that may well be the reason that Vivekananda looked on yoga as a perennial form of science of the interior of the human psyche. Although he looked on raja yoga as the most "scientific", doubtless because it is the yoga that deals with the most analytical function of the psyche, the same pattern can be perceived throughout all of the yogas.

What is noteworthy is that Vivekananda saw this whole dynamic as primarily taking place

¹⁴ CW, Vol.1: Raja-Yoga, 124.

within the individual, not as conflicting bailiwicks of entrenched poohbahs and ultra-orthodox Vedantins. Within that framework, his interest was in encouraging individuals to explore their own potentials and discover and master any and all of the possible levels through the practice of the yoga or yogas appropriate to them. This is surely a fundamental criterion of secularism, as, of course, the total opposite of procedure in Classical Advaita.

In addition to the above, at every step of the way in his training from Ramakrishna, Vivekananda received both a conceptual and experiential “take” on the subject. In the domain of yoga as a science the presentation in the West was as a *pure science*, i.e. one that was being worked up from first principles of matter, and in India as an applied science, in which the perennial findings from the systematic study of yoga were to be applied to the material facts of the everyday world (Ibid., 492-493). In view of Green’s ongoing effort throughout his book to pinpoint Vivekananda’s position vis à vis Advaita and his concern about Vivekananda’s lack of organization, this samadhi is clearly a key piece of evidence to buttress our claim that Vivekananda’s worldview resists any attempt to organize it according to the criteria of either.

With regard to Müller’s actual knowledge of the yoga presented by Vivekananda, my study of Vivekananda’s presentation of the yogas in the two years prior to his meeting with Müller clearly demonstrated that though he fully validated the methods of Advaita Vedanta in his *Jnana Yoga*, he also validated and took very seriously what Advaitins held as the “lesser” or even invalid yoga modes of meditation (*raja yoga*), devotion (*bhakti yoga*), and work (*karma yoga*). To support his presentation

Vivekananda emphasized the traditional texts of each: for jnana (intuitive knowledge), the Upanishads, quite OK with Advaita or non-dual Vedanta; for raja (meditation), Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*, which are based on the dualistic thinking of Sankhya psychology on which Buddha had built his system. From there we “descend” to bhakti (imagination, devotion, and creativity), buttressed by a translation of Narada’s *Bhakti Sutras*, again dualistic, based on the philosophy of Ramanuja and Madhwacharya and feeding into the Vaishnava tradition which the non-dualists totally despised. And, finally the second and third chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* are invoked as “the texts” of the yoga of work, a “yoga for the underclasses” and, as an interface with the physical world almost never mentioned in the Vedantic tradition since the advent of the Gita itself, though the dualist Madhwacharya demonstrates how compatible his dualistic philosophy is with social concerns and interventions, and of course the Tantrics delved into deeply with very valuable results.

This apparent gallimaufry of various philosophical and religious traditions in and of itself is proof that Vivekananda was in no way bound exclusively to Advaita. In his presentations of classical yoga, which were largely in the West, and almost invariably part of his program everywhere he visited (Burke, 1985-1987),¹⁵ he would always include one lecture on what he called *universal religion*. In these lectures he would indicate that the variety of yogas existed to meet the needs of all of the different aspects of human makeup—hands, heart, and head, with the all-pervading intuition of jnana an integral part of the whole picture. In this way he “democratized” yoga, by validating all of them and

15 A very typical and fully recorded example of this type of presentation is *The Ideal of a Universal Religion*, delivered in New York on January 12, 1896, CW 2:375-396

looking at them, not as separate conceptual entities, but as living dynamic realities created to work on the whole person, independently of any school of thought or organization.

Certainly, he advocated that it was desirable to practice as many as possible and to integrate them with each other, a position that suggests a fifth yoga: that of integration of all of the others, which Vivekananda presented several times, though not under that rubric. In the Indian context, this was something radically new. In addition, his claim that proper practice and progress in each yoga would lead to non-dual experience within the purview of each level, was the final last straw in his “apostasy” from any previously settled system of organization. I shall later present data that supports this position.

What seems to be distracting for Green and Western scholars in general is his support of Classical Advaita, a red herring if one has conceived of him exclusively as a supporter of that system, or that that is the only valid system. This is what seems to have happened in our book and is perhaps behind the Western notions of Vivekananda’s “inconsistency” when his utterances are measured from that standpoint. From another standpoint, we can see Vivekananda’s validation of variety in yoga as another way of expressing Ramakrishna’s embrace of the validity of all religions, in this instance of forms of religious/spiritual practice.

In the context of yoga Vivekananda’s insights did run into opposition from Müller, who found it hard to stomach the yogic “powers” that are part of raja yoga or the transformation of our discerning intellect through meditation. The problem seems to have stemmed from the activities of the Theosophical Society which was actively discussing such things

and staging “demonstrations” which were found to be fraudulent. Müller’s article and subsequent book on Ramakrishna worked assiduously at keeping up a skeptical stance on this subject, which was necessary at the time because of the massive resistance to such things by the reductionistic, scientific majority. And, possibly, related to Müller’s own unfamiliarity with such phenomena, despite his encyclopedic knowledge about what had been said about them in the yogic literature. And also of the biographies of Shankaracharya, whose life was in some ways a museum of such events.

Overall, given the heavy Western bias in favor of Vivekananda as an Advaitin, there is much to admire and agree with in Green’s conclusion that Vivekananda avoided the extremes of Advaita and Western thought (Green, 83); that rajayoga is a method to accelerate [spiritual] evolution culminating in the production of perfect man (Green, 45); and that such a consummation is attained not through belief, but by intense struggle through human discovery, not divine guidance, to transcend the limitations of the senses (Green, 71).

Chapter 3 and Level III: Müller’s *Avidya* as Ignorance and Vivekananda’s *Maya* as an Attitude of Mind

Advaita’s Denial of the Physical World versus Immanent Monism

The title of Chapter 3 is *Vedanta in Defence of Religion*, which sets out to demonstrate how Müller utilized the traditional memes of Classical Advaita to stave off the onslaught of reductionist science. Working, as before, in the context of the Brahma Samaj, Green (82) gives us a thumbnail sketch of the struggle within that organization to reach a balance between the Shankara non-dual stance of

the organization's founder, Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) and the later emphasis on personal experience and ethics spearheaded by Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), the father of Rabindranath. Further developments led to the inclusion of the thought of the German philosopher, Hegel, particularly the notion of evolution of Spirit in world history (Green, 81). Green suggests that this movement "was, perhaps, a more cosmopolitan and rationalistic ancestor of the philosophical tendency in Swadeshi-era Bengal named by Sartori *immanent monism*" (Green, 82):

Here, instead of achieving union with the absolute through gnosis [jnana, the methodology of Classical Advaita (Green, 21)], the devotee approaches divine truth from within the flux or phenomenal experience and acquires "spiritual self-realization" through practice (karma yoga, the path of action) (Sartori, 2007, 77-93).

Sartori argued that the Tantric side of this teaching was typical of Ramakrishna and others, "an idealism grounded in an organicist theory of the national spirit in opposition to rationalistic individualism" (Green, 82) [i.e. Western, which was gaining ground in India]. Here we also see a movement away from the Advaitic salvation for the individual to one that involved work for the uplift and salvation of the whole community.

In this line of thought Ramakrishna is characterized as advocating, not the classic Advaitic path of withdrawal from the illusory phenomenal world, but realization of a personal deity, which involves immersion in a world—including this actual physical world identical with that deity. This viewpoint is branded Tantric monism, presumably because there is no radical split between the deity and the physical world (which would be dualism). And

within that physical world of engagement, I would add to the original suggestion of karma yoga, also the yogas of emotion and intellectual discernment, which to the Advaitic mind are sufficiently "contaminated" with the physical world as to render them irrelevant to the non-dual curriculum. This immanent monism is, of course, an apostasy from Classical Advaita. All of that being said, the documentation of Ramakrishna's training of Vivekananda in yoga (MacPhail, 2013, 378-599), does include the Classical Advaitic method at the culminating fourth stage of his development, but not as sublating the other yogas.

As we have been going along, Green increasingly has perceived Vivekananda's teachings as deviating from Classical Advaita, and at this juncture suggests that they fit in better with Ramakrishna's Tantric monism. He does draw attention to Vivekananda's denunciations of the craze for vamachara Tantra especially in Bengal, which permitted sensual license ad lib, in distinction to the other traditions of India. Green opines that Ramakrishna passed on to Vivekananda the Bengali Tantric tradition, including—with great prescience—his acceptance of the goddess Kali as the embodied form of Ultimate Reality. Such "immanent monism" permits Green to refrain, on the whole, from calling Vivekananda a thoroughgoing Advaitin or his position a passive response to Western stimuli (Green, 83). Nevertheless, Green still regards Vivekananda as "non-systematic thinker" (Green, 83), "pulled in different directions", especially those of Hegel-influenced immanent monism and uncompromising Advaita totally detached from Hegel or Tantra.

As we have seen, Vivekananda did not engage with "Hegelianism", but rather with the direct experience of the contemporary manifestations of

the traditional Vedantic chatuspad as evoked for him by Ramakrishna. Like other Western systems of dialectics from Plato and Aristotle onwards, Hegel's dialectics span a whole ontology of reality, in and through each level of which there is a process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis, which resolves inbuilt contradictions and conflicts and permits the analysis to proceed to the next ontological level. In Western style, all of these systems operate within the mode of pure concept or what McGilchrist calls "the left brain" (McGilchrist, 2009, 2021). What I have demonstrated (MacPhail, 2013, 600-777) is that the interaction between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda takes place in a similar fashion, but one in which the conflicting thesis and antithesis are not simply conceptual structures, but the very faculties of conception and experience themselves, akin to bra and ket aspects of experience in quantum theory (MacPhail, 2018). This whole process, involving several levels of context in which there is freedom to bring out an interior exploration of their meaning suggests the function of what McGilchrist refers to as the "right brain". Synthesis or resolution of conflict on any level is brought about by a samadhi event, in which the whole process of interaction of concept and experience is transcended.

This whole process can be seen as the complementary to the conceptual systems of the West, the bringing to the forefront the subjective and experiential processes behind the generation of complex verbal structures the West has always tended to gravitate towards. In *Gayatriprana*, 2020, xlvi-xlvii Vivekananda's view can be seen as a case for the validity and importance of the subjective world so thoroughly investigated by the Indian tradition. In the present situation, rather than embrace a Western

(Hegelian) structure, as his Brahma colleagues seemed to be doing, Vivekananda works through and explains and transmits to others the inner experience and meaning of all of these levels and how they impact human life, including the verbal structures that have been generated, especially in the West. This approach is of course quite novel to the West, and therefore confusing, especially as it comes with the full chatuspad without any of the blocks that have been imposed on it, both by Advaita and materialist reductionism. This dynamic, which I basically demonstrate in my thesis, means that "the full chatuspad" embraces the experience of the physical world (*jagat*) all the way up to and including the experience of Brahman (*turiya or nirvikalpa*). In so doing it simply ignores the Western dismissal of the interior world and Advaita's equally peremptory rejection of any touch of the physical as it is perceived in not only the physical world, but also the world of emotion and creativity and even the world of discerning intellect, of which the function is primarily to separate the world from Brahman and open the door to the Fourth. From the standpoint of both India and the West this is a bold agenda, sweeping away centuries of fixed creed on both side of the aisle. It is not surprising that the insight has arisen that the whole process emanates from another level capable of containing all of this psychic reorganization—what is known as *turiyatita* (beyond the Fourth) or *vijnana* (superior knowledge).

As an illustration of this process, we find in connection with Green's attempt to cobble together some facts from Vivekananda's intellectual development, a comment that Vivekananda's thought evolved over time, electing in 1894 to bring forward

classic Advaita,¹⁶ apparently abandoning the strand of immanentism. From Vivekananda's viewpoint, however, Advaita and immanentism do not pose an either-or dichotomy or exclusion, but rather a both-and-situation, related as different steps on an ever-evolving, non-excluding path of understanding and knowledge. If this analysis is cogent, it is only natural that Vivekananda resists the superimposition of a foreign meme on his own position.

Müller's leanings to non-dualism are attributed to the early influence of German Romanticism and *naturphilosophie*, which he later faulted as too involved with the material world. He later gravitated towards that in Vedanta that clearly separates the material world and spiritual Reality, because materialism, tied to objectivity, is incapable of knowledge of subjective reality, which is the central fact of Advaita.

In order to demonstrate the views of Müller and Vivekananda at this stage Green singles out two cardinal teachings of Advaita, which are brought out by both of them. One is the statement *ayam atma brahma* (this Self is Brahman: *Mandukya Upanishad*, 2). The other is that the universe of our experience is the product of ignorance, *avidya or maya*, which can only be removed by the knowledge that there is nothing else but Brahman, Atman or Self. The Atman is that which is experienced in deep subjectivity, underlies all transient states of consciousness in the human psyche, survives physical death, and is identical with Brahman, utterly transcending all categories of reality as described in materialistic science. Both Müller and Vivekananda stress that the Atman is not to be confused with any aspect

of the human psyche or mind, including the ego as understood in the West. In Vedanta such entities are regarded as radical misperceptions, as is matter itself, and the task of the Advaitin is to deconstruct all such objectifying categories in order to arrive at the subjective experience of the Self (Green, 94).

For Müller the Atman or Self as experienced subjectively is the root for the idea of human divinity, both as conceived of as the presence of God in the human heart, its shared brotherhood with Christ, and human reasoning and language as the manifestation of divine logos (Green, 92). For Müller, the existence of the Self did not require external, material proof. His whole argument is based on the Advaitic assertion that the Self is identical with Brahman, an assertion that is clearly in a totally different category than any assertion relating to the material world. Vivekananda, taking the direct experience of the subjective world for granted (through yoga), asserts that the soul is beyond the law of causation and, rather than offering an elaborate explanation of the metaphysical problem, simply urges his listeners to deny the reality of matter, an injunction the practical reality of which Green does not address (Green, 94). However, the overall vision of yoga distancing one's inner commitment to matter can be said to be a primary goal.

a) The Engaged Atman, a Non-proposition in Advaita

Based on his vision of the primacy of subjectivity, Vivekananda takes another stance that Green sees as quite unorthodox in Advaita: The Self as an active agent controlling the body/nature, the position that Vivekananda assumes in his raja yoga lectures and Green refers to as an exemplification of immanent monism (Green, 95). Although this

¹⁶ Vivekananda's emphasis on classical Advaita was primarily in the West, where the system was more or less unknown and for which there was a crying need.

position seems to contradict Shankara's position that the Atman, like Brahman, is ineluctably other than matter or its manifestations, Vivekananda maintains that only through the direct, subjective knowledge of the Self can we conquer the limitations of matter that constitute our slavery to nature. While this could be interpreted as experiential evidence that the Self is prior to matter and has influence over it, Green chooses to resolve the apparent discrepancy by stating that for Vivekananda the world is ultimately unreal, as it was for Shankaracharya. As we shall see, this view is not an accurate assessment of Vivekananda's thought.

Green maintains that materialism per se was not accepted by Vivekananda as primary or as a criterion of ultimate judgement, since our perception of material objects is dependent on the Self (Green, 94). As always in Vedanta, although the Self is a prime mover, it is not accessed directly unless and until we have objectified the worlds of matter and emotion and discerning intellect, and it is only when we experience it directly behind and beyond them that we understand its power and how it can work through us efficiently and productively. Green is finally forced to state that:

Vivekananda's Atman is the immaterial soul which moves the material body and which, once it is acknowledged and recognized in all its power and freedom, can allow the mastery of nature (Green, 96).

b) Innate Structures of Thought That Control Perception and Response

The issue of how the world is created by illusion was, according to Green, the tool with which Müller and Vivekananda sought to refute the claimed priority of materialism over all other lines of

thought and experience. It accounts for the fact that what is claimed to be one and indivisible is actually perceived as infinitely various and variable, subject to change and limited by time and space. As with his statements about the Atman, Müller's position is not backed up with much in the way of phenomenology. Rather it rests only on the testimony of Shankara, itself founded on the Upanishads, "rather than derived from unassisted reasoning" (Green, 98).

Green points out that Vivekananda more often uses the word *maya than avidya* (ignorance) to explain the whole process. Maya, for Vivekananda, relates to "name and form" or "time, space and causation", "denoting innate structures of thought which cause human beings to see diversity where there is only oneness" (Green, 98). Green states that Vivekananda enunciated this trinity as three levels of reality: physical, mental, and spiritual, which not only puts flesh on or concretizes Müller's blanket term of ignorance, but also gives a kind of "evolutionary" handle on the whole process itself. According to Green (Green, 99) Vivekananda further asserted that within the level of matter, illusory though it is from one standpoint, it is possible to discern a process leading from diversity to oneness, albeit a oneness defined in purely materialistic terms and not synonymous with the ultimate realization of spirit as Spirit. This seems to point to the yoga of work, which though predicated of physical work can lead to spiritual liberation, as per Vivekananda.

At the level of discussion here, the issue is that Vivekananda's willingness to grant any kind of validity to matter is a serious departure from Shankaraite orthodoxy compared to Müller's more or less orthodox position that to the Vedantist "there is no matter at all."

Vivekananda's first public comments on maya were given in the West at the Department of Philosophy, Harvard University on March, 1896:

The state of manifestation is individuality, and the light in that state is what we call knowledge. To use, therefore, this term knowledge for the light of the absolute is not precise, as the absolute state transcends relative knowledge.

Q: Does it include it?

A: Yes, *in this sense: just as a piece of gold can be changed into all sorts of coins, so with this. The state can be broken up into all sorts of knowledge. It is the state of superconsciousness and includes both consciousness and unconsciousness. Those who attain that state have what we call knowledge. When we want to realize that consciousness of knowledge, we have to go a step lower. Knowledge is a lower state—it is only in maya that we can have knowledge.*¹⁷

This reply contains the overall answer to all questions about maya, not only how it obscures true knowledge and how we can hope to rise above it, but also the inference that material knowledge occurs only within the limitations of maya. Not surprisingly, it advocates as the answer to the problem changes of states of consciousness to the stage of transcending all relative knowledge—the topic he had dealt with in his work on yoga, the main purpose of which was indeed this exercise. And in presenting which he had demonstrated that in and through all levels of consciousness—including materialism—it is possible to arrive at transcendence of maya itself. This is the radical vision of the fifth level of consciousness or vijnana: that in and through any

17 CW, Vol.5: A Discussion, 309-310

and all apparently limited worldviews it is possible through self-transformation to penetrate through to ultimate Reality.

In London of late 1896 Vivekananda took up the issue of maya with the crème de la crème of the English social and intellectual world. Not surprisingly, he starts with the basic issue of the confusion created by maya and paints a series of images of the frustration and deception associated with so much of human endeavor. Green chooses to liken this presentation to the pessimistic views of Schopenhauer, but there also seems to be the possibility that Vivekananda was, in short, simply bringing powerful illustrations from common experience to illustrate the subject, before moving on to his solution to the riddle in the third lecture, *Maya and Freedom*, as a drawing of the notion of divinity from the “outside” more and more into the interior of the human soul itself. Rather wittily, Vivekananda states:

Just as in your hymn, “Nearer my God to Thee” the same hymn would be very good to the Vedantin, only he would change a word and make it “Nearer my God to me.” The idea is that the goal is far off, far beyond nature, attracting us all towards it. The goal has to be brought nearer and nearer, without degrading or degenerating it.¹⁸

Green summarizes this chapter in a quote from a subsequent series on Vedanta in which Vivekananda summed up the whole procedure:

This very universe, as we have seen, is the same Impersonal Being read by our intellect. Whatever is reality in the universe is that Impersonal Being, and the forms and conceptions are given to it by our intellects. Whatever is real in this

18 CW, Vol.2: *Maya and Freedom*, 128.

table is that Being, and the table form and all other forms are given by our intellects¹⁹.

This is actually a summary of the Advaita point of view that it is we who create what we see, but with the radical difference that for the Advaitin what we see is unreal, while for Vivekananda the “reality” it has for us is what we have to work with and through in order to get to the depth dimension of it—a dimension that is the same, ultimately, for everything. It is a matter of our committing to the work required to get that perspective.

c) **The Issue Is: How do We Look at Anything?**

What seems to stand out here is that these issues are not primarily issues of purely conceptual understanding, but of “where we are at”, i.e. which part of our psyche is engaged with perception and how our intellect interprets what is perceived. What makes something appear as matter, as mind, or as spirit, is how we look at anything. As we already know from Vivekananda’s approach to yoga, it is within our power to consciously and voluntarily develop not only depth perception within any given framework, such as matter, but also to engage with other contexts, such as mind or spirit, and thereby to radically change what we see ourselves as dealing with: the physical world, the emotions, the intellect, our intuitive grasp of the Whole, and even beyond. In so doing, we are not in any way going against our natural abilities. For Vivekananda, the whole range of yogas is available to all of us, and therefore, potentially, the ability to see anything from any level of vision and insight, and to interact with it accordingly.

This is a practical application of the chatuspad, not as a theoretical model, but as living reality.

19 CW, Vol.2: Practical Vedanta III, 338.

And, unlike Gaudapada and the strict Advaitists, there is no block on the interconnection of all of the different levels. For them, anything below the Fourth was maya, but with Vivekananda and his contemporaries the diktat was to accept the material level as real or perish at the hands of modern science and technology. Accordingly, what is advocated is to experience all of these and give reports, as here, to just what “goods” each level delivers. The material world on its own has its rewards but fails to deliver the joys of creativity and imagination, the depth of intellectual discovery, or the profound experience of the intuitive realm. As Vivekananda would say in another connection, “Each is great in its own place”; none has absolute authority over any other, and indeed engaging all four in a well-integrated manner in response to need is the pragmatic way to go. Here again, we see a remarkable demonstration of just how humanistic and democratic the system is and how it removes the kinds of conflict that two-dimensional thinking habitually engages in. Finally, this way of thinking offers the possibility of a vastly expanded grasp of reality, as well as removing the ridiculous and oft-repeated notion of Vivekananda’s inconsistency.

Both Müller and Vivekananda saw in the study of Advaita Vedanta the potential to energize and take the contemporary, much-reduced and even obsolete, versions of their own religious traditions to a much more vigorous and flexible position. Green points to Vivekananda’s emphasis on the ethical implications of the identity of the individual soul and the Absolute (Green, 84), a position that openly seems to suggest that there is a no god other than our own, deepest state of being. Such “crypto-atheism” as Green dubs it (Green, 107), is certainly a far cry from the Father

in Heaven of most Western traditions, which could well prejudice many against it. On the other hand, for those who work cheek by jowl with the material world—such as research scientists—and somehow penetrate behind it to find a stable Reality, the notion that humanity has within itself the capacity to do so and to push on to still deeper and more expanded levels of consciousness might well be a refreshing incentive to commitment to Vivekananda’s brand of non-dualism.

From his side, Müller indicates how he has understood the model of levels in spirituality:

It is hardly credible how completely all other religions (i.e. other than Advaita Vedanta) have overlooked these simple facts [i.e. different levels of consciousness and stages of spiritual development], how they have tried to force on the old and the wise the food that was meant for babes, and how they have thereby alienated and lost their best and strongest friends (Green, 108).

From the side of Vedanta as presented by Vivekananda, all of the various levels of philosophy and practice were valid and necessary steps along which the aspirant could progress with the assurance of ultimately attaining the final and most inclusive level of them all. As for the application of the chatuspad-based Advaita to the dualistic Abrahamic religions this would clearly be a much harder “sell” than to the Indian religions, but as Green remarks (109), the range of levels that Vivekananda was proposing allowed of the less “rational” aspects of each faith to coexist with Advaita, though in a less rigorous philosophical form and subordinate to the central goal of spiritual development. And, as seems evident, there even was room for the materialist

fundamentalists, so tightly wedged behind their barriers against the inner life that they had thrown it out with the bathwater of Christianity in the Renaissance and modern periods.

In this way, Müller and Vivekananda worked through the glaring paradoxes of the theory of maya, opening up spaces in which interconnection of matter and spirit could occur, through more flexible philosophical approaches (Müller) and with Vivekananda an acceptance of levels of consciousness hardwired in the human psyche and amenable to the approaches of the yogas to open them up to more and more encompassing reality.

Vivekananda’s Third Samadhi: The Resolution of Innate Paradox

Having discovered these various concepts and phenomena, the central issue seems to be: how did Vivekananda arrive at a place that offers reality to the physical world, a notion anathema to Classical Advaita? The framework in which this paradox is presented is the very real conflict between Western materialist objectivity and Indian spiritual subjectivity that was rocking humanity’s boat mightily at the time of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda.

Once again, I turn to the actual record of the role experience plays in all of this. Firstly, with regard to Ramakrishna, he was a *paramahansa sannyasin* in the orthodox Puri Shankara Order, i.e. the highest degree of attainment in the non-dual monastic system. Historically, he was more often in samadhi than not, but at the same time he was wonderfully aware of and dealt with the phenomenal world with finesse.

He was also a *divya* (highest level of practicant) adept in Tantra (Feuerstein, 1998, 119), who was not involved with the *vamachara* or *pashu* (bestial)

aspects of its practice.²⁰ Notwithstanding, Tantra was considered the total opposite of Vedanta in orthodox Vedantic circles. From that standpoint much of what Ramakrishna said was spoken from *bhava mukha* (the face of direct experience that can see the balance between even the most radical of opposites) conveying in language what is usually considered utterly beyond language and thus opening out other views and alternatives beyond the frameworks of philosophy and science as we know them. This is not the concoction of some Western brainwave, but sober facts recorded in *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* (Saradananda, 1952, 386-395 and Glossary, 929) and Maharaj, 2018, 18, who equates *bhava mukha* with *vijnana*, or the fifth level of consciousness. As we shall see for ourselves from this account, Ramakrishna had in fact arrived at an experiential resolution of the central paradox of *maya* that the alignment of the systems of Advaita and Tantra would ordinarily represent.

In Vivekananda's third *samadhi*, which took place around February of 1895, he passed from any obsession about materialism—or, for that matter, non-dualism—into the realm of direct perception of the nature of the Atman, the particular element of Vedanta that underlies all such conceptual constructs. Like the first and second *samadhis*, this *samadhi* is not mentioned by Green, no doubt because he did not find it in the pages of Vivekananda's *Complete Works*. Again, it is Saradananda who gives us this important information.

In this *samadhi* Vivekananda was compelled, willy-nilly, and under tremendous financial and emotional stress after the death of his prominent father, to surrender to Kali, the black Tantric goddess.

20 CW, Vol.7: Conversation with Sri Priyanath Sinha, Calcutta, 1899, 277

Sri Ramakrishna played the role of advisor here, sending the young man to seek help from the goddess in the shrine. But rather than asking for material help, Vivekananda saw behind the anthropomorphic symbol “pure Consciousness, actually living and . . . the living fountainhead of infinite love and beauty” (Saradananda, 1952, 811-812).

From these indications, Vivekananda came to see that Kali symbolizes the *shakti* or power of Brahman or the Atman. Shortly before his death, Vivekananda stated, in connection of the worship of Kali, “Can you fathom the beauty and profundity of the Atman whose external manifestation is so sweet and beautiful?” Then he went on to say, “Kali is Brahman in manifestation.”²¹ This realization cements, as it were, Vivekananda's dedication to not only the physical world, but also to the experience of the most abstract spirit (Gayatriprana, 2003). And would seem to underpin his penchant for thinking of the Atman as active in and through all levels of the physical world.

Some time after this experience, Ramakrishna enunciated to Vivekananda a highly sophisticated view of the interrelationship between the two elements that Vivekananda had thus managed to weld together:

The reality from which we derive the notion of Brahman is the very reality that evolves the idea of living beings and the universe [the realm of the dynamic goddess] (M., 2000, 734).

This statement, on the surface offering an explanation of the equivalence of Brahman and the world, stands out in its assertion that it is our perception of reality that determines this relationship

21 CW, Vol.7: Conversation with Sharat Chandra Chakravarty, Belur Math, 1901, 431-432.

and how it may change the balance between them in various circumstances and over time. As such, these categories are a projection of our psyches in paradox mode, setting up two realities that seem to be in conflict. At the same time, it also offers the possibility of transcending any such opposites and living comfortably with whatever emerges in such a state of consciousness.

In terms of the immanent monism that Green repeatedly invokes in his discussion of Ramakrishna's position and that of Vivekananda, this statement of Ramakrishna can be seen to cover the involvement with the physical world that was such a feature of Vivekananda's work in India especially, as also the "cult" aspects of his personal approach there and his acceptance of all forms of yoga as valid.

What Green seems to find incompatible with immanent monism is the Advaitic notion of Brahman itself. This is illustrated in his remarks about Ramakrishna's possible interpretation of Advaita philosophy as being "intolerably abstract and philosophical" (Green, 84). Always remembering that in orthodox Advaita Brahman is not primarily a conceptual construct but a name for the deepest possible subjective experience that transcends all possible descriptions of reality, Sri Ramakrishna's placing of Brahman in the context of his remark "derive our notion of Brahman" is remarkable. In this statement Brahman is a concept we superimpose on reality, along with that of Kali. This superimposition of names and forms on Brahman is a recognized process in Advaita Vedanta, especially "lower", "imaginary" forms such as the world, and so on. But to suggest, as Ramakrishna appears to do here, that Brahman itself is such a mental construct seems to be a rather radical departure from Vedantic

orthodoxy. One can only surmise that his mastery of the gamut of experience acquired in Tantric practice, had somehow carried him past settled nomenclature such as Brahman, and all of the literature and praxis associated with it into a realm beyond even Brahman itself. Of course, Brahman as an experienced reality would always exist, especially in the role of the complementary of Shakti or Kali, but when we look beyond, what we see is Reality or That itself, as yet undefined and not organized into modes of thought, far less Advaitic thought.

If this is a cogent line of thought, then the Advaita/Tantra paradox and complementarity is far from the furthest shore of human consciousness. Ramakrishna has resolved the paradox with a veritable paradigm shift which removes old taboos and opens up wider and more far-ranging ways of thinking about things and developing models of context and content that go beyond anything we have contemplated in our human history so far. What necessarily goes along with this new possibility is an increased emphasis on the quality of experience accepted as valid, which in turn would rely on more and more scrupulous use of the methods of yoga, including those which appear along with this whole new dispensation. Like Western science, such praxis and its results would have to find fresh criteria of validity of both performance as well as results and methods of evaluation of both. In order to support such "explorers" of reality, there would be a need of a much more focused culture that can produce and sustain such people, their aspirations, and efforts. What also seems evident is that the whole process would proceed through the whole range from the material world to the "cutting edge", not erecting artificial barriers, but opening up avenues

of exploration in multiple loci of the full range of human consciousness.

In this context we get to the very core of Vivekananda's position of being able to speak with authority on any level whatsoever, as *sarvam khalvidam brahma, each and every one is Brahman*, animated into specific forms by Shakti through the lens of our own minds. This would seem to be the reality behind the "immanentism" or perhaps "giving of life" to otherwise static conceptual constructs that Green is forced as the book continues to advocate more and more as the explanation of Vivekananda's position.

In the interchange between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda we see what is probably the logical conclusion of this thinking, but now in terms that suggest more contemporary and universal notions such as Reality and Process, yang and yin, and particle and wave in quantum physics. In the quantum context, there is also the postulate of a *wavicle* from which the particle and wave are thought to emanate and by which they are supported. It seems likely that what Ramakrishna calls *the reality from which we derive the notion* is an analog of the wavicle, as Brahman itself is now reduced to being one of the players in a complementarity within Reality.

In the context of Vivekananda's own teaching, in India's project of manifesting spirit, *maya* is presented as *a method of action*; and, for the Western imperative of self-transcendence, as an attitude of mind (MacPhail, 2013, 518-519). Working through both from the "wavicle" point of view, could be envisioned as the most effective way to bring about the kinds of positive change that is always required.

Chapter 4 and Level IV: The Tattwamasi Theory of Ethics and Hololution

Western versus Vedantic Ethical Systems in the Late Nineteenth Century

An important obstacle to building a Western paradigm on Advaita was the issue of ethics. From the Western side, faith-supported ethics was collapsing as materialism increasingly undercut religious authority. Green, 113 et seq. points out that what was taking the place of traditional, faith-based ethics was materialistic, hedonistic Utilitarianism and also Unitarianism, which despite a professed commitment to spiritual values, was altogether rather too abstract and cerebral for the vast mass of people who needed a faith they could lean upon. For Müller and his cohorts, there was a crying need for ethics supported by a powerful new "attractor" that seemingly no longer resided in the Abrahamic worldviews.

However, despite Advaita's growing acceptance in the West, its vehement rejection of the reality or importance of "the world" and all of the elements within it that required attention, raise the question of how were Westerners supposed to cope with the rapidly increasing complexity, might and ingress of science and its multifarious productions? One central loss was any idea of the validity, far less the sacredness of human life that had been the outstanding virtue of Abrahamism. As the machines took over, there was a rapid decline in the living conditions of the working classes and poor, whom Social Darwinism would later categorize into "superior" and "inferior" groups, a "problem" resolved by mass exterminations and horrendous, world-involving wars. These were the "industrial strength" ethical issues that were looming

over the West. Could Advaita come to the rescue on this white-hot issue?

One issue that is not discussed in Green's book but which seems relevant, pertains to the actual systems of ethics that were extant in India in the mid to late nineteenth century. As Nicholson points out (2020), Advaita was a movement within the brahmin caste, rigidly excluding any member of the lower castes. Its leaders were mostly South Indian brahmins, who kept the movement moving forward, stunning the world with their perceptive disquisitions on the deepest level of consciousness and the worldview that it created in those who had experienced it. It is not surprising that, seeing oneness and nothing else, their attention was not directed to the issues of how to deal with others, especially people of different castes and ethnic groups, of which India has an astounding number. In proceeding in this way these brahmins were actually fulfilling their dharma or code of conduct which prescribed for them precisely what they were doing—investigating the deepest levels of consciousness accessible to human understanding. This was the privilege they had enjoyed from time immemorial, protected by a caste system that had changed very little from pre-Common Era times and had, during the Western invasions become deeply concretized and rigid.

There was a definite downward hierarchy in this system, which held the lower castes and the outcastes or those with no assigned caste, as totally below human concern. Moreover, each caste had its own internal code of ethics, quite different from the others, so that an appeal to a common ethics was not an option. We learn that Müller understood that Shankara, in inculcating Advaita into his monks, relied on the existing brahminical ethical fabric he

could assume had been thoroughly assimilated by the young brahmins who came to him for training (Green, 124), and that he expected them to rise totally above it as they progressed in Advaita to the superconscious state known to them as turiya or the fourth level of consciousness. This of course contrasts with the Western view of the importance of ethics and a more or less common ethics for all, an ideal that Vivekananda sought to establish in India on the basis of the Atman (Gayatriprana, 2020, 155) and the content of spiritual humanism in his first samadhi (Gayatriprana, 2015d).

Although British modernity had indeed loosened up India's archaic social system, it nevertheless persisted at the time of Vivekananda, who would comment—for purposes of demonstrating how things were changing—on the proclivity of the brahmin caste to engage in money-making ventures, so utterly forbidden by caste rules.²² Despite whatever “unity” this caste system could offer the Indians, the fact was that it was based on irrevocable rules and regulations that could only cripple Hindu society and prevent it from acquiring the kind of shared values, flexibility and freedom required to escape the tyranny of materialism and the fundamentalist Christianity that came with the “package”. This scenario is not touched on in Green's book, but it features prominently all through Vivekananda's account of the history of Vedanta (Gayatriprana, 2020).

The net result was that, as far as the Europeans were concerned, the Indians did not have a recognizable system of ethics. They saw their vassals as essentially without morals, weak both physically and ethically (Green, 120). If we factor in this scenario along with the Western *Götterdämmerung*

22 CW, Vol.4: Modern India, 456-457.

at the hands of the materialists, it is clear that finding a solution was going to require brand-new principles and a fail-safe paradigm that could withstand the surging waves of conflict from both India and the West and remain unscathed and ready to take its place in a brand new order, as and when the time came to do so.

The Search for a Solution, East and West

Müller's analysis of this problem as it appeared in the West, was not to blame materialism for the decline in morality, but rather the failure of the churches to support and promote real inner, spiritual work (Green, 117). The resultant, corrosive hypocrisy of religious groups was readily visible, not only to Müller, but also to Vivekananda.²³

Green presents Vivekananda's core view of human ethics as *universal oneness* (Green, 121). *One* was an epithet that up till then had appeared in Vedanta in connection with Brahman—"one without a second" (*Chhandogya Upanishad* 6.2.1). The idea that humanity was itself unitary was not one that had been actively entertained. How could it be, given that there were such radical, divisive categories in India, leading to age-long oppression and deep-seated rivalries, of which Vivekananda himself spoke on many occasions? (Gayatriprana, 2020).

Where could Vivekananda have conceived of human unity? Was it only in the pronouncements of the French Revolution and the resultant Western Europe, as attested by Seal, his university classmate? (Green, 21). In India, where was the pre-existent authority for such a position? Always and ever, it would have to come from the storied Vedic and Vedantic tradition. Here I suggest that we need go no further than look at the very manifesto of Advaita,

23 CW, Vol.7: Letter to Margaret Noble, 7th June, 1896, 498.

the original nostrum on which they were operating, which was, in full: *Brahma satyam jagan mithya, jivo brahmaiva naparah*—"Brahman is the only truth, the world is unreal, **and there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and the individual self.**" Here the statement that the world/human soul is essentially as real as Brahman is rather arresting, raising issues of its place in the overall cosmology of Advaita. How had this insight managed to remain apparently unnoticed for nigh on twelve centuries? One thought that arises is that this insight was how the person who survived *nirvikalpa samadhi* actually saw things in his²⁴ enlightened state. One has to surmise that this affirmation by such people came before its time and the older, world-denying nostrum had held sway by default. If one is able to accept the full impact of *there is ultimately no difference between Brahman and individual self*, the conclusion has to be that the solidarity of humanity is based on the fact that what each and every individual has behind him or her is indeed Brahman, or unfathomable Consciousness.

It seems likely that the rise of the vision of an "involved" Atman energized by Shakti may have helped to open up the idea of the Self as not only supremely meaningful in and of itself, but also as a main player in human experience. Certainly, for Vivekananda the outlook for the entire contemporary world was:

The idea of the Soul is the life-giving thought, the most wonderful. There and there alone is the great thought that is going to revolutionize the world and reconcile the knowledge of the material world with religion.²⁵

However, if the objection arises that this Advaitic nostrum is a very late pronouncement of

24 Only male brahmins were permitted into this tradition.

25 CW, Vol.3: Vedantism, 131

Vedanta, we may look, with Shankara himself, at the pre-existing evidence from the Upanishads. As part of his manifesto Shankara had selected four “great sayings” (*mahavakyas*) that to him said it all. These became canonical in the Advaitic system. I present them here, not in the order he followed (which was based on the authority rank of the Veda each came from), but on what seems like a familiar phenomenological progression (or “evolution”) from the most concrete, objectified and external you, to the interior subjectively experienced I, and on to the Atman, the transcendental entity proposed to lie beyond both in the realm of human understanding; and finally to Brahman, beyond any and all human expression whatsoever:

- I. Tattvamasi: You are That. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.8.7.
- II. Ahambrahmasmi: I am Brahman. *Brihadaranayaka Upanishad*, 1.4.10.
- III. Ayamatra brahma: This Self is Brahman. *Mandukya Upanishad*, 2.--
- IV. Prajnanam brahma: Brahman is intelligence. *Aitareya Upanishad*, 3.1.3.

These sayings come from one of the oldest of the major Upanishads (*Chhandogya Upanishad*) to what is possibly one of the latest (*Mandukya Upanishad*), and between them cover the gamut of possible “divinities” that we may experience.

When we try to place these highly subjective insights into the structure of the human being and their implications for not only the life of the individual, but for how he or she interacts with other entities, we can more readily understand why Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, living on the doorstep of the Western Depression and two World Wars, were not interested

in simply falling into line with the Western model, built on the notion of humanity as other than the divine and therefore highly subject to all manner of failings, if not crimes on a global scale.

For Vivekananda, the ultimate weapon against Utilitarianism was the experience of the superconscious (Green, 121), on the experience of which the whole Vedantic tradition was predicated and built. He dwells with some frequency on his conception of consciousness in his classes on the yoga of meditation, and defines for us the phenomenology of superconsciousness and how it relates to the other structures of the psyche in Vedanta:

Prana is the vital force in every being, and the finest and highest action of prana is thought. This thought, again, as we see, is not all. There is also a sort of thought which we call instinct or unconscious thought, the lowest plane of action. . . . All reflex actions of the body belong to this plane of thought. There is then a still higher plane of thought, the conscious: I reason, I judge, I see the pros and cons of certain things, yet that is not all. We know that reason is limited. . . . Yet at the same time we find facts rush into this circle. Like the coming of comets certain things come into this circle; and it is certain they come from outside this limit, although our reason cannot go beyond. The causes of the phenomena [in] truding themselves in this small limit are outside of this limit. . . . The mind can exist on a still higher plane, the superconscious. When the mind has attained that state, which is called samadhi—perfect concentration, superconsciousness—it goes beyond the limits of reason and comes face to face with facts which no instinct or reason can ever know. All the manipulations

of the subtle forces of the body, the different manifestations of prana, if trained, give a push to the mind, and the mind goes up higher and becomes superconscious, and from that plane it acts (Vivekananda, 1896, 17).²⁶

This statement is, in effect, a presentation in contemporary psychological language of the chatuspad, how it is accessed, and how the overall process is in fact an “evolution” of consciousness.

Müller agreed with Vivekananda that in the late nineteenth century only such transcendence could salvage existing religion in both India and the West, so severely had reductionistic science and especially the materialistic theory of evolution undermined not only the structures of consciousness that had underlain previous cultures, but also the traditional moral values that had been part and parcel of them [even if more “honored in the breach than in the observance” (Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act I, Scene 4)].

It also appears that Müller himself was convinced across the board that the standpoint of Classical Advaita was ultimately incapable of resolving the problem of ethics on account of its maintenance of the immovable barrier it had set between the world and Brahman from the very beginning. A student of Kant, he did see some hope in Kant’s perception that beyond the human mind there was a *ding an sich* (thing in itself) which Müller was prepared to compare to Brahman (Green, 127). He did not, however, have any means to suggest how that could be built upon, either from Advaita or from Kant.

For his part, Vivekananda had gone through the mill of Western materialism in his formal education and been taken through depth experience of Vedanta by Ramakrishna. From his superconscious

experiences (*samadhis*) along the way it had become increasingly clear to him that there was a way to pass beyond all of the paradoxes and obstacles that seemed to block any onward path of investigation and to emerge with a radical solution from within the system that would demonstrate a path, not only to the transcendence that the West so eagerly sought, but also to how the Indians could “precipitate out” from what we might call the quantum potential they had built up over millennia in their practices the external forms that best embodied and manifested the meanings of their core beliefs. These included the mahavakyas described above, in a material way and for the benefit of all. Once again, we see Müller refine and articulate a problem and Vivekananda come forward with a methodology to address the issue.

Thou Art That to the Rescue

Tension was building on both sides of the issue. The West demanded a Vedantic answer to the Abrahamic “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10.27, referring back to Leviticus in the Old Testament), a central pillar of Abrahamic religion. Although again honored more in the breach, this was a central point of inspiration for idealist Europeans, and they sought in vain to find anything that seemed to reflect, far less contain it, in Classical Advaita, of which the stern rejection of anything other than Brahman rendered such sentiments not only impossible but non-existent.

The public *dénouement* on the whole subject occurred in Bombay on the 25th of February, 1893. At the Royal Asiatic Society Paul Deussen, Professor of Philosophy at Kiel University in Germany, delivered a lecture in which he stated that, though the wonderful injunction to love one’s neighbor as

26 CW, Vol.1: Raja-Yoga, Chapter III: Prana, 150.

oneself was the high point of Christian morality, no reason for doing so had been presented in the Bible, still subject, as he remarked, to “Semitic realism”. Given that loving one’s neighbor as oneself is asking that we involve ourselves in the pain of others that is not our own, the question still remained: why? Then came his answer (Green, 130):

[The answer] is in the Veda, is in the great formula *tat tvam asi* [you are That], which gives us in three words metaphysics and morals all together. You shall love others as yourselves because you are your neighbor, and mere illusion makes you believe that your neighbor is something different from yourselves.

In this statement Deussen is pointing to the Atman/Brahman within every human being, or indeed anything else at all, and also to the Advaitic belief that it is we who determine the validity and value of anything by our own way of thinking, what the Advaitins called illusion. Vivekananda, however, accepted all percepts as valid within our own realm of consciousness: as and when we see another as a manifestation of the Atman, we experience the same Atman within ourselves and realize that we are one with what we had previously seen as “other”.

To almost any Westerner at that time this formula must have appeared extremely esoteric if not meaningless, but it had the virtue of basing its claim on the experience of one human individual in direct relationship with another, which is, of course, much more pragmatic and humanistic than invoking or denying an external deity in any way. As such, it had the potential to appeal to the large number of people who were disillusioned with theistic religion and were seeking for an alternative. In its reference to “illusion” it also raises indirectly the issue of

how to get rid of illusion: yoga or conscious self-transformation, which at that time was by no means a mainstream idea.

This message, with all of its apparent freshness, was to become a kind of beach ball for German philosophers. Green informs us that Deussen’s idea had been generated by his teacher Schopenhauer (1788-1860), a philosopher with a huge influence on German philosophy up to the present, who explicitly mentioned *tattvamasi* as what he saw as a precursor to his own insights. Green then proceeds to Vivekananda’s response, to a large extent through the eyes of the German Indologist, Paul Hacker (1913-1979), who carried a strong portfolio for Christianity and European philosophy (Green, 131 fn). Hacker “disputed the philosophical cogency of Vivekananda’s ethics” and claimed that Vivekananda’s views on *tattvamasi* were derived from those of Deussen. He based this view on the fact that on meeting Vivekananda in Kiel on September 9, 1896, Deussen presented a copy of his 1893 lecture in Bombay, and on the purported fact that the first recorded mention of *tattvamasi* in Vivekananda’s work was no earlier than September of 1896.

On the evidence Green produces he concludes that it is proven that Vivekananda did not acquire the notion of That as the foundation of ethics from Deussen, but he does raise the issue of how he did indeed do so (Green, 135).

Though apparently unknown to both Müller and Green, Ramakrishna himself had given the clue to Vivekananda in 1884 when discussing the practice of a devotional Hindu group of “showing compassion to all beings”. Ramakrishna had remarked:

Talk of compassion to beings? Will you—little animals—bestow compassion on beings? You wretch, who are you to bestow it? No, no! Not compassion to jivas [embodied souls], but service to them as Shiva [the disembodied divine].

This remark affected the young Vivekananda profoundly and he said to his friends:

Let people do everything they are doing; there is no harm in that. It is sufficient for them, first to be fully convinced that it is God that exists, manifested before them as the universe and all the beings in it. . . . All are He Himself. . . . Can there be an occasion for them to regard themselves as superior to them or to cherish anger and hatred for them, or an arrogant attitude—and yes, even to be kind to them? Thus serving [embodied souls as the divine], their hearts will be purified and they will be convinced in a short time that they are parts of the [divine], the eternally pure, awake, free, and absolute Bliss (Saradananda, 1952, 821-822).

Although these statements do not carry the formal mantra *tattvamasi*, they spell out its meaning and point to the realization of one's own divinity in compassionate service that is the whole rationale of Integral ethics and Vedanta. More or less encapsulating what Vivekananda had learned in 1884, Green carries his line of thought into the conclusion that it is precisely this immanence that is the motive to work itself (Green, 133). Concluding this thought from an even later presentation, Green presents from the Practical Vedanta that Vivekananda brought out in London of November 1896, a kind of manifesto before returning to India, suggesting that the idea has progressed, perhaps to its final conclusion:

If you cannot worship your brother man, the manifested God²⁷, how can you worship a God who is unmanifested? . . . I shall call you religious from the moment that you begin to see God in men and women, and then you will understand what is meant by turning the left cheek to the person who strikes the right (Green, 135).

Vivekananda and Tattvamasi

On the basis of Ramakrishna's statement and Vivekananda's espousal of its content, it seems rather obvious that Vivekananda had the ethical insight of Integral Vedanta instilled into his soul some eight years before Deussen had his epiphany and twelve before meeting him. Historical priority, however, is not of primary importance. What is important is that these contemporaries on two different sides of the East-West cultural divide arrived at a similar insight into a crucial issue of the modern world. Just for the information of readers and to clarify further Vivekananda's familiarity with the core texts of Vedanta as well as how his teachings developed over time, I shall now take a short excursion into Vivekananda's relationship with this "*opening salvo*" of the whole array of Vedantic great sayings.

I select these from the database on which I rest all of my work—the compilation I made of Swami Vivekananda's quotes of and commentaries on the Vedas, Upanishads, and *Bhagavadgita*, as yet unpublished²⁸. Between 1892-1901, the period when his work was recorded, he quoted *tattvamasi* seventy-two times, and discussed its content without an actual quote seventeen times. The distribution favored the West (57 quotes out of the total of 72).

27 In the West, Vivekananda usually used the familiar term God rather than Atman or Brahman, to comply with Victorian usage.

28 But due to be posted on Academia ASAP.

This discrepancy in numbers with India may well be due to the paucity of records in India before 1897. It is, however, true that some major mantras received a substantial majority in either India or the West. The content of the mantra usually indicates why it was used in that way. Western predominance with *tattvamasi* could well indicate that Vivekananda saw more need for it in the West than in India, where he tends to comment more on its importance conceptually than to its experiential import. In both locations there is evidence of his progression of thought on the mantra. In that setting, and to conserve space, I shall focus here on the statements made in the West.

As I discuss in my doctoral thesis (2013, 887-1067), although themes such as this occurred all the way through Vivekananda's work in both India and in the West, his mode of presentation differed according to the audiences to whom he was speaking. As it happened, he encountered five different types of audience over the ten years of his teaching, again in both India and the West. First came audiences with no familiarity with his form of Vedanta, to whom he spoke in more or less popular, didactic mode. To them he gave out the mantra in a public address reported in a Chicago newspaper on December 23, 1893, (Chaudhuri, 2000, 45)—ten months after Deussen's report in Bombay.

Then came serious students who wished to go deeper and who committed themselves to self-transformation under his guidance. In February of 1896 he said in a class lecture in New York City, summarizing his teachings of the winter:

If one millionth part of the men and women who live in this world would simply sit down and for a few minutes say, "You are all God, O

you men and women and O, you animals and living beings; you are all the manifestations of the one, living deity!"—the whole world would be changed in half an hour. . . . The time is coming when these thoughts will be cast abroad over the whole world. . . . They may become the common property of the saint and the sinner, of men and women and children, of the learned and of the ignorant. They will then permeate the atmosphere of the world, and the very air that we breathe will say with every one of its pulsations, "You are That", and the whole universe with its myriads of suns and moons, through everything that speaks, with one voice will say, "You are That."²⁹

At the third stage he encountered and engaged with the intellectuals who had raised such issues as *maya*. In this area he interacted with the professors and students of philosophy at Harvard University. It seems entirely probable that the issue of ethics and Deussen had been raised with him by his close friend Professor William James, who had known Vivekananda since 1894. Vivekananda was moved to express his views in Boston on March 28, 1896:

The Vedanta claims that there has not been one religious inspiration, one manifestation of the divine in humanity, however great, but it has been the expression of that infinite oneness in human nature, and all that we call ethics and morality and doing good to others is also but the manifestation of this oneness. There are moments when we feel that we are one with the universe, and we rush forth to express it, whether we know it or not. This expression of oneness is what we call love and sympathy, and

29 CW, Vol.2: The Real and the Apparent Man, 287-288.

it is the basis of all our ethics and morality. This is summed up in the Vedantic philosophy by the celebrated aphorism, *tattvamasi*, you are That.³⁰

While we see the same insights as before, they are framed in a more formal context of ethics and morality, about which Vivekananda would speak, but not usually as formally and not explicitly related to *tattvamasi*. It seems likely that there had indeed been some input from his distinguished academic colleagues on the subject.

About six months later Vivekananda met Deussen in Kiel and received from the professor his written thoughts and no doubt a rousing disquisition on his important discovery. He then returned to London and resumed his teaching with his group of highly educated and professional followers. After an intensive course on *maya*, he moved in November of that year to what he called Practical Vedanta. At this fourth stage of his Western work, he not only tied together all that he had said and done in his work thus far, but also gave them a glimpse into the “attractor” at the core—the direct experience of What Is, Ultimate Reality, Brahman, Turiya, or Atman. It is from that fourth period that the following quotation is taken:

In all our actions we have to judge whether it is making for diversity or for oneness. If for diversity, we have to give it up. But if it makes for oneness, we are sure it is good. So with our thoughts—we have to decide whether they make for disintegration, multiplicity, or for oneness, binding soul to soul and bringing one influence to bear. If they do this, we will take them up, and if not, we will throw them off as criminal.

The whole idea of ethics is that it does not depend on anything unknowable, it does not teach anything unknown, but in the language of the Upanishad, “The God whom you worship as an unknown God, the same I preach to you.” If this is not preaching a practical God, how else could you preach a practical God? Where is there a more practical God than he whom I see before me—a God omnipresent, in every being, more real than our senses?³¹

These words express his vision of the direct experience and meaning of the mantra in actual, lived reality.

However, unlike Classical Vedanta this was not the final word. After a sojourn in India from 1897-1899 Vivekananda returned to the West and remained for over a year. On this occasion he stayed in California, where all manner of New Thought was circulating widely and many people had already taken up serious meditation practice. There his work was focused on much more transcendental issues, especially the issue of how not only is the part in the whole, but the Whole is in the part and can be made visible in an examined and transformed life. As a sample of this phase:

As the power of the kundalini rises from one center to another in the spine, it changes the senses and you begin to see this world as another—it is heaven. You cannot talk. Then the kundalini goes down to the lower centers. You are again human until the kundalini reaches the brain, all the centers have been passed, and the whole vision vanishes and you perceive nothing but the one Existence. You are God. All heavens you make out of That, all worlds out of That.

That is the one Existence. Nothing else exists.³²

31 CW, Vol.2: Practical Vedanta I, 304-305

32 CW, Vol.4: Meditation, 237.

30 CW, Vol.1: The Spirit and Influence of Vedanta, 389.

Here Vivekananda speaks of the kundalini, the Tantric version of the chatuspad in that it is based on differentiated levels of consciousness, but without an artificial barrier inserted into it, as in Advaita or reductionist materialism (MacPhail, July 16, 2022). Vivekananda's main discussion about the kundalini is in his presentation of raja yoga given in New York in 1896, where we get a fairly detailed idea of its structure and function. Here, four years later, the emphasis is on the integration of the overall function of the system, in which like the human nervous system that it mirrors, there is the option at all times to move "up" or "down" according to need. Put into the language of self-illumination, both realization ("up") and manifestation ("down") have free play in and of themselves and between each other. And, of course, there is the moment when we realize the culminating truth: You are God. This places the whole process fair and square in the realm of human consciousness and is a rather concrete exemplification of the holism that we see at this stage of Vivekananda's teaching of hololution.

I have gone into this presentation not simply to demonstrate that tattvamasi was no stranger to Vivekananda—in fact, it and the other mahavakyas that point to human divinity in various ways were the backbone of his whole line of thought. I also have tried to demonstrate in a short compass that his teachings about the meaning of the mantra were adapted to the people to whom he was speaking, and over time present an expansion and deeper scope, culminating in a vast, holistic vision for humanity. In the West his initial presentations gave way to a focus on ethics, the issue that was most besetting the European Advaitists around the mid-point of his work there, and took the form of an explicit view on

the subject, then moved that view on in the pattern of thought he was following.

This interpretation of Vivekananda's modus operandi is based on the data and interpretation in my doctoral thesis (MacPhail, 2013) that covers not only ethics but the entire range of human consciousness. In the massive database of my thesis, it was possible to discern that the teachings in the West followed what I call an evolutionary pattern, i.e., from the gross, physical, and outward form of perception to the most interior, transcendental, and on from there to holism, that seamlessly interrelates all into a whole picture. In this present study there are enough items in the West to be able to discern that pattern without too much difficulty. Another striking feature is that for the most part the mode was largely experiential, appealing to the attempt to interiorize their minds and find from within the tremendous energy and inspiration he assured his hearers they would find there. The Indian materials show the mirror-image pattern (involution from the transcendental to the physical), not simply in this mantra, but across all of them. As this dynamic of progression of thought held across all of his work, especially in public, it is advisable always to be clear of the provenance of any of his utterances in place, time, and circumstance. This would help to remove much of the present notion of Vivekananda's lack of cogency and cohesion as well as personal and cultural misunderstandings.

The Reconciliation of Impersonal Ethics with Impersonal Metaphysics and Vivekananda's *Hololution*

In his *assessment* of the whole Hacker-Vivekananda "dialog", Green opines that at every stage of the way Vivekananda never showed a typical

Classical Advaitic approach to the issue of ethics. Rather, he sees him as embracing “an immanentist ontology in which the world is completely suffused and sanctified by the divine presence” (Green, 133). I believe that the evidence I have provided supports that interpretation, at least in a certain mode. As Green points out (Green, 134) Vivekananda’s ethics are not grounded in abstract idealism, but in the vision that God is really present in all things.

After deconstructing the German interpretation of Vivekananda’s position, Green does state that it is still unknown how Vivekananda arrived at what he calls the tattvamasi ethic and claimed to have reconciled impersonal metaphysics with impersonal ethics. Green opines that Vivekananda “compromised something of the transcendence of the Absolute where ethics was concerned” (Green, 137), advocating an intense, volitional struggle to find freedom from the bondage of materialistic fundamentalism. For Green, the import of this approach is that it removes the classical barriers between the Absolute and the human subject, opening up (as we have seen) a kind of evolutionary path that was not a part of Classical Vedanta (Green, 138-139). As Green observes (Green, 139) the combination of an idea of process and development combined with the immanent concept of divinity “allows for a more positive view of engagement in the world than would perhaps be possible for a more orthodox Vedantin” (Green, 139). This is an astute observation that resonates with the idea of vijnana or Integral Vedanta or Holism, in which there is a level beyond the Fourth, where there is an engagement from the experience of the Fourth itself with the other levels on the chatushpad that were traditionally downplayed or even rejected as illusions in Classical Vedanta. In this view, all

levels, including Classical Advaita play a valid role. This is the fifth level that I shall touch on in the final section of this essay.

To conclude, Green’s assessment that Vivekananda developed the tattvamasi ethic on his own terms and not as an uncritical assimilation of Western views (Green, 139) seems quite cogent and rather clear, as I trust my own presentation of the development of Vivekananda’s work over time has indicated. I shall now address Green’s issue of how Vivekananda arrived at the very recondite insight behind his position.

Vivekananda’s Nirvikalpa Samadhi and His Understanding of Hololution.

I have already presented the idea that the fourth level of Vivekananda’s thought is related to Hololution, a concept he gained from his teaching from Ramakrishna immediately after his third samadhi. Thereafter, Vivekananda set his sights on gaining nirvikalpa samadhi, the “gold-standard samadhi” of Advaita Vedanta. To that end he followed the traditional path of studying non-dual texts in depth and discriminating between the real and the unreal with the goal of breaking through, with the power of pure intuition, to the unchanging Reality behind all changes.

Near the beginning of May, 1886, Vivekananda totally broke through the veil of maya and in the fourth level of consciousness attained *nirvikalpa samadhi*. He then knew once and for all who he really was spiritually and saw with total detachment the whole cosmic mechanism as but a play of the elements, coming and going in a hololutionary pattern, the “evolutionary” (matter to spirit) part of which he described thereafter in his poem *The Song of Samadhi*³³ and the involutionary (spirit to matter)

33 CW, Vol.4, 498.

part in *The Hymn of Creation*.³⁴ Arriving at the pure intuition of the fourth level, he now sees the physical world, the imaginal world, and the causal world representing maya—not as “standalone” levels, but as totally interconnected with each other and presenting a progression along which it is possible to pass effortlessly in the mode of either realization or manifestation. This is the progression that Classical Advaita downplayed or to which it even denied validity. If one can suspend “ordinary” Western judgement here, it is possible to acknowledge that this view offers at least a theoretical solution to many if not most of the issues we have dealt with in this chapter.

As to the question how to arrive at such a synthesis? I think that the answer “through intuitive insight” should not be unacceptable, given that so many of the major breakthroughs in materialistic science are due to precisely that. But arriving at such insight is of course the big question. Here I remind readers that the “first” three insights are those which he had experienced internally in Levels I, II, and III in this presentation. These were by no means insignificant in themselves and together they give an indication of the kind of effort and progression involved in interior self-transformation that can conclude with “hitting the jackpot”, at least as far as traditional Vedanta went.

This fourth samadhi is mentioned by Green (Green, 20), more from the standpoint of Vivekananda’s attribution of his knowledge about non-dualism to the experience rather than to what Ramakrishna had taught him. Such a statement would be consistent with the general Indic prioritization of experience over dogma. But whatever the assigned significance, the fact that Green mentions this

34 CW, Vol.4: 497.

samadhi at all demonstrates at least an openness to the experiential side of Vivekananda, though not a detailed study of the phenomena of and conclusions from these experiences.

This type of samadhi is the one that most Westerners, if any, are likely to know about, because many Westerners focus largely on Advaita, where this is the samadhi. A study of the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, the classical text on yoga, however, reveals that there are in fact five classes of samadhi, of which this is the fourth, though not called by the name *nirvikalpa*. As I discuss in my thesis (MacPhail, 2013, 348-369), the samadhis experienced by Vivekananda conform in their essentials and especially on their outcome, to what we find in the Sutras that span dualism to non-dualism, with an adumbration of a fifth samadhi that was beginning to emerge at the turn of the Common Era.

Certainly, at the fourth phase of his teaching Vivekananda stressed particularly the processes of evolution and involution, not as competitors, but as built into the whole cosmic *modus operandi*. These insights are particularly concentrated in his commentaries on *prajnanam brahma* (*Aitareya Upanishad*, 3.1.3): “The Atman is pure Intelligence,”³⁵ one of Shankaracharya’s four great Vedantic sayings (MacPhail, to be published). In that context, Vivekananda makes some quite arresting statements:

Every evolution presupposes an involution. The modern scientist will tell you that you can only get the amount of energy out of a machine which you have previously put into it. . . . If humans are an evolution of a mollusk, then the perfect human being—the Buddha-person, the

35 CW, Vol.6: Lessons on Raja-yoga, 128.

Christ-person—was involved in the mollusk.³⁶

This quote surely makes clear what Vivekananda means by hololution and also that he could not be further from Advaita—or Western thinking—if he tried. In addition, it provides in a very explicit way his conviction that the pinnacle of human evolution is the perfected soul, an idea to which Green drew attention in connection with raja yoga (Green, 24). But that that perfected soul is implicit in all forms of life is quite an arresting idea and certainly food for sustained thought. It certainly would seem to have profound implications for ecology and the extreme necessity for a deeply respectful attitude, not only to human beings, but to all forms of life.

My contention here is that this line of understanding is what lies behind Vivekananda's penchant to think in terms of an array of change and transformation in any subject whatsoever and also to pay attention to the various stages along the array of that subject, as I have indicated in his quotes on *tattvamasī*. Within that framework ethics is a definite item of interest, no doubt supported by his awareness of the need for Advaita to present such a system if it were going to catch on in the West. But just how that idea is expressed relates to the stage in the progression of his thought, which in turn relates to his responses to the actual groups of people he was interacting with. As I discuss in my thesis (MacPhail, 2013, 990-1067), it is rather striking how the responses of the five groups of people attracted to him, both in the West and in India, fell into the same pattern of consciousness development as he himself had gone through in his training from Ramakrishna. It is, therefore, possible to discern the same overall pattern of transmission as took place in the interaction of

himself as a young man and Ramakrishna. Although this may sound like a rather far-fetched hypothesis, in my own experience reading his work in the proper framework of locality (East or West), topic (related to the level of his hearers), and precise time served to remove from my own mind the confusion and doubt that reading the materials at random had created. It was as if a holographic mass of squiggles suddenly fell into an organized, coherent three-dimensional image when I looked at it with unfocused eyes and slowly moved it further away in my focus of vision.

Chapter 5 and Level V: Ramakrishna, Vedanta, and the Essence of Hinduism and Holism/Vijnana

In this last chapter, which I have aligned with Holism or Vijnana in Vivekananda's worldview, Green puts the spotlight on Ramakrishna, the link that connected Vivekananda to Müller. He presents us with a bird's-eye view of how Vivekananda's interpretation of Ramakrishna's meaning seemed to evolve over time and also raises some of the issues that beset the Western mind in response:

1. The apparent disconnect between Ramakrishna's recorded sayings and Vivekananda's patent agenda. As Green reports:

Vivekananda's interpretation of his guru Ramakrishna was at least the product of very different concerns and ideology from [Ramakrishna's], with some arguing that Vivekananda's teachings distort or even contradict those of his master (Green, 141).

2. The suspicion that Vivekananda's thought was directly influenced by Western rather than purely Hindu memes. In Müller's day the suspicion was that Vivekananda embraced some of the teachings of Theosophy (Green, 163-166).

36 CW, Vol.2: The Real Nature of Man, 74-75.

3. A deep distrust of the paranormal elements in some of Vivekananda's presentations (Green, 163-166).

The First Difficulty: The Relationship between Sri Ramakrishna's Teachings and Those of Swami Vivekananda

The skewed perceptions of Vivekananda include what we have studied in Green's book—Vivekananda is an "Advaita Vedantin" and on the other he is involved in "Western" social work. Ramakrishna, for his part, is pigeon-holed as a loveable pietist (Green, p.111), conforming to mainstream devotional Hindu views, more concerned with the personal yogic development of his followers than with aspirations to social change and secular reforms (Green, 118-119). This is one of the central issues on which both Westerners and Indians build their case that Vivekananda, a social changer par excellence, had an agenda different from Ramakrishna's. However, if one goes deeper, particularly into Vivekananda's work, the criticism was not of social service per se but of Indians rushing in to perform it in Western style without—like the West itself—having developed the spiritual maturity to do it as a spiritual practice, as an act of worship of the living, human God, as developed in *tattvamasi*.

In Green, 144 the idea is put forward that the inexpressibility of Ramakrishna's experience gave license for various interpretations. This is very fair, and of course could account for the fact that Vivekananda's path of bringing Vedanta to the secular level was quite within the scope of Ramakrishna's purview. Perhaps another way of saying the same thing is the remark on page 145 that Ramakrishna exemplified the Brahmo idea of unity of religions in an experiential way. This angle sees the situation

from the standpoint of a unifying experience that holds all the religious traditions harmoniously, without minimizing or distorting any of them—a designation I would call *holistic, integral, or vijñana*, coming from a level beyond the Fourth. Such a level draws all "previous" levels, including the Fourth, into a total picture in which each level is valid and important on its own terms. In introducing this encompassing vision, Green (Green, 8) perceives the *Gospel of Ramakrishna* as a bilingual dialog between Indian philosophy and European logic. From another point of view—existential and equally valid—it is a record of how Ramakrishna adjusted his position to multiple different people and groups, espousing whatever views they held in order to work with them from where they stood. His interlocutors leave, invariably fully satisfied and with fresh insights into their religious views and commitments.

In the context of conceptually relating to all forms in and through an internal experience/principle, I would add here Green's insight into Müller's work that he tended to see that all religions, including that of Ramakrishna, could be reduced to the same pattern (Green, 54). This somewhat restrictive view is juxtaposed on the same page to the view of Glyn Richards (1994, 112) that Vivekananda's view of religion was "that religion was one in essence, but diverse in manifestation." In addition to being a more flexible insight, this view has the merit of echoing the mantra from the *Rig Veda* 1.164.46, probably thousands of years old, *ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti*: That which exists is one; sages call it variously.³⁷ As I bring out in MacPhail, 2017 105, this is the Indian version of what is known as the invariance principle in the West. Vivekananda quoted and commented on this mantra extensively

³⁷ CW, Vol.8: Discourses on Jnana-Yoga, 12.

in both India and the West, conveying the sense of the insight he had gotten from Ramakrishna on the subject (MacPhail, 2022).

On the basis of Vivekananda's view of his "salvation" by Ramakrishna Green thinks that Vivekananda saw Ramakrishna more as the regenerator of spirituality through direct experience (Green, 149) than as a propounder of any specific faith (Green, 147). These views are, of course, entirely consonant with the ekam sat mantra and the invariance principle, from a grasp of both of which it is possible to deduce the validity and value of any and all sincere and honest traditions. Ramakrishna expressed it in his cordial and understanding reception of adherents of any and all genuine religious traditions, as did Vivekananda. Like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda exhibited in this department, as he had in his yoga presentations, a willingness to embrace the founders and their principles of all the major traditions. In his series of lectures in the Bay Area in 1900, he spoke on Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad,³⁸ a clear temporal progression of the phenomenon of avatar or prophet. His fifth lecture in the series might well have been on Ramakrishna but, true to form, Vivekananda spoke of this integral worldview and its implications rather than about Ramakrishna the person from whom he learned it.³⁹ He held up the cardinal principle of this worldview as "worship of the spirit by the spirit", a Christian injunction (John 4.23-24) that shifts the key of religion to the utmost generality and most encompassing principle imaginable.

38 CW, Vol. 1: Krishna, 437-445.
CW, Vol.8: Buddha's Message to the World, 92-105.
CW, Vol.4: Christ, the Messenger, 138-153.
CW, Vol.1: Mohammed, 481-484.

39 CW, Vol.8: Is Vedanta the Future Religion? 122-141.

Within that principle, Vivekananda engaged with Advaita more or less all the way through his training with Ramakrishna, but as we have seen, his succeeding samadhis brought in more and more integral and integrating vision that allowed for the previously unbending non-dual position to be engaged with the physical human world, the imaginal world and the intellectual world, directly seeing all of these relationships as interrelated and interdependent with each other and with the fourth, intuitional level. This enabled him to valorize karma yoga along with nirvikalpa samadhi, etc. Here we are contemplating the kind of mindset that can handle this wide and apparently disparate array without counterintuitivity, a skill developed by actual experience, not on any logical methodology, though this can help to shape the final presentation.

The insistence on logical coherence restricted to a materialistic frame of reference is of course characteristic of the Western academy and self-evidently is the obstacle to Western understanding of Integral Vedanta, the core of which is authentic, direct experience of the nature of the psyche's different levels and how they can be experienced and seen to work, not as a rigid hierarchy, but as a continuum along which one is free to pass in any direction that is needed.

This ability is accessed in a process of *experiential development*, such as Vivekananda went through at the hands of Ramakrishna. Later, in discussing the notions of dualism, qualified non-dualism, and non-dualism—a classical Vedantic hierarchy—he recognized them all as valid, due to the fact that all of them were of primary importance and of use to different types and levels of mind and psyche. It does not mean that one stage sublates the

others as is the tendency in conceptual thinking, but that one has access to the whole array to rely on and come to one's aid at whatever stage one finds oneself, including sudden moves from one position to the other. The "lesser forms" are not lesser in terms of experience, only of conceptual grasp and classification.

In conclusion, in assessing Vivekananda's profile against that of Ramakrishna what seems to be important is if and how Vivekananda utilizes this "operating system" in the various realms of activity he was called upon to engage with, so different from that of Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna was a traditional Indian holy man, remaining quietly in one spot and waiting for the world to come to him. Vivekananda went out over the whole world and spoke to huge numbers of people, East and West, addressing the issues they were grappling with in the teeth of global "meltdown".

In MacPhail, 2013, 990-1067 I demonstrate that Vivekananda recapitulated with his "students" the same internal pattern and modes of thought as he himself had been shepherded through by Ramakrishna. In both situations he brought about tremendous changes of vision and fresh attitudes to the work that needs to be done to face the re-making of humanity as it starts to emerge from its thralldom to, on the one hand exclusive materialism, and on the other the towering injunctions of Classical Advaita Vedanta.

Cross-Cultural Preconceptions That Can Create Most of the Perceived Difficulties

Before proceeding to Vivekananda's fifth samadhi and an attempt to formalize the worldview it arose from, I here take up points already raised: The distrust of the Indians of Western influences on their

culture, epitomized by the Theosophical Society, and on the entrenched resistance to "supernatural" phenomena in the West.

Müller and Vivekananda lived at a time when the Theosophical movement was at its height. Started and led in 1875 by a Russian medium, Madame Blavatsky, the movement purported to bring Indian wisdom to the West. It was in fact an amalgam of Western Perennialism and Indian customs and inspiring myths about "Great Masters" and "esoteric teachings". It did introduce a form of yoga, possibly the first such Western movement to do so.

As it developed worldwide, its claims to the "supernormal" became more and more difficult to support and various fake "appearances" and "miracles" began to be presented. Müller, along with many other Western serious thinkers, was appalled and repudiated the whole movement. It was this situation that moved Müller to title his pamphlet on Ramakrishna *A Real Mahatman* [great soul] (1896), to distinguish the "real article" from the fake mahatmas of the Theosophists.

In India Vivekananda resisted Theosophy, as he felt it was bringing a Western fantasy to India, where the real need was for Indians themselves to revision and rebuild their own authentic tradition.⁴⁰ In regard to the West, he had a cordial relationship with Annie Besant, the leader of the movement after Blavatsky, and in public acknowledged the movement as preaching the divine-in-humanity, along with luminaries like Confucius, Moses, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, Luther, Calvin, the Sikhs, and Spiritualism.⁴¹

40 Nivedita, Sister. 1910, 254 and CW, Vol.8: Letter to E. T. Sturdy from New York, April 24, 1895, 335.

41 CW, Vol.8: Jnana and Karma, 229.

The more serious difficulty in understanding Ramakrishna in the West was his reported paranormal experiences and behavior. These caused Müller considerable pause, and at times brought out his fears about Theosophical inclinations even in Vivekananda (Green, 162). When Vivekananda had his brother disciples send materials to Müller for his book on Ramakrishna, the professor was quite shocked at the deluge of “paranormal” phenomena they contained. In writing the book he refrained from including most of these and when he did so he attributed it to a “dialogic process” that attributed traditional and mythic properties to the character and behavior of contemporary great people. This was his way of deflecting such information, an implication that Ramakrishna’s disciples were “mystery-mongers” or simply deluded devotees resurrecting ancient myths in their enthusiasm (Burke, 1986, 292-296).

In some ways this was rather ironic, given Müller’s public commitment to Vedanta. For all of its Himalayan philosophy and rhetoric that carried so much impact in the West, the whole structure of Vedanta is built on the stages of interior development and how mastering them results in what the modern West regarded as “superhuman” faculties and abilities (MacPhail, 2015c). In this situation, even Advaita Vedanta—the shrine at which Müller and his contemporaries worshipped—was based on a samadhi, the fourth in an “evolutionary” line of samadhis, each of which not only unleashed tremendous energy, but also a revisioning of the methods needed to attain that samadhi, the unusual phenomena that resulted from it; a formidable philosophy supporting the whole phenomenon; a reorganization of social norms to accommodate all

of the above, and finally maximizing the chances of reaching the next level on the chatuspad.

What was equally ironic is that this whole process was not predicated on the intervention of an extracosmic deity, as in Abrahamism, but largely on the efforts and determination of the subject him or herself. While there are innumerable deities, even in Vedanta, these are usually understood as helps to the central process of self-transformation, ultimately the responsibility of the subject. The basic fact is that spirituality in India was intensely humanistic, unlike the rather fraught dependency in the West on a distant deity whose “decisions” at worst could be just as unfavorable as favorable and human beings were more or less collateral damage.

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate how “paranormal” events (samadhis) were crucial in affecting the insight and decisions of Vivekananda, and in most cases simply cut right through all manner of conceptual speculation and established canards concocted in the West (and also by Westernized Hindus). At the same time, these events also served to harmonize whatever complementarity he was facing and also moved him on in a kind of “saltation” to the next level in the traditional sequence he was being led through.

Vivekananda’s Fifth Samadhi

At this point I turn to Vivekananda’s fifth samadhi with Ramakrishna, which is included in Green’s book (Green, 164), but simply in the context of Vivekananda’s belief in Ramakrishna’s yogic powers—which again, I emphasize, are supported by Indian tradition, especially when they emanate from a life of systematic discipline and efforts at self-transformation.

It took place only months after Vivekananda's nirvikalpa samadhi, a few days before Ramakrishna's death. On this occasion Ramakrishna and Vivekananda went into samadhi together. In the course of the samadhi, Ramakrishna transmitted to Vivekananda "everything that I possess . . . With this power you will do a lot of work for the world and then return" (Green, 163-164). Vivekananda adds, "I think it is this power that makes me just go from this work to that work" (Green, 164).

This samadhi is extremely important as well as remarkable, because it is so unusual in its actual physical enactment of two people in that state together and also it represents what I have termed in my doctoral thesis a "personality/gene/spiritual transplant" (MacPhail, 2013, 413) of the totality of Ramakrishna's highly integral view into Vivekananda, who had managed to move from entrenched humanism to hololution in the space of only five years, and was now capping this achievement by the total transference into his "operating system" of integral/holism, or the total picture that Ramakrishna stood for: Within the Indian tradition the Advaitin was right; so was the yogic meditator, the ecstatic devotee and the work person. As were the followers of all of the other major religions of the world, including the Abrahamic religions.

The word that has been utilized for this ability to accept everything as valid, as Brahman itself, is *vijnana*, knowledge greater than even the intuitive knowledge of Advaita Vedanta, which despite its philosophical grandeur, takes such a narrow view of reality. The meaning and value of *vijnana* have been supported by Arvind Sharma, the contemporary Canadian scholar of Indian philosophy, who suggests that Ramakrishna's *vijnana* was what supervened

after his peak experience of non-dualism, when he perceived that the Brahman experienced in pure non-dualism is also the universe and its living beings (Sharma, 1989, 34).

More recently, Ayon Maharaj (2018, 19-26) [Swami Medhananda] advocates interpretive principles to guide our understanding about Ramakrishna's mindset, from which I select those that I have not emphasized thus far (Ibid., 27-45, paraphrased and annotated by myself):

1. Reality is both personal and impersonal, inseparably interconnected (such as Brahman and Kali).
2. There are two levels of Advaitic realization: the world-denying acosmic view of the classic Advaitists, and beyond that view, the world-affirming view of *vijnana* based on the principle that all this is Brahman [to be seen, experienced, enjoyed and served.]
3. Ramakrishna stated that the *vijnani*, unlike the non-dual *jnani*, is capable of "attaining various forms of union with God—on different planes of consciousness, all of which are true." [These I take to be the classical *chatuspad* plus the fifth or *vijnani* level.]
4. *Vijnana* Vedanta is the formal expression of this experience/frame of mind. "Seeing God with open eyes", it accepts that the eternal and the temporal are both true and sees that any or all attitudes to Reality are intrinsically true and lead to final realization of Reality itself. [Maharaj comments on how Ramakrishna and Vivekananda especially emphasize compassion and service to all beings without distinction. I would add that all the way through the *Gospel*

of *Sri Ramakrishna* and Vivekananda's works, the emphasis is very heavily on the sincerity and honesty of anyone's physical and spiritual life. This is the sine qua non of understanding this new "liberated" worldview and without borders for all practical purposes: the whole thing depends on the caliber of its adherents and followers.]

Vivekananda himself used the term *vijnana* only once and described it as:

Knowledge absolute means not the knowledge we know, not intelligence, not reason, not instinct, but that which when it becomes manifested we call by these names. When that Knowledge Absolute becomes limited we call it intuition, and when it becomes still more limited we call it reason, instinct, etc. That Knowledge Absolute is *vijnana*. The nearest translation of it is all-knowingness. There is no combination in it. It is the nature of the Soul (Vivekananda, 1907, 83-84).⁴²

This gives us a hint of the level Vivekananda operated from, but it is in his commentary on *Sarvam khalvidam brahma*: All this is verily Brahman (*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 3.14.1) that we really glimpse what it meant to him. This mantra is one of the oft-quoted in Vivekananda's work.

Here I present the concluding materials of his thoughts on this mantra in the West:

May I be born again and again, and suffer thousands of miseries so that I can worship the only God that exists, the only God I believe in—the sum total of all souls. Above all, my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races, of all species is the

42 CW, Vol.2: *Sankhya and Vedanta*, 459.

special object of my worship.⁴³

Then, toward the end of his life, writing to a close Indian friend:

From highest Brahman to the yonder worm,
And to the very minutest atom,
Everywhere is the same God, the All-Love!
Friend, offer mind, soul, body at their feet.⁴⁴

In my own work, I opted to name the study as one of Integral Vedanta or *turiyatita*, the latter name given in Kashmir Shaivism to a level "beyond" the Fourth as far back as probably the beginning of the second millennium of the Common Era (Lakshman Jee, 1988, 83). Pinpointing and documenting at length the innumerable conversations between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, it is clear that Ramakrishna took Vivekananda through all of the already established levels and overtly introduced him to *vijnana*, ranging in mood through work, devotion, meditation and pure non-dual self-knowledge and finally integral knowledge. These facts seem to offer an exemplification of *vijnana* in action: conveying realized truth in far more than one "tongue", according to the person Ramakrishna was talking to. And with Vivekananda it was the full, "unexpurgated" version, which could be a reason why many—especially those partial to devotion—perceive him as deviating from Ramakrishna's testimony.

MATRICES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

An Attempt to Integrate All Elements of Integral/ *Vijnana Vedanta*

As I studied this large database, I noted that Ramakrishna did not take Vivekananda along the five quite different levels in a sequential historical pattern, but in an amazing *combination of all of them together* in an ontological array—no doubt a feature

43 CW, Vol.5: Letter to Mary Hale, July 9, 1897, 136-137.

44 CW, Vol.4: To a Friend, 496

of Ramakrishna’s own holistic consciousness, which is represented in Figure 1. As such, each created a “horizontal” conceptual context or field that was retained throughout the whole process. This was, of course, a major challenge for Vivekananda, espoused as he was at the beginning to materialistic Western thought that has placed an immovable barrier above materialism (represented here as humanism) itself. And also, of course, the barrier placed by the Advaitists between the contexts of maya (III) and hololution (IV).

What bonded all of these potentially incompatible levels together was a second dynamic that could be traced in the voluminous literature available for this study: a historical process of inducting Vivekananda within the ontological, atemporal, “horizontal” array into the actual historical experience of a gamut of

five consecutive states of consciousness, the overall content of which echoes the context of the spectrum of levels. Analysis showed that the content of each state impacted the entire array of levels in sequence: State 1 content appeared in the first cell of each of the levels, State 2 in the second cell, and so on. The overall impact was that the state experiences transected in sequence the array of levels to create a 5x5 matriceal dynamic, introducing into the basic framework of an array of context the *experiential content* that gives a progression of meaning to the context, culminating within each level in a samadhi that transcends both concept and experience and opens out a space where a radically new combination of context and content is possible. Figure 2 gives an idea how I integrated these two major aspects of the study :

Figure 1: The Five Conceptual Contexts of Ramakrishna’s Transmission to Vivekananda

Conceptual Level/ Context	Contextual “Fields” throughout Vivekananda’s Training
V Holism/Vijnana	V
IV Hololution	IV
III Maya as an Attitude of Mind	III
II Yoga as a Science	II
I Spiritual Humanism	I

Figure 1: The Five Conceptual Contexts of Ramakrishna’s Transmission to Vivekananda

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This is a matrix of consciousness, showing the “vertical” (atemporal) ontological hierarchy of levels and the “horizontal” (temporal) exegetical progression of states of consciousness. I arrived at this intuitively as this work was done ten to fifteen years prior to the publication of Ken Wilber’s “lattice” (2006) that offers a similar arrangement, but within a much more Western, conceptual context. Nor was I familiar at the time with the materials in Kashmir Shaivism (Lakshman, 1988, 73-85 and MacPhail, 2018, 61) and Sri Aurobindo’s work (Banerji, 2012) that lend themselves to this analysis, far less with the astounding 2x2 and 3x3 “proto-matrices” of consciousness tentatively put forward in the 6th to 7th Century CE by none other than Shankaracharya and Sureshwaracharya (Fort, 1990, 39, 68, fn51), the arch-proponents of the unimportance of stages 1-3, all of them “tainted” by including the physical world to some extent in their purview.

Overall, the matrices are bringing together within the same system two closely related elements—concept and experience—apparently

different, but actually complementary in the sense of quantum theory (Römer and Walach, 2011). In the context of the interplay of bra (stored experience) and ket (immediate experience), I (MacPhail, 2018) go into more detail about these elements in the construction of the matrices. This conjunction gives us an impression of how all the parts that occur in the construction of the matrix are related to each other concept-wise and also “numerically”, thus giving a sense of the overall interrelatedness of all of the elements in Integral Vedanta. In short, a possible map that could help in sorting out the counterintuitive issues that we are contemplating in this chapter.

Bringing all of the elements involved in the Ramakrishna/Vivekananda transmission into a matriceal pattern permits us to trace the stepwise progressions of meaning within each level as also how the context of each level influences the way the content is presented. The degree of “agreement” between level and state at any cell/conjunction determines just how that cell plays a role in the

overall development of each level and, indeed, over the entire matrices. In that connection, in this general layout five sequential cells show bolding of the interacting components (I.1, II.2, etc.) This indicates the cells at which samadhi occurred. In effect, it is the conjunction of a conceptual level with the experiential state at the same point in their respective progressions.

■ The Genesis of Samadhi and Its Various Forms

These samadhis are discussed by Vivekananda in his reading of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, the all-time authority on such matters. In Chapter III, verse 4 we learn of samyama, the state in which a person "can direct the mind to any particular object and fix it there for a long time, *separating the object from the internal part.*"⁴⁵ This state is in fact the culmination of a three-step process: *dharana*—holding the mind to a particular object (Ibid, 270); *dhyana*—an unbroken flow of knowledge in that object meditation (Ibid.); and *samadhi*—when meditation on all CW, Vol.1: Raja-Yoga: Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms, 271. My italics forms is given up and one perceives only the internal sensations, the meaning, unexpressed in any form (Ibid., 270-271).

The text goes on to explore several contexts, from physical matter to the most interior awareness and lays out the outcome of samyama in each, i.e. the import of the samadhi at each level. When the object of the exercise is physical, the import of the samadhi will be physical, when mental, mental, and so on. I present these ideas in a very abbreviated form in MacPhail, 2015c. But no matter which level is dealt with, the result of samadhi will be to acquire total

control of that level and the manifestation of highly supranormal power within the level itself, including levitations, control of other minds and suchlike, which were no doubt what Müller had qualms about. There is a large anecdotal literature about all of this (including Shankara's rather spectacular abilities along these lines).

Another recent approach related to samadhi lies in contemporary attempts to explain non-local events in the human psyche, which bring forward demonstrable paranormal phenomena (Walach et al., 2009, 277-308). These can be equated qualitatively with what was observed in connection with the various samadhis in the works of Patanjali (MacPhail, 2015c). Just how these pieces of information can be utilized to demonstrate and investigate such phenomena at this time of general disbelief is hard to see. The most striking fact is that subjects in whom to study such phenomena are probably vanishingly rare. These would need to be people with the capabilities and skills and discipline necessary to demonstrate them convincingly. As well as, it goes without saying, investigators who are open to and thoroughly conversant with the whole "program".

In Vedanta, however, these paranormal skills are not considered of importance. Indeed, perhaps it was the prevalence of them in the days of founding Advaita that moved the Advaitins to deconstruct the "lower" levels in the first place. And, on the other side, perhaps it was the superior discipline and concentration of mind that gave us Newton, Planck, Einstein and the quantum physicists, the whole galaxy of Western science including psychology and parapsychology, unfortunately disconnected from this powerful interior science of the mind developed in India before the turn of the Common Era.

45 CW, Vol.1: Raja-Yoga: Patanjali's Yoga Aphorisms, 271. My italics.

The philosophy behind this remarkable data sees the final liberation as one of aloneness, realizing that ultimately we are totally other than any external object or process, identified with the reality of ultimate meaning which became Brahman or the Atman in Advaita Vedanta. What Integral Vedanta now offers is that we are dealing with a bipartite reality—the static (Brahman) and the active (Shakti), both of which we ourselves generate in our own heads—and it is up to us to find the point of balance between them in any event whatsoever. The more grounded we are in the Atman, which I suggest is “the wavicle” within us, the more understanding and control we have over our image of ourselves (the bra element or “static” particle) and all that we have to deal with (the ket element or “dynamic” wave). Such balance helps us to auto-adjust to whatever we have to face. As and when the adjustment across the “map” brings together the concept and experience of the exact same order, we experience samadhi, the “bullseye” of the whole process and what holds the matrices together in the first place.

In addition to this regular pattern, I draw attention to the fact that every level concludes with the fifth state imbuing it with the deepest dimension of meaning, even if the “distance” between the level and state is great across the spectrum/gamut, e.g. Level I/State 5. In this extreme example, samadhi is the starting event (I.1) and the subsequent four cells denote the ongoing deepening of understanding of the event up to I.5, when the holistic or vijnana element is present. The subject has reached the outer limit of his or her level. At present, traditional Vedanta regards as the culminating point nirvikalpa samadhi (IV.4). Interestingly, Medieval Kashmir Shaivism also works with a 4x4 matrix, but terms

IV.4 turiyatita (Lakshman, 1988, 85 and MacPhail, 2018, 61) and defines it as:

Absolute fullness of self, full of consciousness and bliss. Found not only in samadhi, but in each and every activity of the world.

What is remarkable here is the explicit mention of the world as engaged with the whole process, previously considered purely interior by Vedanta.

The interchanges between Ramakrishna and Vivekananda with which I worked definitely include open discussion of vijnana, which is a synonym of turiyatita, and also enough events and statements to trace its meaning right across the matrices. This is a new insight that at present is disputed. Nevertheless, the work of Aurobindo (1872-1950), a junior contemporary of Vivekananda (who was highly influenced by both Ramakrishna and Vivekananda), as presented by Banerji, 2012, provides sufficient independent documentation, albeit largely conceptual, to support the construction of a 5x5 matrix (MacPhail, 2015b).

We may say with regard to State 5 that such a person is perfected in his or her area of work of self-transformation in the level with which he or she is engaged. This dynamic holds all the way up; as the more expanded and integrated levels are reached, it takes longer for samadhi to take place and therefore it occurs closer and closer to “perfection”. In Level V, the final cell is V.5, the occurrence of samadhi and also the final “perfection” in that level. I mention this dynamic in connection with Vivekananda’s blanket vision that any sincere, honest, and sustained effort leads to liberation from what used to be known as “human bondage”.

The basis of this conviction lies in the whole tradition. When discussing the adverse effects of

foreign invasion (**page 4**), I drew attention to the basic Vedantic conviction that whoever knows Brahman becomes Brahman, perhaps a key mantra in the whole system. On **page 17** under a discussion of human experience as the core of spirituality, we see that Vivekananda defended the validity of even “lesser” (dualistic) forms of Vedanta as guaranteeing spiritual liberation. On **page 21** there is Vivekananda’s explicit statement that each and every yoga when properly practiced, guarantees freedom to the human soul. Green himself (45) mentions raja-yoga in that connection. In discussing maya on **page 27**, Vivekananda is interpreted as stating that even within the physical world one can progress from diversity to oneness (“matter” to “spirit”) and thereby attain spiritual liberation. In the light of the matrices, and indeed Vivekananda’s whole presentation of Vedanta, this goal of “perfection” applies to all combination of levels and states, with the difference that the way that perfection is manifested depends on which level or levels the practicant has done the work in.

As we have already seen, there are other samadhis, perhaps less “exalted” to the untrained eye, but of crucial importance in Vivekananda’s life. These might be trivial to the Advaitin, but in the steps toward nirvikalpa are of first importance in Integral Vedanta. In my doctoral thesis, 2013, I discuss these different samadhis (348-369), the way they are presented by Patanjali (500-200BCE), the authority on the subject of yoga, and how they translate into the events of Vivekananda’s life.

■ **Correspondences between Ramakrishna’s Teaching to Vivekananda and Vivekananda’s to His Students**

Another distinct feature of my study of the data

of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda transmission is that at every step or “node” in the whole process Ramakrishna offered not only an experiential insight or even moment, but also a closely related conceptual one. That could be putting a name on something, a didactic comment or two, an injunction or explanation. This was so regular and striking that I decided to create two matrices; one conceptual and the other experiential in content. As I was bringing in at every cell comments from Vivekananda at the same stage of his own teaching, I noticed that the conceptual entries were from his Indian work and the experiential ones from the West. This is the basis of my often repeated statement about twin matrices, one reflecting the needs and concerns of India and the other of the West. They are related to each other in the complementary mode of concept and experience themselves.

Finally, in bringing in the materials of Vivekananda’s transmission to his students, both Indian and Western, and comparing them to the same stages of his own development of consciousness, his work, both in India and in the West, was a re-enactment of what he had undergone with Ramakrishna (MacPhail, 2013, 877-1067). There naturally were some modifications to allow of the different circumstances, especially that Vivekananda was working with groups rather than with one subject, but the overall dynamic was the same. Here I give a brief overview of how my findings may relate to the discussion here.

First it is apparent that Vivekananda, like Ramakrishna, held up the entire array of ontological levels (contexts) to all of the groups he encountered, no doubt engendering many of the same counterintuitivities he himself had gone through with Ramakrishna. Space here does not permit of

a display of the content of this dynamic, but in my discussion of the development of meaning within tattvamasi (40-42), I made a much-abbreviated demonstration of how, over time and the particular groups that came to Vivekananda,⁴⁶ the meaning of the mantra expanded and deepened over time within the spectrum of levels Vivekananda was presenting to them. On page 45 I comment on how remarkable was the way into which these groups fell into place as in a hologram. But as each group presented a different type of person/state of consciousness, within the gamut of the five different states of consciousness Vivekananda had gone through with Ramakrishna, they were all independent of each other, and the form of the matrices is therefore a series of five vertical, non-contiguous columns, as in Figure 3:

Figure 3: The Replication of “A Matrix” in Vivekananda’s Groups of Students

There I give an impression of the “level characterization” of each group, defined largely by their attitude to Vivekananda and ability to learn from him.

For our purposes here, this re-enactment of the process on which the matrices are based, necessarily means that within each of these horizontal “progressions” across the five groups inevitably there will be one “samadhi” along any given “horizontal” development. As this mode of study involves groups, the occurrence or non-occurrence of individual samadhi is not a relevant item, but I do demonstrate (MacPhail, 2013, 1004-1008) that at the appropriate conjunctions of each group with the level it corresponds to in the spectrum (N.n), there is a major breakthrough, discovery or initiative undertaken, as suggested

⁴⁶ There I give an impression of the “level characterization” of each group, defined largely by their attitude to Vivekananda and ability to learn from him.

on page 48. I take these events as exemplifications within the external world of the interior samadhis that Vivekananda experienced.

These findings surprised even me. If they are found to be cogent, this data is probably the most valid demonstration of Vivekananda’s faithfulness to the holistic operating system Ramakrishna had “installed” in him. Working along this line of evidence and thought may go a long way to resolving the present issues of disconnect, frustration and perhaps even thoughts of Vivekananda’s “apostasy” to Ramakrishna.

Biases in Both India and the West in Reaching Clarity on Vivekananda

Traditionally, the modern West has had trouble with the transcendental realm and India with the concrete; but if both East and West are to come together it is clear that we need a paradigm that covers the whole range of religious or any other kind of perception, experience, and belief from matter to spirit and back again. In the Indian/Western setting of this discussion, the pre-existing norms of each culture automatically rule each other out. The West was hammering out a materialistic paradigm that was to go on to delete as “epiphenomenal” any and all entities but actual physical matter, thereby not only deleting the normal world of dream, creativity, emotion, but also the capacity to discern intelligently what is likely to be real and true, and to condemn intuitional knowledge to the garbage can. In so doing, it was about to plunge the West into relentless devastation of nature and climate, family values, and essentially to pull the plug on any notion of self-respect or respect for others. In India, the shadow of Advaita hung over the country in the notion that the world is essentially unreal, resulting

LEVEL	State 1		State 2		State 3		State 4		State 5
I									
II									
III									
IV									
V									

in a culture that was unable to resist with any force the unending waves of invasion and exploitation that battered India for nearly a millennium. In their own, richly fertile land the Indians were living like slaves and paupers under the Western invaders, deprived of their own tradition of spirituality and self-respect. And, as a final blow, The West was about to totally denaturalize the Indians and make them foreigners in their own land.

At the same time the situation produced other young men like Vivekananda, intelligent, robust and determined to get to the bottom of their culture’s decline and near demise, if necessary using the very Western methods their minds were saturated with. These young men spoke English fluently, had the capacity to probe evidence coherently and effectively and to see that investigation was recorded precisely and efficiently. All that remained to be done was the overthrow of foreign dominance and the production of a paradigm that would help India rebuild itself on its own ancient principles and presuppositions.

But who would “bell the cat” to accomplish this? India’s backbone was nearly broken, and who was there who was really in touch with the deeply buried Indian soul? Although there were great souls like Devendranath Tagore and other highly educated

and revered Indian leaders, their English education made it impossible for any of them to command enough influence to rise about the endless altercation and millennial grudges of caste, philosophy, culture, religion, native and imported, and the effects of the relentless divide and rule policies of the English.

The answer was, quite simply, Ramakrishna, an uneducated, “madman” from a remote village in West Bengal, who spoke only a few English words, refused to go to any kind of school, and went into samadhi at the drop of a hat. But the Brahmo Samaj and especially the young Western-educated men discovered him and found what they were looking for in his enchanting simplicity, forthrightness and utter unconcern for anything but the direct experience of India’s own Reality. This was available to all without the intervention of any priesthood, synod or presbytery. Ramakrishna shone a light that soon percolated through Bengal and over India and was to impinge on the exquisite sensibilities of Max Müller, trained and refined in the workings of the millennial Aryan or Indo-European culture of the inner world, and determined to bring its blessings to the bone-dry soul of the West.

Müller and Vivekananda were united in their appreciation of Ramakrishna’s greatness, though they derived different messages from it—not to

be unexpected, given that the problems they were dealing with were more or less mirror-images of each other. But from the standpoint of this study, what stands out is the nature of the group of young people who, trained to close observation and critical thinking, committed themselves to the observation and scrupulous recording of the phenomena of Ramakrishna's day-to-day life and his profoundly transformative effect upon all of them and in particular, for our purposes, the life of Vivekananda.

My own doctorate is built entirely on this material and has sufficed to discern the key stages and facts of Vivekananda's development and how they relate to the traditional Vedantic criteria of transformation of consciousness along the *chatuspad*—a position most supported by Swami Saradananda, Ramakrishna's primary biographer (MacPhail, 2013, 613-617).

As more and more literature is now appearing that delves systematically into these authentic sources, it seems likely that it will become easier to discern what Vivekananda's motives and intentions were, why he chose to speak and act as he did and how it was possible for him to offer a menu that was able to include so well both India and the West in a harmonious manner, no matter what distortions may have been superimposed on him by political and other interests other than his own. What I feel has made this possible is the remarkable conjunction at a crucial time of such a powerful exhibition of traditional Vedantic experience and culture in Ramakrishna and the Westernization of an unusually fiery, articulate, and executive soul as Vivekananda. It was a kind of nuclear fusion, the import of which has hardly begun to be objectively explored.

This seems to be what Green is trying to

encompass in the notion of immanent monism as the primary influence on Vivekananda, which he does attribute to the influence of Ramakrishna (Green, 84, 133). Vivekananda's *samadhis* 1 through 4 are all compatible with a direct interconnectedness of matter and spirit, though in different "formats" which indicate on each level a deeper and more universal interconnection between the conceptuality and rationalism we associate with the West and the experientialism and ability to interconnect that we respect in Vedanta.

In addition to these "objective" criteria of the influence of Ramakrishna on Vivekananda I also mention here an intensely subjective poem by Vivekananda himself titled *A Song I Sing to Thee*, written in Bengali in June of 1894. Here we see Vivekananda relating to Ramakrishna in the purely human mode, then the transformational mode, followed by *maya*, *holovolution* and finally *holism* (though of course not using such terms), expanding more and more into the universe and this world itself, where Ramakrishna is seen in the direct vision of Reality in a flower, washed with dew, raising its face to the sun.⁴⁷ This material may not be accepted as valid in academic discourse at the moment, but it is nevertheless a very strong and undeniably authentic statement of Vivekananda's bond with Ramakrishna and his work, which totally negates any notion that Vivekananda was operating in anything but the realm of Ramakrishna's vision of Reality.

Trying to peg Vivekananda or Ramakrishna to only one standpoint is bound to create counterintuitivity on both sides of the aisle. What does help to sort this out is precisely the definition of the different contexts, worldviews, or levels that

⁴⁷ CW, Vol.4: *A Song I Sing to Thee*, 511.

can be discerned in both, though certainly more conceptually in Vivekananda. I have not only defined these in my doctoral thesis but also subsequently studied (MacPhail, 2015b) a similar phenomenon in the work of Sri Aurobindo. My personal choice of nomenclature for this state of things is *Integral Vedanta*, partly in recognition of the aptness of the word to the vision of matter and spirit as fully integrated in the experience of the Ground or Brahman in this way of thinking, and partly as a recognition of the work of Aurobindo, to which his academic followers⁴⁸ gave the name Integral Yoga.

■ CONCLUSION

I would characterize *Religion for a Secular Age* as an interesting and inspirational presentation of the levels of thought and work of Max Müller. Green's handling of the inescapable link between Müller and Ramakrishna and Vivekananda is less satisfactory, partially because of a list of Western misconceptions, biases and canards about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda, which Green states quite openly, but without resolving most of them. Some CW, Vol.4: *A Song I Sing to Thee*, 511. Indra Sen and Haridas Chaudhuri. of these could be attributed to the lack of recognizable coherence in the way the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature is currently organized, some to the restriction of Western study primarily to the *Gospel of Ramakrishna*, which for the most part demonstrates only one facet of Ramakrishna, and some to prevailing biases against Indian culture that permeates our Western academy, despite itself. But in this particular book the main issue seems to be that the experiential aspect of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda phenomenon is not adequately covered. Green laudably includes authentic descriptions

48 Indra Sen and Haridas Chaudhuri.

of two of Vivekananda's samadhis (moments of illumination) during his training period, and also the primary experiential biography *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master* in his bibliography, but omits an inner examination of their meaning. Three other key samadhis are entirely omitted which would also, if examined, have thrown considerable light on how the "immanent monism" that Green is forced to bring into service as he goes on, finds support in the transmission of Integral Vedanta from Ramakrishna to Vivekananda.

In the West we expect teachers to remain within one common frame of reference (usually materialism) so that the logical sequences we are called upon to follow are immediately clear, and Occam's razor can be wielded without doing any serious damage. But with Ramakrishna and Vivekananda we are dealing with people who moved effortlessly between five levels of consciousness, the phenomena and logic of each of which are quite different from the others, although put together they present what can be seen as a coherent sequence. These materials fall into patterns fully consistent with all of the previous systems brought forward in the Vedantic tradition, albeit in a totally contemporary and quite fresh mode. As I commented at the beginning of this review, I see Green's own approach as adumbrating at least the thematic structure of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda paradigm, a fact that has made it possible for Green, despite his oft-repeated canards as to Vivekananda's lack of cogency and coherence, to conclude for the most part that Vivekananda's position has a kind of coherence of its own and seems to stand independent of both Müller's theory and also a more sophisticated version of immanence theory. For me, it has made it possible to write this review.

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The Religious Perspective: Dignity as a Foundation for Human Rights Discourse

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The manner in which I am about to begin my paper might surprise you, as I am going to start out so far afield that you might wonder if I am ever going to come within even striking distance of the topic. But they say that, in life, it is not where you start but how you finish that counts.

I start out, like the song of Wordsworth's solitary reaper, with "old unhappy far off things and battles long ago", as long ago as the time of Alexander the Great.

It might not seem exactly auspicious, and in fact even outright unpromising, to commence a discussion of human rights with an incident in the life of Alexander the Great. Perverse you may think I am, but this is exactly what I intend to do. The West of course looks upon Alexander as a great conqueror but many in the East look upon him as no more than

another egregious violator of human rights. A widely read book on Indian history offers the following assessment of Alexander's invasion of India, and I quote:

The general Indian position with reference to the Macedonian invasion is well expressed by Matthew Arnold:

"She let the legions thunder And plunged in Thought again."

The only permanent result of Alexander's campaign was that it opened up communication between Greece and India and paved the way for a more intimate intercourse between the two. And this was achieved at the cost of untold sufferings inflicted upon India—massacre, rapine and plunder on a scale till then without a precedent in her annals. In spite of the halo of romance that Greek writers have woven round the name of Alexander, the historians of India can regard him only as the precursor of the recognized scourges of mankind.¹

¹ Radha Kumud Mookherji, "Foreign Invasions," in R.C. Majumdar, ed. *The Age of Imperial Unity* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1951) p. 53.

Although these scourges detract from, rather than add, to human dignity, nevertheless I would like to propose that Alexander's invasion might help us advance our discussion of human dignity, on the basis of a conversation he had with an Indian king the Greek sources call Porus, whom he defeated in a famous battle at the Hydaspes in 326 B.C. It is a battle studied even now at Westpoint and Sandhurst for the brilliant strategy employed therein by Alexander. We are, however, more concerned with what followed!

After Porus had lost the battle and was captured:

Alexander rode in front of the line with a few of the Companions to meet

Porus; and stopping his horse, he admired his handsome figure and his

stature, which reached somewhat above five cubits. He was also surprised that he did not seem to be cowed in spirit, but advanced to meet him as one brave man would meet another brave man, after having gallantly struggled in defence of his own kingdom against another king. Then indeed Alexander was the first to speak, bidding him say what treatment he would like to receive. The story goes that Porus replied: "Treat me, O Alexander, in a kingly way!" Alexander, being pleased at the expression, said: "For my own sake, O Porus, thou shalt be thus treated; but for thy own sake, do thou demand

what is pleasing to thee!" But Porus said that everything was included in that. Alexander, being still more pleased at this remark, not only granted him the rule over his own Indians, but also added another country to that which he had before, of larger extent than the former. Thus he treated the brave man in a kingly way, and from the time found him faithful in all things.²

Please keep the crucial elements of this conversation in mind. To paraphrase: Alexander to Porus: How do you wish to be treated? Porus to Alexander: As a king treats a king. Alexander to Porus: Elaborate. Porus to Alexander: When I said as a king treats a king, everything was contained in that.

We have there, I dare say, an example of real dignity. But we live in more democratic times and

perhaps that dignity which was once the preserve of kings may now be the possession not just of kings but of commoners as well.

Imagine now a situation in which a dissident is at the mercy of his torturer, and the torturer were to ask him (in dark jest perhaps): "Now how do you wish to be treated," both knowing fully well that the torturer had the power of life and death the dissident. And the dissident were to say: "As a human being should treat another human being". And the torturer were to reply: "Elaborate your point". And dissident were to say: "When I said treat me as a human being should treat another human being, everything was contained in that". I invite you to regard this statement as an expression of human dignity and now join me in exploring it from a religious perspective.

II

Several approaches could be brought to bear on the relationship between religion and human rights—a relationship which could be evaluated either positively or negatively, or, more comprehensively and analytically, as including the possibilities. In this presentation I shall take a *prima facie* positive view of this relationship. I therefore begin by raising the question: In what way can religion be used as a positive resource in human rights discourse?

In framing this question, I have deliberately used the word religion in the singular. So the question I ask is not: In what way can religions be used as a positive resource in human rights discourse. Nor is my question identical with a similar question which one hears raised these days: In what way can world religions be used as a positive resource for human rights. Both of these are rewarding questions. are not the questions I ask now. The question I ask now is: In what way can religion, in the singular, be used

² Majumdar, *The Classical Accounts of India* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Private Ltd. 1981) p. 42 - 43

positively in thinking about human rights.

In my attempt to answer this question I will now try to identify a feature of religion or religious experience in general, which I have found helpful in trying to think about this topic. It is this. Somehow or other, religion links us and the world we live in with the transcendent—to something beyond us. Some have even argued that it is this transcendental dimension of religion which enables us to distinguish religion from ideology. Whether this is so, or what the transcendent is, or even if it is, are questions of immense importance but need not detain us here. I would like to focus on this feature of transcendental linkage alone for the time being, for it seems to me to offer an important clue regarding how we might wish to think about human rights from a religious perspective.

Human rights discourse is at present largely juristic in its orientation. It primarily belongs to the realm of law, though not divorced from considerations of morality. This raises the following question in my mind. Given the way in which human rights discourse has come to dominate normative thinking in the public square: Are human rights strong enough as a concept to bear the heavy weight we are placing on them? For if they are primarily a juristic concept—and you may wish to challenge me on this—then what the law gives, the law can take away. Like the Lord. A society based solely on law is better, but perhaps only marginally better than a society without it. In one the letter of the law might kill, if lawlessness kills in the other. Let me put the matter another way. Suppose the U.N.O. collapses tomorrow and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights becomes a dead letter. Could it not mean that as human beings we have now ceased to possess

human rights?

I sense a danger lurking here, the danger of aspiration becoming overly identified with an expression, a manifestation, of that aspiration, to the point that if the manifestation is compromised the aspiration itself may run the risk of being lost hold of—or at least lost sight of.

It is here that I see merit in introducing a transcendental dimension to the discourse. Such a transcendental dimension pervades religious discourse. At the most abstract level, the reality always transcends any manifestation of reality; at a theistic level, God transcends the universe; at a more concrete level, a religious tradition possesses a quality which exceeds or transcends its contents. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am not trying to smuggle religion in through the back door. What I am trying to do is to take into account the phenomenon described by Professor Charles Taylor as the suppression of ontology in modern pluralist and relativist culture. Let us, for instance, in pursuit of a firmer anchor for the concept of human rights, ask the question: What does a human being's humanity consist of?

Several answers are possible, answers on which even reasonable people might differ, to say nothing of unreasonable people.

The answers which have been offered to this question, in my view, either go too far or don't go far enough. It is tempting to anchor human rights, for instance, in religious or moral discourse. However, religions are characterized by ontological differences and the search for moral universals is beset by various problems so that to search for a religious or moral anchor, in my view, compounds the problem. On the other hand, to place complete confidence in merely a

legal conception of human rights alone, as complete and secure by itself, seems to me to leave too much in the lands of law. Even at a less elevated level, law cannot always be relied on even to secure justice in everyday life, without its ongoing and continuous scrutiny as a means of securing it.

If you are willing to come along with me this far, then, what we need is something less heavenly or lofty than religion or morality, but also less earth-bound or down-to-earth than just law. It is here that I offer my suggestion, not a novel one I am afraid, but one which should be revisited: that human rights be anchored in human dignity. Not in God or morality or merely law—but in the concept of human dignity.

Before proceeding any further I must point out that human dignity as a concept can be related to human rights in a least three ways: 1) human dignity can be regarded as the product of the successful assertion of human rights; 2) or human dignity could be regarded as a partner-concept of human rights. One could then say, for instance, that participation in the political process enhances both human dignity and human rights, and 3) one could also regard human dignity as the source of human rights and consider human rights as flowing from human dignity. When one is operating with such evocative words as human dignity and human rights, which themselves process multiple vectors of meaning, it should not come as a surprise that the relationship among them may be amenable to different patterns.

To clarify my own position, therefore, I will now like to propose my own model which links three concepts: those of human dignity, human rights, and human duties in a specific way. This model emphasizes the last of the three ways in which the two concepts of human dignity and human rights

may be related, namely, human dignity as a source of human rights.

I take my cue from Aristotle's dictum that dignity does not consist in our receiving honours but in our consciousness that we deserve them. If we replace the word honours by right here, then human dignity may be said to consist in our consciousness that we possess, and deserve to possess, human rights, even when they are denied to us. This consciousness is coterminous with our consciousness of being a human being. Lest one feel that this involves splitting a particularly fine conceptual hair with little practical consequence, imagine a black rights activist in chains—she may have been deprived of her rights but she is capable of experiencing and displaying human dignity. This was confirmed by the following news item:

It is worth noting that much of the moral force of the civil-rights era of the early 1960's was achieved by blacks in the South - who, through the dignity and restraint of their personal behaviour in the face of segregation's indignities, managed to transcend and shame - and ultimately defeat - a system designed to humiliate them.³

Once this interiority of human dignity is recognized as a psychic component of our make-up as a human being, which is independent of human rights but of which human rights constitute one particular recognition, then the entire model may be present as follows.

Human dignity inheres in all human beings qua human beings; human rights constitute one expression of it. Human dignity is a quality which is always present in but is also more than and above its various expressions.

Thus, human dignity has to do with dignity which inheres in oneself as a human being and possesses a dimension of interiority as relating to one's self-perception. The external recognition of

3 The Gazette, Montreal, October 4, 1998, p. C6.

this dignity by another constitutes the basis of human rights. Respecting them then devolves on the other party as its duty. In this way, human dignity, human rights, and human duty become intertwined in a web of relationships.

Take two human beings: A and B. Both possess human dignity within themselves in their awareness that they are human beings. B's recognition of this human dignity of A gives rise to A's human rights, which it is B's duty to respect. Similarly, it is A's duty to respect B's human rights, which flow from B's human dignity.

What have we accomplished through this exercise? Let me demonstrate the outcome in terms of beneficiaries and obligors with the help of a classification I owe to Professor Brian LePard. Case 1: beneficiary—infant; obligor—mother. Let us now progressively enlarge the category. Case 2: beneficiary—children; obligor—parents. Case 3: beneficiaries—citizens; obligor—state. Case 4: beneficiaries—all human beings; obligors—all human beings, through rights-duty interface among them generated by the concept of human dignity.

It has been pointed out to me⁴ that the same argument could be made in the parallel idioms of duties rather than rights. Take infants and mothers. The infant has a right to the mother's care, but once the infant grows up and the mother grows old, it becomes the grown-up infant's duty to take care of the mother. Again: children have rights vis-à-vis parents. But it is the duty of grown-up children to take care of their old parents. Again: citizens have rights against the state in normal times; in critical times it becomes the duty of the citizens—even through conscription—to protect the state. Finally, if all human beings have rights in relation to other

4 I owe this insight to Marie Royer.

human beings the same holds true of duties.

III

Now that an outline of human rights discourse, as modelled on human dignity has been presented, one is brought face to face with the inevitable question: how does this privileging of human dignity contribute to human rights discourse, if at all. An obvious advantage is the way in which the concept of human dignity allows one to intermesh rights and duties. Another less obvious, but equally clear-cut, advantage may lie in the fact that the concept of human dignity is similarly able to connect several generations of human rights discourse, those consisting of "'first generation' civic and political rights; 'second generation' social, cultural and economic rights, and 'third generation' environmental and developmental rights"⁵. These are also sometimes referred to as distinct families of rights.⁶ One could venture the opinion, from the perspective of human dignity, that while the first generation rights—or more precisely "those norms therein which relate to physical and civil security (for example, no torture, slavery, [etc.])"⁷ recognize human dignity; the rest enhance or enlarge it. Or one might say that the first generation rights treat human dignity as a noun and those of the succeeding generations treat it as a verb. That said, allow me to move on to make a few more points.

1) The rise of human rights discourse in the West is closely associated with the rise of liberal secular thought. The secular location of this thought has not prevented scholars from wondering whether it might not be capable of a religious extension. As Ninian

5 John Witte, Jr., "Law, Religion, and Human Rights", *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* Vol. 28, No. 1 (Fall 1996) p.13.

6 Gregory Baum, "Human Rights: An Ethical Perspective", *The Ecumenist* (May/June 1994) p. 65.

7 Summer B. Twiss, "Moral Grounds and Plural Cultures: Interpreting Human Rights in the International Community", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 26.2 (Fall 1998) p. 272.

Smart and Sivesh Thakur have pointed out:

An intriguing question arises as to whether differing cultures can arrive at a similar conclusion about rights by rather different routes—some via explicit philosophizing, as with Locke, Kant and others in the West; others by contemplating religious texts and duties (as the Mīmāṃsā and Gītā); others again by exploiting ideas of ritual and performative behaviours towards others (e.g. li in China as a source of rights). It would be a happy outcome if so: since it would allow a confluence model of world society to establish itself—differing civilizations like so many rivers coming together, like the reverse of a delta.⁸

This creates room for suggesting that the idea of human dignity might enable one to build a bridge from the secular to the religious realm. For instance, Louis Henkin begins by claiming an exclusively secular provenance for human dignity when he writes:

The human rights idea and ideology being with an Or value or principle (derived perhaps from Immanuel Kant), the principle of human dignity. Human rights discourse has rooted itself in human dignity and finds its complete justification in that idea. The content of human rights is defined by what is required by human dignity—nothing less, perhaps nothing more.⁹

But he is careful to add parenthetically:

(Some advocates of human rights may derive their commitment to human dignity from religious ideas or assumptions—for example, from the creation of persons by God in the image of God—but the human rights idea itself does not posit any religious basis for human dignity.)¹⁰

The point, however, was destined to break out of the parenthetical cage as well, for Henkin himself goes on to say later on in the same essay:

Indeed some religions have begun to claim to be the source and the foundation, the progenitors, of the human rights idea, of the idea of human dignity that underlies it, of the commitment to justice that pervades its, of the bulk of its content. They have come to see human rights as natural rights rooted in natural law, natural law religiously inspired. The ancestors of the human rights

8 Ninian Smart and Sivesh Thakur, eds., Ethical and Political Dilemmas of Modern India (London: Macmillan Press, 1993) p. xi.

9 Louis Henkin, "Religion, Religions and Human Rights", *Journal of Religious Ethics* 26.2 (Fall 1981) p. 232.

10 Ibid.

idea, we are reminded, were religious Christians (Locke, Kant)— or at least deists (Jefferson). Religions have begun to welcome, and claim, human dignity as a religious principle implicit in teachings concerning the imago dei,

the fatherhood of God, the responsibility of the neighbor. They have claimed as their own the concept of justice and its specifics: criminal justice, distributive justice, justice as fairness; some religions include economic and social rights as religious obligations. The law of some religions has provided ingredients for particular human rights: for example, the right of privacy.¹¹

2) The concept of human dignity allows one to clarify the concept of human rights. Allow me to explain how. The concept of universal human rights— famously enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—suffers from a subtle ambiguity, which pertains to the relationship between the concepts of the individual and the universal. Often the two words are used interchangeably but a significant, if subtle, difference also characterizes them. For instance, three statements can be made of an individual, any individual, such as you or I: 1) that an individual is like no other, that in some sense we all possess a unique identity; 2) that an individual is like some others; that is to say, we possess a group identity as citizens of a particular nation or as belonging to a class, such as of academics, for instance; 3) that an individual is like all others; that is to say, we possess an identity coterminous with all human beings, as possessing a mind and body, etc.

It is only in this third sense that the individual and the universal overlap, which may explain the sense of unease some people might feel when women's rights etc. are considered human rights, if in their minds the concept of human rights has been exclusively identified, or in their opinion should be exclusively identified, with the third sense.

Being human, however, involves all these three dimensions and thus the juxtaposition of the words human and universal creates an ambiguity. As being human involves all three dimensions, and concept of human dignity would also embrace all the

11 Ibid., p. 236, emphasis added.

three dimensions, and enables us to understand the word universal in an extended sense; as embracing individual and group differences (since these differences characterize all human beings also) beyond their similarity in possessing in common what characterises by all human beings.

3) The concept might also help us understand the relationship between religion and human rights better. For instance, Louis Henkin writes: "The human rights ideology, though it has not wholly outlawed capital punishment, clearly aims at its abolition because it derogates from human dignity—the dignity of the person executed, as well as the dignity of the member of the society that executes".¹² He then adds parenthetically: "It does not accept the argument that the human dignity of the victims of the crimes requires or justifies capital punishment". Now, it is precisely in terms of the human dignity of the victims and of the members of the victim's family that such an argument in support of capital punishment¹³ will be mounted by those who should wish to challenge human rights ideology on this point, as for instance, the supporters of a provision of blood compensation in Islamic law,¹⁴ a practice which seems so recalcitrant to empathetic analysis at first blush, until viewed in terms of the human dignity of the various parties involved, and specially of the victim's relatives.

IV

I would now like to start moving towards the conclusion. The model of human dignity, human rights and human duties, which was outlined in the course of this paper, perhaps enables us to engage issues of human rights in a new way. It does not

follow from this, however, that it solves all the problems associated with that discourse. To the extent that it enables us to come to grips with the issues more cogently it may help towards achieving their resolution, but whether such a resolution is achieved or not depends on the case. Helping understand a problem better is not the same as solving it. There is all the difference in the world between the elucidation of a problem and its solution, but one may not disdain a better understanding of the problem even if no solution might be yet forthcoming—specially, if the probability of reaching one may be enhanced by such improved understanding. In this spirit one might say that the concept of human dignity enables us to understand statements such as the following: "It can be affirmed that human rights are universal, but it is much more difficult to assert a universal standard of justice in upholding them".¹⁵ This remark was prompted by what Bishop Tutu said during a visit to Edmonton, Canada in his capacity as Chairman for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa.

In Edmonton, Archbishop Tutu told a story of four men who had murdered young people in a small town. They appeared before his commission in the same town in a crowded hall before the very people whose relatives had been lost. They admitted their guilt. They expressed their remorse. They asked for forgiveness.

It was a hot night. The hall had been filled with anger and passion. After some moments of silence, the crowd broke into applause and the guilty men wept. God was in the room that night, said Archbishop Tutu.¹⁶

I do not wish to comment on the case but would

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 William Thorsell, "Whose Justice is it?" *The Globe and Mail*, Toronto, January 9, 1999, p. D6.

16 Ibid.

like to raise the following question: dignity may well have been present in the room, could it also be said that humanity was also present in the room? Were both divinity and humanity present in full measure, in some Christological way? Or, could it be further asked: in exactly what way was human dignity

present in the room? Had the human dignity of all been upheld or had the human dignity of the victims been compromised, as some allege? I think I will have to leave the answer; in fact, I must leave the answer in your hands.



4

Understanding self from Eastern Philosophies with special focus on Human Rights, Spirituality and Religious Freedom

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■ ABSTRACT

Self-realized person can see the Truth, speak the Truth, and uphold the Truth. That encompasses all of human right issues, religious freedom and spirituality. If we live in falsehood, we create problems and can be the problems itself.

■ KEY WORDS

Human rights, Sikh, Consciousness, True self, Guru Nanak Dev Ji

■ INTRODUCTION

Among many eastern philosophies, the Sikh teachings are relatively the latest. In this essay, we will talk about Sikh way of life. The founder of Sikh teachings or Sikh way of life was Guru Nanak Dev Ji, followed by nine more Gurus. They complied teachings of enlightened persons of all faiths (whose thoughts were similar to them) including saints from

Hindus, Muslims, low caste system of India, Sufis, devotional worship movement of India, along with theirs into one holy book, called Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Their teachings and life examples are a grand work of interfaith and are for whole of humanity. The authors will talk about Sikh way of life in this article because they are affiliated with Sikh way of life and has understanding about it.

Where we are?

Even though we have advanced in Science in the 21st century, the problems of Human beings are not decreasing but increasing and reaching critical levels at some places.

It is a responsibility towards ourselves and humanity that individuals must realize the problem and start thinking about the root cause of all problems with their open hearts. It is important for

individuals to know their True Self and have a good understanding of their current state. In order to try to solve any issues in our home, society, or anywhere in the world, we also need to know ourselves.

Society has given everybody an identity (ID) for example White, Black, Asian, or Canadians, Europeans, Americans, and religions label such as Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists or even regional labels such labels Punjabi, Haryanvi, Tamils, Biharis and more. There is no end to the labels.

The Creator who created the creation does not recognize any IDs. It sees all human race as one. So we all are loving humans of the Divine before any label is given to us. In its eyes, we all are its children and are equal like all siblings to their parents. The Creator is our common father and mother, equally loves all and it expects us to stay united with brotherly or sisterly love and protest against any atrocity done to our brothers or sisters and speak for human rights issues. If any of our brothers or sisters get hurt by oppression, our creator also gets hurt. We can imagine when some unwanted things happen to any of our brothers or sisters our parents get equally sad.

We are all humans first and are literally connected with each other through our common creator. Like bubbles in the ocean are connected to it and with other fellow bubbles through the same ocean (2).

Understanding Bubble and Ocean Concept



Human beings are consciousness. They are not mere bodies as we see them. Divine created us from itself. Look at a few months or a year old child. Does he know his race, religion, language, etc? Slowly, as he grows he is given information that his name is this, this is his house, parents, relatives, society, state, country etc. All that information comes from outside so all his knowledge is based on that information or in other words is borrowed knowledge. Somebody told him so, not even one ounce of it was from his own experience. He was made to act like a robot. When he goes to school the teacher teaches him all the information from books and he starts relating himself to that information and with that his mind develops unreal understanding about himself and he starts operating based of it. This is called ego. It starts building when a child is small and keeps growing as he grows.

So that few months old child who was connected to the ocean has now become a bubble filled with ego. Bubble sees himself separate from the ocean and he looks at other bubbles and totally forgets about his connection to the Divine ocean (2).

With this process, the ego-bubble starts behaving or acting in the society and developing a selfish attitude, all that negative energy, anger, greed, attachment, surrounds him. He sees fellow bubbles as others and starts comparing them with each other and sees them as separate entities. Now it is obvious this process will give birth to human rights issues because human beings operate from their understanding. When understanding gets corrupted because it was all from borrowed knowledge, not a knowledge of True Self, all his actions will be unwise. With technology like the iPhone in hands, social media etc. mind has become more unpeaceful.

It has become difficult to know the true self. So are we following the path to a dead end?

Who are we truly?

It cannot be imagined, cannot be thought about. We cannot form any pictures in our thoughts.

That ultimate revelation, the new us, cannot be thought about. We cannot imagine our real True Self. We can only have some gestures from outside like being peaceful, stable, calm, happy, loving, compassionate, etc. That will help us to have some inkling about ourselves. Because the mind's consciousness remains outwardly focused, it can never know its real self, neither has any interest. Bubbles are looking at other bubbles, a bubble can only know about itself if it starts looking within and slowly feels the ocean moving in him. Minds consciousness is looking away from its source, origin, or creator. It is looking on the opposite side that is why it is broken or disconnected from its source. Its nature is diametrically opposite from the nature of its origin. The nature of the mind's consciousness is totally opposite from our True Self. Under that influence, Human starts operating opposite from its natural behavior; its qualities are just reversed of his real self.

How to go back to your True Self?

How does a bubble keep its connection with the ocean?

This is the real purpose of human life. This is why we are given intelligence and a beautiful body. This is what makes human beings separate from animals otherwise they are also eating, drinking, and sleeping. Human beings need to ponder over this - Purpose of life? Life is short and the journey is long. We must understand the purpose first - once understood then start walking on the journey without wasting a single moment.

me to ME

It is a process of transforming old self to True Self. It is a rebirth of the consciousness.

How do we awaken fully and completely to the whole truth of who we really are?

Until our insides are awakened, we cannot feel Divine inside and right now we are totally numb from within. Creator is doing zillions of functions, inner functions to keep us alive and to keep all the organs running. It is incomprehensible that in one second 18 trillion messages are being sent and received within us by different cells. 18 trillion messages per second. But we don't feel anything, because our inside is sleeping, we only feel when we are hungry or thirsty or when our egos are hurt. We don't feel our inside at all, because we are asleep.

Enlightened Way of Life which is Spirituality and Role of Religions

All individuals are temples of Divine. Divine is dwelling within them like the ocean is connected with bubbles. We should all become united with one creator ocean, learn to listen and feel the ocean to its voice and then live our lives according to that voice. Meditation, holy congregation and killing of ego can help us transform. Then we will see people are not bodies, they are the temples of Divine and slowly as we progress with Divine's grace we start recognizing that they are not just temples of God, Divine flows through them. Everybody has Divinity, Earth becomes heaven!

Guru Nanak Dev Ji said that we all are one, there is one community. He said we all are the temples of God, the Mosques of God. He said there is no Hindu, no Musulman, we are humans first. He did not create any community, He made the whole of humanity as a community. Over time, the people who believed in his teachings came to known as Sikhs. Sikh means student.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji, appeared on the face of this earth in 1469 and then in nine other successive bodies. He wanted to make sure that His message was instilled in the homes of humanity. He travelled to all the main places of religion. He travelled to Mecca, He travelled to Vatican City (3), He travelled to the main places of Hindu religion e.g. Haridwar, of Buddhists, of Jains. He travelled all over and to far flung places and gave the same message, that we are one; that each human being belongs to the whole of humanity.

The identity of the Sikh states that I belong to the whole of humanity. I belong to the whole of humanity and I, my mission is to make this, to contribute whatever I can, to make humanity better.

One small example, that when Guru Nanak Dev Ji travelled to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and non-

Muslims were not allowed in Kaaba, Mecca. So Guru Nanak Dev Ji wore the clothes of a Muslim so that He could enter into Kaaba. He said that you are a Muslim and to be a Muslim is so beautiful. A Muslim is so kind hearted.

And He said **“Meher Maseet”**, He always talked to all the religions, did not condemn anybody, He embraced all the religions, He never, ever quarreled with anyone, but lovingly and most humbly, he made the other person see his point of view (1).

He said the Muslim should dwell in a mosque, a mosque of **“Meher Maseet”, a mosque of mercy** (1). He said sit always in that mosque, but not the mosque which is built of bricks, but the mosque of mercy. Mosque of mercy **“Meher Maseet Siddak Musalaa”** (1). And then sit on the mossella. Mossella is the mat on which the Muslim brothers sit to perform prayers. He said your prayer mat should be the deep faith that everybody is the house of Allah. They all are the temples, the mosques, the synagogues of God.

and he said, always see God in others and make sure that you recognize that God is watching you from everywhere. And whatever you are doing, you are doing in the presence of God.

“Hak Halaal Quran” honest living is to read the holy Quran (1). He said it’s not good enough just to read a holy book, the holy books teach us how to live human life. Just to read them is not going to help us to transform, we need to apply the teachings. And **“Saram**

Sunnat”, have faith in God, that noble actions at the end, will always win (1). **“Saram Sunnat Seel Roza”** he said that you perform fasts but to be humble, to be utterly humble is to have fast, **“Seel Roza Hoho Musalmaa”** (1). He said that be this type of Muslim, this is the true Muslim, the pure Muslim. He asked the whole of humanity to become pure. Pure means where we purify our consciousness - which will purify our thoughts, speech and actions - through meditation, prayers and through selfless service. He emphasized on three main teachings – honest earning, share with others through selfless service and to keep divine in the consciousness at all times.

And Guru Nanak Dev ji is one of the latest prophets among other prophets. He also met Pope at Rome, Italy and told that nobody has the right to enslave others and every human being has the same blood in his or her veins. Pope praised Guru Nanak Dev ji by saying **“Common father of our race”** (3). The prophets are prophets, they are not higher or lower, they are just prophets, they came from the same God. Guru Nanak Dev ji, belongs to the whole of humanity. He recognized that we are one. We are one human race.

And we need to strive towards the welfare of the community and the community is the whole of

humanity — I cannot be happy, nobody can be happy, unless everybody is happy. If the negative voices, spring from within a person, that person cannot be happy. You can see his frustration, anger — and everything around him slowly becomes negative.

We must stand together, we must fight together against the negativism and we must not become discouraged. Guru Nanak Dev Ji in all his 10 appearances, embraced every religion. He did not recognize any boundaries on the earth, in the ocean or in the sky. He said all these resources belong to God and whatever belongs to God, belongs to His children. All the earth, all the waters, all the skies -- belongs to God's children that is humanity.

And, if we can have that type of open mindedness and humility we can solve all the problems.

He called Himself the slave of God's slaves. He never said I'm a prophet, or I have been sent by God, or I'm here for a special purpose, never. He said I'm nothing, I am just a slave of God's slaves "***Daasan Daas Kahe Jan Nanak***" (1). Such humility.

Sikh teachings are not the teachings for any group of people. Sikh teachings are the teachings of humanity, the teachings for humanity and teachings for self-realization. The first thing, the very first word Guru Nanak Dev Ji uttered in his teachings is One. God is one and we all are one. Ik Onkaar. And, all creation belongs to God and God is dwelling in its creation.

■ **Enlightened Means Activist for Human Rights**

The enlightened person care for others and acts for the welfare of whole humanity, thus is an activist for any human rights issues. In 1675, 9th Guru Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Ji sacrificed His

Holy Head at Chandni Chowk Delhi; he didn't do it because of his direct or indirect connection with some specific religion. He did it for His love and compassion towards humanity. He was deeply touched that Hindu's freedom to pray and worship being taken away from them in such a tyrannical way. He stood up against evil when religious heads of Hindu brothers from different states of India came in a group to Anandpur Sahib to do humble supplication of saving their freedom from the tyrant ruler of India, Aurangzeb. He stood up with humanity and against oppression and evil.

■ **CONCLUSION**

So when we are self-realized human beings, we know the truth, we are the truth, we live the truth. Guru Nanak Dev Ji said that The Truth is the highest but higher still is truthful living. We do not create any of the issues of human rights by being self-realized human beings. And if we see somewhere human rights violations, we are ready to raise a voice and dispute it, because we do not know any other way of living besides truthful spiritual living. When we are enlightened spiritual beings, we are free and have religious freedom, and we can see there is only one true religion, oneness religion of humanity.

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Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Message of Oneness and Love

‘ਸਭ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਹੈ ਸੋਇ॥’

‘ਤੂੰ ਸਾਝਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਬਾਪੁ ਹਮਾਰਾ॥’

**The Divine is our common Father
as well as common Provider.**

**The whole mankind is his family,
we should recognize the same Light
in everyone, love and celebrate each other**



5

The Dharmic Concepts of Self Enlightened Action (Karma) to Attain Understanding of Rta (Righteousness) for Modern Human Rights

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■ The Concept

Freedom is one of the features of all that is *vyakta* (expressed) in the entire universe, be it material or the man. The material world is expanding entropically since its origin, starting with the big bang to free the energy and material over time and distance. Material world in short time range disintegrates for freedom into molecules, atoms, or subatomic particles, and associate in various combinations. Humans on the other hand are defined as intelligent beings, and thus express themselves intelligently through language, art, dress, food habits, and ideas, including philosophies or *darshanas* in case of the Dharmic traditions. The Vedic concept of living in the moment implies that one could see changes from moment to moment. A human being needs to train himself or herself to realize oneself from moment to moment, in a detached and unbiased manner. The knowledge

of self provides the freedom to act according to one's nature, and one also develops capacity to accept the consequences without fear, anxiety, or stress.

Thus, it is the knowledge of self that needs to be promoted through Yoga (Hindu), meditation (Buddhist), detachment (Jain), and charity (Sikh), with training in the traditional gurukul system. When the karma is performed as one's only right, all appropriate human rights are secured through the understanding of its *phala* or consequences. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was necessitated because of the colonial concept of exploitation that comes from biblical concept of chosen people, faith based salvation through religion, and the suppression and torture of beings in the name of God. Freedom of being oneself, freedom of expression, freedom of senses, and freedom of action are the practices that dharmic traditions

promote, and with that there is no need to pursue the human rights, as those are attached to one's actions.

■ Words, Translations, and Transgressions

Human rights is a western concept moored completely in its culture and philosophy. This becomes clearer when one translates the words in Indian languages – Human can be translated as *adami* in Urdu and *manav* in Hindi or many other Indian languages. Right as right or wrong, in fact, means *sahi* or *uchit*. If we use right as in right or left, it would mean *danya* or *dahina*, which would perhaps not make any sense in this context, unless we mean to state that human rights are opposite to inhuman leftists. But that would not be appropriate as both rightists and leftists could be inhuman, as one can see white supremacists (rightists) in places like USA, or Naxals and communists (leftists) in India.

Therefore, if right is taken as *sahi* or *uchit*, it will be translated as *Adami sahi* or *manavochit*. However, right in human right is interestingly translated as *adhikaar*. *Adhikaar* is a very well used word in Indian texts, and is formed from *adhi + kaar*. Meaning of *adhi* is super or excessive, and the word *kaar* is derived from *karya* which means work or to do work. Both *manovochit* and *manavadhikaar* do not exactly reflect the intended definition or meaning of human rights.

According to United Nations, “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more.” (<https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/human-rights/>)



Figure 1. National Human Rights Commission is a statutory public body constituted through an ordinance September 29, 1993 in India.

The UN definition is a mixture of rights and freedom, but in fact rights here refers more to the entitlements. As a matter of fact, in the Article 2 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, it is clearly stated that “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” (<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>). Entitlement in English means a right granted by law. Again there are no equivalent words for the meanings of entitlement and law – as *patrata* for entitlement and *niyam* for law do not reflect the intended or cultural meanings.

Thus, the human right by definition does not convey the cultural meaning by the word *manavadhikaar*, even though that is exactly, albeit incorrectly, has been done by the Government of India (see Figure 1) *Manavochit* probably will be better, but it still has the problem of not reflecting the entitlement. Proper words are key to cultural collaboration in social and political behavior,

which clearly lacks in translating human rights as *manavadhikaar*.

■ Philosophy of Human Rights

Assuming *manavadhikaar* is translation of human right from Indian tradition, one can easily look for the context in which *adhikaar* is used in standard Indian texts of Vedanta. *Bhagavadgita* being a standard *Vedantic* and well cited text would a good place to look for the meaning of *adhikaar*. There is a very popular verse in *Bhagavadgita* which can help explain the meaning of *adhikaar*.

Chapter 2

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।

मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥ ४७ ॥

Transliteration

karmaṇy-evādhikāras te mā phaleṣhu kadāchana
mā karma-phala-hetur bhūr mā te saṅgo
'stvakarmaṇi

Word meanings:

karmaṇi—in prescribed duties; eva—only; adhikāraḥ—right; te—your; mā—not; phaleṣhu—in the fruits; kadāchana—at any time; mā—never; karma-phala—results of the activities; hetuḥ—cause; bhūḥ—be; mā—not; te—your; saṅgaḥ—attachment; astu—must be; akarmaṇi—in inaction

Translation

You have a right to perform your prescribed duties, but you are not entitled to the fruits of your actions. Never consider yourself to be the cause of the results of your activities, nor be attached to inaction.

(Reference Swami Mukundanand - Bhagavadgita – the Song of God, 2014; <https://www.holy-bhagavad-gita.org/chapter/2/verse/47>)

Adhikaar is used in regards to performance of one's prescribed duties, with the condition of not even

taking the credit for the results, while ought to do the work nevertheless. This is far from the entitlement by law provided for in the UN Declaration of Human Rights.

Even when taking the meaning of entitlement as *patrata*, one needs to refer to the following shloka from *Hitopadesha*:

विद्या ददाति विनयं विनयाद् याति पात्रताम्।

पात्रत्वाद् धनमाप्नोति धनाद्धर्मं ततः सुखम्।।

English Translation:

Knowledge makes one humble, humility begets worthiness, worthiness creates wealth and enrichment, enrichment leads to right conduct, right conduct brings contentment.

Hindi Translation:

विद्या विनय देती है, विनय से पात्रता, पात्रता से धन, धन से धर्म, और धर्म से सुख प्राप्त होता है।

Source: Hitopadesha 6

Finally, when one considers the meaning of law to interpret entitlement by the law, it again reflects Indian culture differently from the one intended in the declaration. According to John Austin the law is commands, backed by threat of sanctions, from a sovereign, to whom people have a habit of obedience (Austin, 2022). This is more of a top down approach whereas the word *niyam*, used in Indian translation of the word law, has entirely different meaning and context, as propounded in the classic text *Patanjali Yog Sutra*.

■ Patanjali Yog Sutra II 32.

sauca-santosa-tapah-svadhyaya-isvara-pranidhanani niyamah

Translation

Niyam consists of *sauch* (purity), *santosh* (contentment and peacefulness), *tapas* (spiritual

passion and fire), swadhyay (self study and mastery), and isvara pranidhan (surrender to the Universal Great Integrity of Being). (<http://www.integralyogastudio.com/ysp/ysp-alex-bailey-long.pdf>).

While the law indicates the wishes or commands of an authority, the niyam is exactly opposite in that it is self initiated and observed.

The Western world is obsessed with the authority beyond self, even in their religious approach where God is someone sits out of reach to ordinary people, requiring a middleman like prophet. The ten commandments in Bible are made by that authority or God, and everyone must follow to get salvation. Whereas in Dharmic concept there is a concept of Aham Brahmasmi, or the self is the Supreme, and thus the focus is on self, be it right as *adhikaar*, entitlement as *patrata*, or law as the *niyam*, all of them self initiated, self practiced, and self deserving, as a detached result of karma. This latter approach provides freedom to people, something that is only half-heartedly acknowledged in the UN declaration of human rights. A more robust examination and analysis of dharma and karma approach needs to be undertaken to challenge the well intended concept of human rights that in fact creates more conflicts than cooperation among the people.

Karma is generally translated as action, and is well understood and practiced in all the Indic traditions – Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Jain, although with slightly different explanations (Singh, 2016). The most comprehensive and perhaps original thought of Karma, is, of course, in Vedic literature which is accepted by the followers of the Sanatan Dharma or Hindu way of life. From popular epics of Ramayana and Mahabhabharata to Vedic texts, Karma (translated as deed or act) is a deterministic

concept not only for humans but to explain the existence of the entire universe,.

The two common quotations even in the remotest part of India are (1) Tulsidas in “*Karma pradhan vishwa kari rakha, jo jas kare so tas phal chakha*”, that is, the karma is supreme in this world, and one faces the consequences of one’s deeds only; and (2) Karmanye Vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana, or one has right to karma but no control over the consequences.

Yoga philosophy and practice has become a well accepted concept in the world today. The basic concept of it is propounded in Bhagvadgita as “*Yogah kamashu kaushalam*”. This is an important concept that can be linked to the practice of Yoga to demonstrate the practice of karma theory. Patanjali Yogsutra brings out the definition of Kriyayoga or the Yoga of action, and also the concept of Ishvara which is a state of mind that lends one to be untouched by the karmaphala. In other words, the concept of karma can be readily explained in the practice of Yoga, which will also allow people to realize the state of Ishvara.

These universally accepted concepts amongst Hindus and followers of other Dharmic traditions lend to the idea of time-testedness of Karma theory into practice. The question, of course, is how deeply these concepts are understood in today’s world. Before addressing the question, it may be worthwhile to consider the basic structure of Karma theory.

■ Physics of Karma

It is critical to examine the actual intended meaning of the word karma. It is generally translated as action or work. In Karmanye Vadhikaraste Ma Phaleshu Kadachana, Karma normally refers to action one takes or the work one performs, but it is actually a task that has been completed or at least targeted. If one has to define in term of scientific

terms, it will be defined as follows. Karma theory states that there are consequences of every action, something obvious and observable at the physical level. The action is what happens after the act is done. Thus, the action (karma) is a subtle property that one (subject) can be entitled to with full control of one's act. This action, in fact, then leads to result (consequence, karmaphala), which will be governed by many other conditions of the surrounding environment of infinite dimensions i , and thus is unpredictable to satisfy the condition of *ma faleshu kadachan*, meaning one does not have a deterministic control over the consequences!.

At a very gross level this is quite clearly evident in Newton's Third Law of Motion – there is equal and opposite reaction to every action.

Third Law

$$F = ma = -ma \quad (1)$$

where

F= Force

m = mass

a = acceleration

It is notable that the Third Law of Motion may only define the action and reaction in terms of force, not necessarily energy. The definition of energy includes work.

$$\text{Work (W)} = F \times d \quad (2)$$

where d is displacement or distance

Even in the physical work, the displacement does not need to be in opposite direction. More importantly, this energy may in fact be expressed in terms of heat, electrical, or chemical energy. In such a case it could be a set of reactions, leading to unpredictable consequences, which would explain why the consequences of the action are unpredictable.

Action (A) is another quantity that is defined by as a product of momentum (M) and distance (d);

$$A = M \times d \quad (3)$$

$$= m \times v \times d \quad (4)$$

where m is mass and v is velocity as distance per second (s)

$$= m \times d/s \times d \\ = md^2/s \quad (5)$$

Thus, an Action is a dynamic quantity, subject to unpredictability.

Substituting $a = v/s$ in equation (1), and substituting it in equation (2), we get

$$W = m \times v/s \times d \quad (6)$$

$$= m \times d^2/s^2 \quad (7)$$

Taking a ratio of W and A using equations (5) and (7)

$$W/A = 1/s = s^{-1} \quad (8)$$

In other words, the energy (W) per action (karma) provides the velocity to the whole (one or 1) life integrated into a unitless 1, and can be referred to as Karma *Gati* (KG) which is unique at every moment, considering the surroundings continuously change due to the dynamics of the universe. In other words, as long as there is karma, that is powered by the initial origin of matter whose existence and appearance are linked to the rest of the universe.

Surdas, the legendary poet, writes in one of his compositions, Udhou, karman ki gati nyari (उधौ, कर्मन की गति न्यारी), meaning the Karma *Gati* is unique. In other words, each individual has a unique way to performing karma, and consequently, its result or the karmaphala is unique, thus not predictable.

Therefore, deterministic elements like rights are counter to freedom of action or Karma for individuals, although latter do not realize when asking for rights. Fixing a naturally undeterministic concept forces everything else to be fixed by the power that provides the rights, thus mortgaging other aspects of human life. While this provides an appearance of uniformity in dealing with all humans,

it allows the rulers to control other aspects of life activities and relationships. For example, in the name of human rights, governments throughout the world or even international organization like United Nations place restrictions by law or rules for others to conform to a model code.

■ Law and Rights

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1946), Its Preamble and following articles contain references to rights as provided by the **law**

“Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of **law..**”

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the **law**.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by **law**.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence.

2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 29

1.

2. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by **law** solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

3.

law (n.) according to the etymologyonline.com, “Old English lagu (plural laga, combining form lah-) "ordinance, rule prescribed by authority” according to a post at Louisiana State University’s website (LSU, 1993), the origins of law is listed as follows:

“ORIGINS OF LAW - Common law is law that evolves through judicial opinions interpreting statutes, treaties, and, in the United States, a written constitution. Civil law evolves through legislation rather than opinions of courts. The law of the original thirteen colonies was based on the English

common law. This was modified by the Articles of Confederation and then the Constitution. As the United States expanded into regions originally controlled by the Spanish and French, this common law tradition was modified by the local civil law systems. This is most obvious in Louisiana, which still retains a French- rather than an English-oriented legal system. The Spanish influence is pervasive in the legal systems of California, Texas, and several other southwestern states.

The English common law was the king's law, as distinguished from the Church's or ecclesiastical law. During the early evolution of the English legal system, the Church and the king were equally powerful. The two legal systems were separate, with

the nature of the injury determining which system had jurisdiction. The U.S. Constitution ended the role of the church in the legal system. Some of the terminology and forms of the ecclesiastical courts persist, however, in the legal systems of the states that had strong state churches.”

■ Dharma and Law

In Vedic contexts, there are no such systems of laws, although it is common for scholars to cite Manusmriti as the book of laws (see the display below extracted from Encyclopedia Britannica). Smriti (a memoir) by no means can be considered as law, and while there maybe a debate on several aspects of Manusmriti, those aspects were never enforced as in the case of law.

Manu-smriti

Hindu law



By The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica • Edit History

Manu-smriti, (Sanskrit: “Laws of Manu” or “The Remembered Tradition of Manu”) also called **Manava-dharma-shastra** (“**The Dharma Text of Manu**”), traditionally the most authoritative of the books of the Hindu code (Dharma-shastra) in India. *Manu-smriti* is the popular name of the work, which is officially known as *Manava-dharma-shastra*. It is attributed to the legendary first man and lawgiver, Manu. The received text dates from circa 100 CE.

The *Manu-smriti* prescribes to Hindus their dharma—i.e., that set of obligations incumbent on each as a member of one of the four social classes (*varnas*) and engaged in one of the four stages of life (*ashramas*). It contains 12 chapters

[britannica.com/topic/Manu-smriti](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Manu-smriti)

Vedic concepts are based on dharma as is also mentioned in the Britannica entry, and although Dharma is quite often translated as religion although it is quite contrary to the original as well as even pragmatic meaning of the word dharma. There are several definitions of Dharma. In one definition Dharma is defined in terms of non-violence (Ahimsa parmo dharmah or Non-violence is the ultimate Dharma; Srivastava et al., 2013). However, that definition is not tenable as the text from Mahabharata is stated by the character of Yudhisthir who was fighting war with weapons and was involved in killing. Therefore, it is more appropriate to define Ahimsa as non-violation, which will then define Dharma as the principle that cannot be violated, akin to scientific laws that cannot be violated. According to sage Kanad, who provided the idea of the atom around 700 BC, dharma is that which governs the birth and death of everything. This is not just a secular definition of dharma but a scientific one. It encompasses all those forces involved in governing appearance and disappearance of remarkably both material and non-material things in this universe. In order to comprehend the proper meaning of dharma, it is imperative that one directly embraces and experiences the nature. Only then appropriate experiments can be designed with humans or with material to obtain data for expressive meaning of dharma (Singh, 2018).

■ Rta and Rights

It is the dharma of the minutest object to holistic universe that ultimately guides the man as well as matter to its karma. An interesting aspect of examining karma is its relationship to evolution of jiva or organism through rebirth cycle. According to Jain concept of Karma, it starts with the vibrations of the supreme power which in its real form remains still.

Thus, vibrations are the origin of the world. This is also envisaged in the Vedic literature, which propounds spandan or oscillation as the origin of the universe in Nasadiya Suktam (Singh et al., 2012). In the Nasadiya suktam of Rg Veda (Mandala 10:129) - *násad āsīn nó sád āsīt tadānīm*, meaning then even nothingness was not, nor existence (Basham, 1954), thus there was not nothing nor anything. This was followed by *kāmas tād āgre sám avartatādhi mánaso rétaḥ prathamam yád āsīt* - then the desire descended on it - that was the primal seed, born of the mind. Mahayogi Gorakhnath describes that then the spandana (vibration) or internal agitation occurs in the infinite spiritual bosom of the para-shakti that eventually manifests into apara-shakti (Banerjea, 1983).

Karma in a simple way can be understood from a grammar point of view. Karma is the object, whereas kriya is the verb, which is related to the adhikara (adhi means 'over and above' + kara from kri means 'doing'), and karta is the doer or subject. From this perspective rights are not entitlement unless it is considered to be result of the kriya, meaning the act of doing over and above the requirement, thus it is karma that decides what one gets or what one is entitled to based on the adhikara through action. However, there is another way to look at the rights from the Vedic perspective, and that is to look at the etymology of right from Sanskrit language in combination with Vedic philosophy of Rta (ऋत). In such a case right needs to be redefined for its true meaning from Vedic perspective.

Rta is considered as the actionable part of the Satya or the Truth, derived from the Satya, and is thus right way to approach the truth. Rta itself is the origin of Dharma, as the Dharma encompasses all the kinds of actions, observations, and natural

qualities. N.R.I. Pathi (2016) has organized Satya, Rta, Dharma, and Acharana (conduct) to explain the connection amongst these aspects of the reality and its practices (Figure 1).

The Śhrīmad Bhāgavatam states (Muktananda, 2014):

satya-vratam satya-param tri-satyam
 satyasya yonim nihitam cha satye
 satyasya satyam rita-satya-netram
 satyātmakam tvām śharaṇam prapannāḥ (10.2.26)
 [v8]

“O Lord, your vow is true, for not only are you the Supreme Truth, but you are also the truth in the three phases of the cosmic manifestation—creation, maintenance, and dissolution. You are the origin of all that is true, and you are also its end. You are the essence of all truth, and you are also the eyes by which the truth is seen. Therefore, we surrender unto you, the Sat i.e., Supreme Absolute Truth. Kindly give us protection.” This clearly establishes the supremacy of Satya as the source of all the principles and actions.

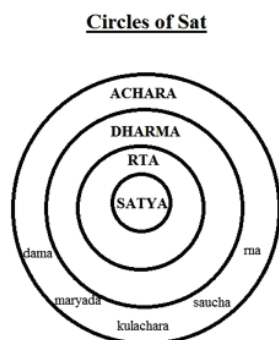


Figure 1. Relationships amongst Satya, Rta, Dharma, and Achara (to include dama or capacity, maryada or ethics, kulachara or family tradition, saucha or clean, and rna means debt).[Taken from Pathi, 2016].

This relationship can be represented in another way by replacing Achara (conduct) with Karma or action, and drawing arrows in both ways to indicate reversibility of the roles depending on the circumstances. An individual with enlightened consciousness has access to the level of Truth that does not change, and looks at the Rta as part of the cycle governed by the ultimate truth. By observing the Rta of all the things in existence, one is able to conclude about Immutable nature substance or Dharma that upholds the qualities and action. This naturally leads to the Dharma being the regulator of the Karma or Action. This process is considered as the Nigam way (Deductive Way) of approaching the knowledge (Singh, 2019), which is a top down approach in which knowledge at the highest level governs the observations for verification and adoption. This process is shown by the downward blue arrow in Figure 2. Often Vedic knowledge is considered Satya or Truth, which can be observed in Rta around the planet, galaxies, and the universe to establish Dharma that leads to the action of the substance.

The opposite process, exhibited by the upward red arrow, is approach the knowledge in an Inductive way (Agam way) in which observations are made through action to understand the guna or qualities and action according to the nature of the substance or the Dharma. The Dharma values are fed into the Rta to understand the cyclic change over a long and short of periods of time, which eventually leads to knowing and realizing the Satya or Truth. Yoga and Ayurveda are examples of Inductive knowledge system, which are based the cumulative knowledge of ordinary people doing their work according to their swabhava, prakriti, or nature. One of the most amenable vehicle

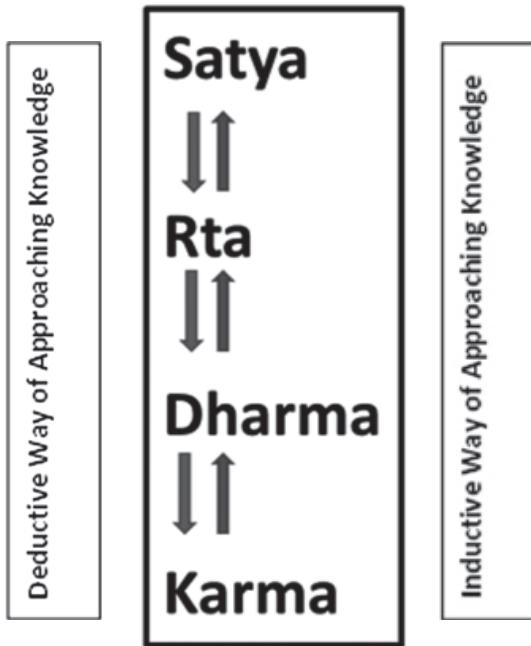


Figure 2. Reversible sequence of Satya, Rta, Dharma, and Karma for approaching Deductive and Inductive knowledge

currently available to be perceptive about the matter at the most subtle level is the Yoga philosophy and its practice. The basic concept propounded in Bhagvadgita is “Yogah kamashu kaushalam” or the best ways one can apply in performing karma is, in fact, Yoga. This is an important concept that can be linked to the practice of Yoga to demonstrate the practice of karma theory.

Both Nigam and the Agam ways are fine to approach knowledge, provided one is qualified. All the religious texts, which include Vedas, Bible, and Quran, dictate Nigam method of approaching knowledge by declaring the knowledge in those texts to be true. However, the problem arises when those making such announcements are less than realized masters. In most cases proclaimers barely know the texts, and many times misinterpret the meanings. And, these proclaimers tend to provide rights to those who follow them, whether it is a ticket to heaven or possession of material things. Thus, rights or even

human rights granted by authorities be religious or political are marred with problems, as unqualified or undeserving individuals take advantage at the cost of others, including nature consisting of plants, animals, and the planet earth.

■ Concluding Remarks

The verse कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन (Karmanye Vadhikaraste, Ma phaleshou kada chana – You have the right to perform your actions, but you are not entitled to the fruits of the actions) is by far the most quoted verse of the Bhagvadgita (Agrawal, 2014; Agrawal and Agrawal, 2014; Banerjee, 2015), and it has led to the description of adhikara to be rights, as even accepted by the Government of India for its National Human Rights Commission. However, its meaning and explanations of this verse is varied, and indeed inadequate to reveal its philosophical meaning, but a more serious and perhaps damaging aspect of this intellectual inadequacy even among the best Indian scholars, intellectuals, and spiritual leaders is that adhikara has been translated as rights. Origin of the word right from Rta, as propounded in the article, perhaps for the first time, can in fact improve the comprehension and implementation of human rights in the way of Rta, which is natural, guided by the truth, and supported by Karma through Dharma.

Further discussion on the understanding of Rta, and development of Dharma notions from the concepts that are observed in Rta, and finally verifying validity of Dharma in following Karma through Kriya may in fact create a consensus and implementation of human rights as things to be done naturally, rather than being ordered. These concepts may be more accessible and also perhaps more acceptable with the use of mathematics, science, and

engineering, all being so much in vogue in modern times. With the advent of modern technologies in communication through the virtual world, this is

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6

30 Basic Human Rights List Universal Declaration of Human Rights

■ List of 30 basic human rights

Human rights is moral principles or norms that describe certain standards of human behaviour, and are regularly protected as legal rights in municipal and international law. Everyone born in this world have human rights that must be protected by the law. According to United Nations, there are 30 basic human rights that recognized around the world. So what are the 30 human rights according to Universal Declaration of Human Rights by United Nations?

Basic human rights recognized around the world delacred by United Nations through Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These declaration held by United Nations General Assembly at the Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France on 10 December 1948. Of the then 58 members of the United Nations, 48 voted in favor, none against, eight abstained, and two did not vote.

This declaration consists of 30 articles affirming an individual's rights. Those 30 articles currently known as 30 universal declaration of human rights or

30 basic human rights, including rights to life, rights to education, rights to organize and rights to treated fair among others things. The 30 universal human rights also cover up freedom of opinion, expression, thought and religion.

■ 30 Basic Human Rights List

So what are the 30 basic human rights list? Here are full list of 30 human rights according to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by United Nations, signed in Paris on 10 December 1948.

1. All human beings are free and equal

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

2. No discrimination

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be

made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs.

3. Right to life

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

4. No slavery

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

5. No torture and inhuman treatment

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

6. Same right to use law

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

7. Equal before the law

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation and against any incitement to such discrimination.

8. Right to treated fair by court

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.

9. No unfair detainment

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

10. Right to trial

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

11. Innocent until proved guilty

Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed.

12. Right to privacy

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

13. Freedom to movement and residence

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

14. Right to asylum

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

15. Right to nationality

Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality

16. Rights to marry and have family

Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They

are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

17. Right to own things

Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property.

18. Freedom of thought and religion

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

19. Freedom of opinion and expression

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

20. Right to assemble

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

21. Right to democracy

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

22. Right to social security

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and

in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

23. Right to work

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

24. Right to rest and holiday

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

25. Right of social service

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children shall enjoy the same social protection.

26. Right to education

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

27. Right of cultural and art

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

28. Freedom around the world

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

29. Subject to law

Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible. In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for

the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

30. Human rights can't be taken away

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

So those are all Universal Declaration of Human Rights list by United Nations General Assembly. All universal human rights list above commonly known as 30 basic human rights that must be respected and protected by the law.

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The Scientific Endogeny and Manifestation of Subjectivities

How can a Human be Modeled “Alive”?

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■ Abstract

This paper introduces a thinking theory which can be used deductively to explain why and how the “aliveness”, spirituality, or subjectivity of human is endogenized in it. Although it is borrowed from computer science, the model is reformatively assumed to run in human brains with computational economic logic, thereby surprisingly proving that various humanistic phenomena are actually rational. This finding can bridge or synthesize sciences and humanities, into a global framework.

I. Introduction

The social sciences are regarded generally as study of the mechanical or regular aspects of

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human behaviors whereas the humanities for those “spiritual”, “cultural”, aesthetic, psychological, historical, ideological, religious, philosophical, or “alive” aspects. They both have been distinct for long time. However, inspired by computer principles, and apart from them, I have found a quite easy and simple way to the explanation why the above diversified “aliveness” happens. It is mainly based not on extant AI (Artificial Intelligence) allegations, but on a mechanism of computing economy. Thus, most of the humanistic phenomena that represent the “aliveness” could be regarded as the results of operation of the mechanism. This means a grand synthesis or unification of social sciences and humanities.

I introduce a thinking theory first, then interpret, from multiple angles, why the hypothetical mechanism can be “alive”, and how various humanistic phenomena come into being. The Chinese

traditions are briefed as a paradigm to showcase the endogenous humanistic diversity.

II. How a Person Thinks

According to computer principles, computation, or a computer's "thinking", is interpreted that dozens of "instructions" selectively, alternately, serially, and repetitively process the information (or data) from the outside world, which resembles that the tools in a box kit are picked up respectively and are used to work on physical materials. When using computers, the user is offered a menu on the screen to select, where multiple "commands" are present; the commands are instructions, or some combinations of instruction. Instruction is the minimal or basic job a computer can do, such as Add, Multiply, Transfer, Compare, Copy, Delete, Store, Search, and so on. Common people know well, and can do well the jobs that instructions do, however, in order to save labor and to speed up computing operations, people invented computers that simulate the computing operations; people "instruct" computers what jobs to do, and then read and use the computing results; gradually, the categories of the jobs are changed into the name of "instructions". All computers, in their core parts for computations, share the same instruction system.²

Many writers nowadays believe that computational operations can be equivalent to human thinking, or will be sooner or later. Nevertheless. Let's put aside such disputes of AI or of computationalism, and turn to another new approach (Li, 2009-2022) that could briefly and reasonably justify the human aliveness, and that real human minds can stem from the computer-alike mechanism integrated with a logic that has not been discovered by far.

² These principles can be found in chapters of any of the most basic textbooks of computers, e.g., Dumas, 2017, Chapter 3.1.

Since the instructions in a computer came from analysis and simulation of human thinking, it would be convincing to assume that there are also the same "Instructions" innately in human brain that equals for everybody. Nevertheless, providently, in order to mitigate the doubts on AI, we can additionally assume some "Artificial Instructions" that exist only in human brains rather than in computers, and that can be picked up from verbs in the vocabulary.³ And, obviously, we think stepwise, therefore, it can be assumed that the Instructions (artificial or not) run in the brain in the manner like that in computers, selectively, alternately, serially, and repetitively, and hence the storages in the brain can also be assumed, for short or long term memories respectively. Enormous pieces of information come into a human brain via sensory organs, and are stored and then computed in a certain sequence; the results are re-used, discarded, or transferred to storages temporarily or permanently, which can be deemed the "knowledge", or "knowledge stocks". This computational process can be comprehended analogously with physical working: a worker uses his/her hands to process physical materials, with limited capacity, and then puts the product or semi-product at a place near him, and turns to process another object; afterwards, he/she may go to pick up the product or semi-product again to work; consequently, the products or semi-products around him/her will grow more and more.⁴

III. How the Person Become "Alive"? (1)

An action means a motion, which can literally be deemed "alive", but not enough. Further, "aliveness"

³ Strictly, Artificial Instructions should be few, which can be exemplified as "Randomize", as the computer instruction of "Randomize" is usually pseudo, i.e., imitated by random functions.

⁴ This was originally called by economist Böhm-Bawerk as the "roundabout method of production"; see Böhm-Bawerk, 1891, Chapter II, Book I.

means doing different kinds of actions serially, like plants or animals do; and, “aliveness” entails the different kinds of actions to be done unexpectedly, irregularly, surprisingly, or even confrontationally. The below is to elaborate how the above thinking theory satisfies all these requirements.

An Instruction works on certain data (no more than two usually), always getting the same result, regardless of when, where or who involved in this computation. In this sense, human thinking is fixed, mechanical, or even “dead”, like physical motions in the natural world. However, people are free to, or not to, choose Instructions, combine Instructions with information, and combine different Instructions to compute. This is our humankind’s freedom. We may not have freedom in everything, but do have in these aspects. We think, hesitate, and struggle, because we have freedom of this kind.

It can be inferred from the above theory that originally, a person could be 100% free of choice, and thus deemed “alive”. Knowledge stocks are the accumulated results of history that can be used to direct computations. In the “earliest” (if any) stage of history when knowledge stocks do not exist, there was nothing but the Instructional system in the human brain. Then, some pieces of information were introduced, passively, how should the person respond to them? A reasonable answer is: he/she must respond randomly, i.e., randomly select Instructions to process the informational data, then leading to different results for different persons. If you agree that randomness (or stochasticity) can be included in the meanings of “aliveness”, the modeled people should be originally “alive”.

However, in this context, determinists may argue that although people are, functionally, free to choose

Instruction and information, they must rationally know how to properly choose and combine them so that everybody adopts equivalent approaches (or “programs” as a computer term) to the information processing as if no choices exist at all, objectively, in observers’ eyes.

This is incorrect. The following chapter refutes it.

IV. How the Person Become “Alive”? (2)

The above determinists assume the perfect knowledge or methods that are used to direct information-processing or problem-solving satisfactorily. However, as the knowledge or methods directing production of knowledge are knowledge itself, how could we obtain the knowledge prior to production? Instructions are existent separately or independently in the brain, any method of information-processing is comprised of many Instructional steps, as illustrated in computers. Therefore, not only are the information and results stored in computers, but also programs as Instructional sequences, or the mixture of methods and parameters for computations. Storing programs like informational data to support computing has been a significant creative development in the history of computer science, which clearly shows the meanings, importance and necessity of knowledge accumulation.⁵ A computer without program stock can do nothing but random operations.

Hence, originally, humankind allocate computing time and recurses alternately between method developments and its applications, and the methodological knowledge they acquired at any time is generally limited in both quantity and

⁵ For a basic explanation, please visit <https://www.britannica.com/technology/stored-program-concept>; for excellent philosophical discussions, see Boden 1996, Chapter 8, 9, 10, 14.

quality. Then, people must teach or learn some ready-made knowledge from each other, like we copy and install programs from other persons. These educational performances can intensify knowledge dissemination, application, and development. Nonetheless, knowledge stocks in the society are still and always limited.

Limited knowledge must vary from pieces to pieces. If you agree that the correct or true knowledge as a whole, if any, should be the final result of all computations including the operations of elimination of all mistakes, the different pieces of knowledge owned by different persons, as the makeshifts in history, must be imperfect or flawed, different from, and even incommensurable or conflictive with each other, in these or those aspects. Since knowledge stocks stem from previous longtime enormous computations, and the current operations that adopt knowledge stocks often terminate in short periods, knowledge stocks can affect the computational results to great extent. Therefore, a reasonable conclusion is that the thoughts or opinions of people must often be different, incommensurable, or conflictive in many aspects whereas they agree on each other in other aspects.

Thus, people are “alive” again in each other’s eyes. People do not know exactly what knowledge others have, or what they are thinking, or what ideas they will produce, or what they will do, or how they will change. Moreover, they will also see themselves in the similar way – although they usually know themselves better than others. The same is true as well between different actors, and between actors and observers as researchers. This is the major conclusion that this paper aims at.

“Development” suggests the procedures that

people’s different opinions converge into a consensus, which we can observe often; however, since the extant knowledge is flawed, corrections or innovations can happen to it reasonably, in addition to the introduction of new information, hence divergent procedures will take place again. Combination of Instructions and information can lead to the “combinatorial explosions”⁶ that indicate the infinite possibility of knowledge development, and explain the historic or contemporary developmental social realities. Thus, theoretically, we come to a synthetic, developing, mixed, pluralistic, and expansive thoughtful world.

Limited knowledge and thoughtful differences, from the above perspective, have extensive and deep implications, far from common perceptions on these issues. Let’s gradually expound their details next.

V. Subjectivity and its Manifestation: Psychology

“Aliveness” relates closely to subjectivity, and can be discussed further under it. And, in most cases, subjectivity relates to limited knowledge and interpersonal thoughtful differences that make people appear “subjective”, although any thought or knowledge, from the perspective of above thinking theory, is actually “objective” – regardless of who made it, when or where. In this way objectivity and subjectivity are coordinated and symbiotic.

The spirit or “soul” loiters, which, as a significant manifestation of freedom underscored by humanistic scholars, can be attributed to limited knowledge rather than perfect knowledge. The action of spiritual loitering implies that one does not know what to compute next, hence the current computation hesitates and struggles among different options, or searches inside memories, or just waits –

⁶ See the following webpage for its explanation: <https://www.encyclopedia.com/computing/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/combinatorial-explosion>

also evidences that human thinking or computation is carried out serially, rather than parallelly.⁷ If one has perfect knowledge, he/she may be busy acting on the outside world to pursue happiness, instead of loitering.

“Search” is a thinking action or “Instruction”; however, serial processing entails that any computational action, including search, consumes time and proceeds at a finite speed, thus costly. One must weigh the costs and benefits of computations. Thus, any search must be incomplete, and has to stop somewhere. As the methods and directions used to search are limited, different searches must often find out different results. And, as these results have been merely stocked there, not fully straightened, perhaps incommensurable with each other, the subsequent computations on them would probably lead to different incommensurable opinions, ideas or decisions.

Since computations must be saved to use, one would, reasonably, select the problems to solve; would evaluate the importance of different problems and rank them; would avoid some and highlight others; would neglect something nearby and emphasize others distant; would neglect some local objects and prefer the globality; or, would focus on the useful practical issues than on other trivia, and so on. This causes interpersonal differences and incommensurability again.

Since computations are costly and the knowledge is limited, one would realize that the

⁷ Parallel processing means multiple pieces of processing ongoing simultaneously, which is often used to deny the importance of serial processing. However, the former is usually composed of the latter in a few of number, and the number is extremely tiny in contrast with the number of the computing steps of a serial processing, which then illustrates the fundamental insignificance of parallel processing.

deductive reasoning is often pitifully tedious, infeasible, or ineffective, he/she then recourse to other arbitrary, speculative, but easy and quick methods, such as induction, approximation, analogy, heuristics, experiment, learning, association, imagination, besides the randomization above. These “heterodox” methods can be dissected in principle as the sequential combinations of Instructions. For example, “imagination” can be dissected first into analysis of a certain object, and finding some properties of the object, then search and association of the properties with other ones; next, it may require modification of some variables arbitrarily, to form a new virtue object. Trees are often green, however, we can imagine a tree in blue color, because we arbitrarily assign the variable of “color” of the tree with the value of “blue” that is borrowed from other objects than trees. This dissection can demystify imagination as a spiritual action that humanists prefer.

Since the final knowledge is unreachable as a whole, people must decide something on the “halfway” of history; then, they will make some fixed patterns or modules (or stereotypes) as the knowledge, which are accepted relatively and comparatively. Creating good patterns or modules may cost long time and significant resources, however, their learning and application in current computations should be easier, direct, and quick, thereby obtaining computing economy. Any knowledge stocks can in principle be seen in this way. Sometimes they are reviewed or modified marginally in current computations; in other times, after reviews, they are “authorized” by oneself to run automatically upon certain input or stimuli without

reviewing again, as if many homunculi residing in the brain, controlling computations respectively. This logic can be used to solve the disputes around “autonomous or automatic computation” .⁸

Further, understanding the patterning or modularity of knowledge makes the way to understanding various psychological objects such as emotions, instincts, impulses, desires, and personalities that make people “alive” more. Emotions resemble knowledge patterns that give fixed, flawed, but quick responses to informational stimuli. Instincts direct an infant who has no time enough to develop knowledge for his/her urgent affairs. The impulses and desires as spiritual variables represent the physiological demands of a human body, roughly, “arbitrarily”, but simply and economically.

The person internally subjective will reasonably lead to many social subjectivities as below.

VI. Subjectivity and its Manifestation: Politics

Among various social subjectivities, politics is one of the most prominent, where it is rich in opinions, debates, disputes, and even enforcements or fights. Why and how is politics generated? We need to expound them from the birth of institutions.

Rules in one’s brain are some abstract pieces of knowledge that affect lots of similar computations, coordinate the conflictive patterned thoughts in the brain, hence are conducive to the decision-making of one’s own business. When the computing scope expands to a group of many persons, rules become more important, because the communications among the persons are more difficult than inside a person where neuro system is used to directly undertake the internal communication; hence, the subjectivities

intensify in the group. The independent existence of human body causes the social communicational difficulty, hence people have to develop physical measures such as spoken and written languages to communicate – Especially, people with limited thinking power and limited knowledge are demanding more communications.

Understandably, the non-deterministic frame with personal willful freedom demands enforcements to implement the rules. Should personal actions decided deterministically, the enforcements could be avoided. Multiple such factors that arise from the above thinking theory collectively lead to the generation of institutions, formal or informal, realized with the threat of hard or soft punitive measures.

Institutions are stipulated verbally or orally, and announced openly before actions, to regulate the actions upcoming. However, due to limited knowledge, it is impossible to stipulate proper or sufficient institutions in advance, therefore, another measure was invented, that is namely, many persons are commanded by one person whose own thinking system is reasonably deemed more integrated than the group’s, thus, even if nobody knows exactly in advance what the commands would be, the head person can real-timely produce proper decisions and then command them to act collaboratively. Organizations thereby are born, which coordinate interpersonal conflicts to pursue the benefits that cannot be achieved from mere free persons.

Institutions combine organizations to endogenize the governmental structure and performances, where some branches legislate or implement laws as a kind of knowledge stock, and the president holds the administrative power to conduct public current

⁸ See Schneider, 1999 for “Automaticity”.

computations to make decisions on actions, based on laws, or implementing laws. Separation of power is thus explained.

Political behaviors regulate the flawed society and market. If people behave deterministically and perfectly, they are unnecessary and impossible to be regulated. Politics uses the tools of “right” or “obligation” to reallocate interests. Right or obligation is something made artificially, authorized or imposed unsymmetrically, unlike commercial transactions. The perfect market model, assumed in mainstream economics, is a variant of perfectionism, rationalism, or determinism, and can be reformed in the approach illustrated herewith.

VII. Subjectivity and its Manifestation: Religion

In Chapter V people choose problems to solve, because any knowledge in principle covers only finite scope of objects. Computing economy forces mankind to tradeoff between computational precision and width of the scope of objects. Characteristically, science prefers the former, then covering quite narrow, and keeping silent on abundant practical issues. However, actors or scholars other than scientists must answer or solve the practical or other issues, then have to find the solutions by themselves, due to shortage of relevant scientific knowledge.

This logic makes rooms for various kinds of knowledge other than sciences. Common sense, acquired from families, others, or one’s own practices, supports human to act in most of the real circumstances. Partly based on common sense, and partly based on other reliable or non-reliable knowledge, engineering was generated to directly guide practical actions. The aforesaid law and politics are actually and mainly kinds of social engineering that directs social activities, although

we can “scientifically” study them again. Now, it is the turn to religions.

Religions attempt to answer many cognitive issues such as the generation of the world, where human life comes from and goes toward, as well as many engineering issues such as how to do with other people, with failures and pains, with lifetime, etc. Religions also involve in history, literature, arts, and other cultures, playing significant roles in the western society. Lacking of proper scientific support, and due to the necessity of timely conclusion- or decision-making, it is understandable that from contemporary perspectives, some of the religious arguments and statements are not much quality or convincing, since they were made in ancient times. Thus, religious evolution or reformation has always been underway, implicitly or explicitly, to adapt to knowledge development.⁹

Will religions disappear eventually in accordance with the scientific development and expansion? This is a great and challenging question. However, inferring from perspective of combinatorial explosion, we can realize that the unknown is infinite or endless, deducted by the finite knowledge made, and still remaining infinite or endless. Humankind can really improve, but will never ultimately know. Therefore, there will always be space for subjectivities, beliefs, imaginations, surmises, hypotheses, and hence religions, concomitantexistent in parallel with increasing computational achievements.

VIII. Chinese Traditions and the Globalization

Starting from a simple thinking theory we deductively come to the kaleidoscopic world abundant in differences, subjectivities, diversities, or

⁹ According to structuralists, mythology, magic, and religion was produced in the way similar to science. See Lévi-Strauss, 1963, Part Three.

pluralities, which we could sightsee chronically in history, or horizontally in the earth. Since civilizations as collections of knowledge were developed compounding objectivities with subjectivities in different continents, they are unsurprisingly similar or distinct each other in various aspects, and concurrently in different developing stages. Comparing to the modern western civilization, China can be a paradigm illustrating the interactions between different civilizations.

Despotism (or other similarities) actually characterized most ancient civilizations including ancient China. However, the geographical separation prevented ancient China from being invaded by other countries, thereby preserving even boosting its despotism, in most of its long and continuous history. Coincidentally, a collective political system favors the development of a behindhand economy as a procedure imitating developed economies,¹⁰ which sustains again the governance of Chinese Communist Party in contemporary China where the economy kept rapid growth in past forty years. Among the social chaos, conflicts, or irrelevance we could find out some comparative advantages of collectivism or authoritarianism, with the inferences above. These advantages have been recognized by the American institution which created presidency imitating the post of king in Great Britain.¹¹ The contemporary despotism would believably decline sooner or later, however, some factors of its political tradition might be retained in China's future society, more or less, as in Japan, Russia, Germany, and many Islamic nations.

¹⁰ German economist Friedrich List initiated plenty of thoughts in developing economics. See List, 1909.

¹¹ See Hamilton, 2001, No. 69-71.

Common Chinese are traditionally philosophical, rather than religious, as a Chinese philosopher said. Thus, it would be strikingly surprising that Xuanzang became a hero whom every barber knew in ancient times, who introduced Buddhism from India in Tang dynasty, via his seventeen years' transnational travel on foot. Buddhism stimulated the generation and expansion of indigenous religions in China that increasingly embedded the ordinary life of Chinese people. Buddhism and other religions have been envied, restrained, oppressed, or modified by China's governors in almost all its historic stages. Therefore, although religions are seemingly declining in western societies, they are expected to boom with the rise of western cultures in future China.

Traditional Chinese were and are rich and highly active in spiritual activities, such as philosophy, literature, poem, arts, drama, and so on, except that they were comparatively weak in science. Hence, contemporary China since 1949 focused on the exotic sciences so much that it almost forgot its humanistic history, which, pitifully, rigidified the mentalities of Chinese people. The significance of humanities is to be articulated in the concluding remarks.

IX. Conclusion: the Humanities

The phenomenon that people appear "alive" or "subjective" stems mainly or primarily from the computational economic logic under a framework of thinking model similar to a computer, which is deductively illustrated in the paper. This finding should not disappoint us, but illuminate and encourage both scientific and humanistic studies advancing on a synthetic or unified basis, and hopefully achieving plenty.

Since humans use Instructions to think that are distinct from information, they are originally

“subjective”, and hence human computations are activities of “constructive”, “creative”, and innovative, infinitely and endlessly. Knowledge including ideas, beliefs, skills, and narratives is then divided and modularized, like oases dispersed sparsely in a desert. The word “incommensurability” does not mean that the “oases” at different places will be incommensurable forever, but that they are for the time being, and only in the eyes of actors, and/or of our researchers or observers. Same Instructions processing same data in same orders, always leads to same results, and hence same ideas or opinions. Therefore, incommensurability comes only from different Instructions or data used, or from their different computing orders, where “big data” or huge computing workload, perhaps in quantities unimaginable or unaffordable for us, prevents

thinkers from reaching their consensus. However, knowledge would keep improving marginally, slow or fast, partly attributed to the work of intelligentsia, and to the communications and interactions between intelligentsia and practitioners.

Thus, logically, the descriptive, narrative, or fictional work, such as historiography and literature, will arise in the framework, which mainly collect, trim, and re-showcase informational data. In order to intensify their expressional efficiency, some minimal or scant theories are used, inevitably, and often implicitly. Re-embedded with the thinking theory, the descriptive, narrative, or fictional work could be integrated more closely and effectively with theoretical work, better representing the society than before.

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Freedom of thought and Human Rights in Jain Tradition

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■ Abstract

This article explores the human rights embedded among the key principles and practices of Jainism, and correlates them with in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (International Bill 1948), a mid-20th century document that is regarded to be a major collective achievement of the scholars of many nations. UDHR provides a set of directives for institutions, mainly the government and political organizations. Dharma, as discussed below, provides guidance to an individual in the form of self-discipline. However the nature of a government, especially if it is democratic, depends on what the people believe. The article points out the difference between the spiritual dharma, which is unique to a specific religious tradition, and the worldly dharma that creates a harmonious society. It is sometimes believed that the Jainism is mainly about afterlife and salvation, and thus does not address ordinary

everyday human life and its relationship with the human society and the environment which is the world of living beings. This article points out that this is incorrect. The concept of freedom of thought is a key part of human rights. We examine freedom of thought in Jainism using Jain texts and examples of Jain practices. Examples are given that illustrate how the Jain society not only strove to coexist with other faith traditions but also often supported them.

■ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was a major achievement by the newly formed United Nations in the aftermath of the bloody Second World War, which saw not only aggression but also genocide and weapons of mass destruction. It was drafted by eminent jurists from several countries, Canada, France, Lebanon, China (then represented by the Nationalist Kuomintang) with the

chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt of USA. It was adapted on December 10, 1948, by a vote of 48 to 0. Nine countries abstained, seven in the Communist bloc (who objected to the individualist perspective), South Africa (which then used apartheid as a basic principle) and the Kingdom Saudi Arabia (which drew inspiration from its Salafi foundations). The document is considered to be mainly of moral character, however, it has been cited internationally often that some of the components of the Declaration have acquired the status of virtual international legal code.

The articles included in the UDHR may be summarized as follows.

§1–§2: Concepts of dignity, liberty, equality, brotherhood.

§3–§11: Individual rights, right to life, prohibition of slavery, universal freedom of speech.

§6–§11: Fundamental legality of human rights with specific remedies.

§12–§17: Rights of the individual towards the community (freedom of movement etc.).

§18–§21: Constitutional liberties, spiritual, public, and political freedoms, such as freedom of thought, opinion, religion and conscience, word, and peaceful association of the individual.

§22–§27: Individual's economic, social and cultural rights.

§28–§30: Ways of using these rights and exclusions.

Here we consider the parallels between the Declaration and the Jain tradition as announced by the Jain acharyas in section below.

What is dharma?

It is necessary to understand the term “dharma” as used in the Jain and other Dharmic traditions.

The term “dharma” is often translated as “religion” or “deen” (Arabic). However, the dharmic texts and scholarship make it clear that this interpretation is misleading, or at least only partially correct.

The Jain Acharya Haribhadra, author of many Sanskrit and Prakrit texts, is estimated to have flourished around sixth century in Rajasthan. He provides these sutras in his (Haribhadra 1968)

सोऽयमनुष्ठातृभेदात् द्विविधः – गृहस्थधर्मो यतिधर्मश्च ॥१॥

गृहस्थाधर्मोऽपि द्विविधः – सामान्यतो विशेषतः ॥२॥

These sutras specify that there are two dharmas, one for householders (laity), other for renunciates (wandering monks). For the householders, again there are two dharmas: ordinary (i.e. worldly) and specific (practices unique to Jainism, that allow one to rise spiritually). While Haribhadra belonged to the Shvetambara tradition, the 10th century Jain Acharya Somadeva belonging to the Digambara tradition concurs. His Yashastilaka Champu composed in Karnataka includes a chapter "Upasakadyayana" that deals with the practice of Dharma. He declares (Handiqui, 1968),

द्वौ हि धर्मौ गृहस्थानां लौकिकः पारलौकिकः।

लोकाश्रयो भवेदाद्यः परः स्यादागमाश्रयः॥

The householders have two dharmas: one that pertains to the world and one that pertains to beyond. The first one is based on the world (i.e. conventions and practices that allow human beings to seek happiness), and the other is based on the scriptures (agamas), that have come down from the Kevalis such as Lord Mahavira.

The word “dharma” is frequently misinterpreted. A recent example is the controversy over the address by Jain Muni Tarunsagar in Haryana Assembly on Aug 27, 2016. He was widely known for his controversial “Kadave Pravachan” (literally harsh discourses). Discussing the need for regulation of

political practices he stated: “Rajniti par dharm ka ankush zaroori hai ...” (outlook 2016) It was mostly translated correctly in the Indian press as “The control of Dharma over politics is necessary”. However Ujjal Dosanjh, the Canadian India politician used the translation of dharma into religion and wrote:

“He left absolutely no room for confusion when he said, “Religion must control politics. The two are inseparable.” That left me completely angry. ..” Indian Express 2016.

Dharma, properly translated, refers to as the natural and proper conduct.

Jain religious texts often address the spiritual dharma, because the worldly dharma is presumed to be guided by everyday life. However, some Jain acharyas have explicitly addressed the worldly dharma. Acharya Haribhadra and Ashadhar, a lay scholar of 12-13th century, have both given a set of 35 aphorisms for the worldly dharma.

■ Dharma in Tamil classic Tirukkural

The Jain perspective of the worldly dharma is presented in the Tamil classic Tirukkural attributed to sage Tiruvaluvar, dated variously from 300 BCE to 400 CE. A latter limit is suggested by another Tamil classic, Silappadigaram, which is generally dated to 2-3rd cent CE. which quotes a verse in Tirukkural. With the exception of the Preface consisting of four chapters constituting the traditional Manglacharana, it is essentially a secular text and is thus accepted widely by scholars of different traditions, even atheists. (Tinkkural). Its main body includes three sections:

Book I – Aṛattuppāl Dharma (virtues)

Book II – Poruṭpāl Artha (wealth)

Book III – Kāmattuppāl Kama (desires)

Some of the chapters provide guidance to the ruler

and the administrators, similar to Niti-Vakyamritam compilation by Acharya Somadeva mentioned above. Niti-Vakyamritam quotes numerous scholars, mostly from the non-Jain traditions in support of the directives (niti) stated by Somadeva.

Here is a selection of some of the Kural verses that support human responsibilities. The translation is by T. Kannan. Tirukkural, 2021

One who is aligned to the right ways of the world lives amongst the alive. (214)

Even in times of distress, those who don't shy away from beneficence, have clear vision of their moral responsibilities. (218)

The world will embrace the feet of the ruler, who embraces his people and renders justice. (544)

“I'll serve my people,” for the one who so said, god shall gird up his robes and rush to his aid. (1023)

■ Dharma in Dharmabindu of Haribhadra

The 35 sutras in the Dharmabindu of Haribhadra include the following.

न्यायोपात्तं हि वित्तमुभयलोकायेति ॥४॥

The wealth earned fairly, brings benefits in this life and beyond.

अदेश कालचर्यापरिहर इति ॥४५॥

Avoid doing what is contrary to the needs of the time and the place.

तथा – ऊहापोहादियोग इतीति ॥५८॥

A person should ask questions and listen to the answers.

■ Jain Anu-vratas

In Jainism, the term “vrata” implies self-imposed control. The code of conduct for the renunciates is stated in the form of five mahavratas (great vows of self-control): Ahimsa, Satya, Achaurya, Brahmacharya (celibacy), Aparigraha (non-possession). For the monks, the rules are

completely limiting. There are corresponding rules for the lay Jains, however, for them, the limitations are only partial and hence their vratas are termed anu-vratas (little vows). They thus are not completely celibate since they have families and are not completely without possessions, however they limit their possessions.

The table 1 below compares the maha-vratas, anu-vratas and the elements of the UDHR.

The anu-vrata concept has been extended by some scholars for modern professions such as

politicians, software developers, etc. The best known of them were proposed by the late Acharya Tulsi for the individuals and the society soon after India's Independence, and are discussed below.

It is notable that the Hellenic Stoic philosophy, which is regarded to have influenced thinkers such as Josephus (37-100 CE) and Marcus Aurelius (Roman Emperor, 161-181 CE) and Maimonides (1135-1204 CE) also stressed self-control.

■ **Anu-vratas and Human Rights as specified in UDHR**

It is possible to correlate human rights as

Table 1 Vratas in Jainism and UDHR articles - a comparison

Vrata	Maha-vrata	Anu-vrata	UD Human Rights (articles)
Classical Jain Vratas			
Ahimsa	Non-violence	Minimization of violence	Right to life, §1-§10
Satya	Truth	Minimize falsehoods	§11
Acharya	Non-stealing	Non-stealing	§17, §24
Brahmacharya	Celibacy	Chastity	§16,
Aparigraha	Non-possession	Limiting possessions	§25,
Proposed additions			
Freedoms			§1, §9, §13-15, §18-23
Opportunities			§26-§29
Equality			§7-§10

specified in the UDHR and the five vratas. The major distinction between the two is that a person imposes a vrata for himself, where as a human right is provided by the society (enforced by a government) to the people within the society. If the human rights are embedded among the values of the society, eventually they will be reflected as the

values professed by the government.

Having looked at the articles of human rights, I identify three groups of human rights that are not included in the five vratas. If the vratas are extended to be applicable to societies, I believe that the three additional vratas will cover most of the articles of UDHR.

■ Freedom of thought and Jain Anekanta-vada

Jainism inherently supports coexistence of multiple perspectives. The principle of Anekanta-vada (principle of multiple perspectives) is one of the key concepts in Jainism. It states that it is possible to observe a single reality from multiple perspective and describe it differently. Anekanta-vada has guided both Jain individuals and the Jain society. Although the Jain society is thought to have been traditionally quite conservative, it has not only acknowledged other religious and philosophical traditions, there have been notable instances of Jains actually supporting them, morally and financially.

A point of view that is too narrow, is regarded to be flawed. There is even a term for a perspective that takes only a single point of view, “ekanti”. It has a negative connotation when used by Jain scholars. (Praman Sagar). Several examples of support of pluralism by the Jain society are presented below.

Era Mahameghavahan Kharavela was the Jain king of Orissa around 2nd cent BCE. He has left a famous Prakrit inscription, often termed the Hathigumpha inscription in Brahmi script. It is a long inscription with 17 lines. The last line declares:

गुणविसेस-कुसलो सब पासंडपूजको

सवदेवायतन संकार कारको..

राजसिवसकुल विनिसितो

महा विजयो राजा खारवेल सिरि ।

Translation:

The great conqueror, King Kharavela, born in the Rajarshi clan is skilled in noble attributes, he is a worshipper of all sects, and preserver of temples of all gods.

The famous Bhaktamar-Stotra of Jain Acharya Manatunga (Gupta period) is a widely recited Jain prayer. Its 25th verse recalls the terms used for the

deities of various traditions in the context of Lord Adinatha, the first Jain Tirthankara:

बुद्धस्त्वमेव विबुधार्चित-बुद्धि-बोधात्,

त्वं शंकरोऽसि भुवन-त्रय- शंकरत्वात्।

धातासि धीर! शिव-मार्ग विधेर्विधानाद्,

व्यक्तं त्वमेव भगवन् पुरुषोत्तमोऽसि ॥२५॥

This is in remarkable contrast to the rulers in many parts of the world who proudly boasted that they adhered to the one and only true faith and stamped out the heresies.

In many ways, Jainism and its principles and practices are very unique. However, the Jains acknowledge the wisdom of the scholars in other traditions and often have been willing to assist other religious traditions, as the examples below illustrate.

Several rulers in India have been Jain. They include Kharvela, Rashtrakuta Amoghavarsha (800 – 878 CE) and Solanki Kumarapala (1143 – 1172 CE). They honored and supported all religions as shown by the archaeological records. Kumarapala is known to have repaired the Somanatha temple.

A modern example of Jain support of pluralism is the Dharmasthala institutions that includes the famous Manjunath Swami Shiva temple in Karnataka. It was founded 800 years ago by the Hegade family which still administers it. The family representative is termed the Dharmadhikari which has a significant influence among the Hindus as well as others in the regions, even though the Hegade family has always been well known a Jain family. They have been organizing annually an annual Sarva Dharma Sammelan since 1932, which brings together all the religions. There are several examples of Jains contributions to Hindu temples and Sikh shrines and even mosques and churches.

Ancient Jain libraries (Patan, Jaisalmer,

etc.) have preserved Vedic, Puranic, Secular and Buddhist texts. Jain scholars have sometimes written commentaries on them. They have been a rich source of manuscripts for the scholars when they searched for manuscripts for preparing the critical editions of religious as well as secular ancient Indian texts.

It is interesting to note that Jain scholar scribes have produced copies of the text from other traditions. In Rajasthan, there exists a class of Jain scholars called "Mahatma" who are engaged in scholarship like the monks but marry and live a lay life. They are described in *Dabestan-e Mazaheb* (1655 CE) by an obscure Persian author, perhaps Kay Khosrow Esfandiyar. (Muhsin 1901).

The British Library preserves a copy of the *Mewad Ramayana* which has been described as "one of the most beautiful manuscripts in the world." Its colophon states that the illustrated manuscript was commissioned for Maharana Jagat Singh I of Mewar, and was written by the Mahatma Hirananda in 1650, as ordered the Jain Acharya Jasavanta. (*Mewar Ramayana*)

■ Jainism and Christianity

An interesting example of Jains supporting Christian institutions can be seen at Mathura. The Roman Catholic Church of the Sacred Heart was constructed in 1860 at Mathura by the then collector of Mathura F. S. Growse who in addition to his administration duties, had a deep interest in Indian languages and history. He notes that one of the largest donations for the church (Rs. 1100) was by Seth Gobind Das, the Jain Nagar Seth of Mathura. (browse 1982)

Incidentally, the family of the Jain Nagar Seths of Mathura had constructed the massive Vaishnava Rangaji temple of Vrindavan in 1845. The Seths of Mathura continued to be major force in Jainism,

they founded the Digambar Jain Mahasabha in 1900, and influential organization that is still active and influential.

■ Jainism and Sikhism

Sikhism is sometimes considered to be very distinct from Jainism. Sikhism is the newest of the major world religions. The Sikhs are considered to be a martial people whereas the Jains are thought to be very non-aggressive. However, it is interesting to note the interaction of Jainism and Sikhism.

The tenth and the last Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh was born in Patna, Bihar when his father Guru Teg bahadur lived there. It is notable that at the time of the birth of the 10th Guru, his parents were guests in the haveli owned by Salis Rai Johri, a Jain businessman in Patna. The Jain family gave half of the haveli for gurdwara Janam Sthaan. Today a gurudwara marking his birth stands on half of his property, and in the other half a Jain temple.

Two sons of Guru Gobind Singh and his mother executed by Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind when they refused to convert in 1705. After their death, the local ruler refused to provide land for their cremation. The land for cremating their bodies was purchased by a Jain businessman Diwan Todar Mal Jain of Sirhind, who covered the land needed by gold coins, as the demanded price.

■ Jainism and Islam

It will come as a surprise to many that the oldest Islamic house of worship in India was constructed by a Jain. The oldest Islamic shrine in India is the Shrine of Ibrahim (better known as Lal Shahbaz Dargah) at Bhadreswar in Gujarat. It was built in 1160 AD before the Turkish conquest of India.

Mehrdad Shokoohy, Islamic Architecture regards this as earliest Muslim monument in India based on archaeological evidence. (shokoohy,1988)

The so-called Cheraman Perumal mosque in Kerala, which is mistakenly claimed as the oldest mosque in India, is actually from a much more recent period. The architecture of the Shrine of Ibrahim is similar to the Jain temples Gujarat or Rajasthan region from the same period. It has an inscription dated 1160, which marks the first use of Kufic script in India.

The region was administered by a Jain merchant prince Jagdu Shah. According to Jain text Jagaducharita (1256 AD), a grant was provided by the Jain ruler Jagdu Shah for the construction of a mosque.

मसीतिं कारयामास, खीमलीसंज्ञितामसौ ।

भद्रेश्वरपुरे म्लेच्छ-लक्ष्मीकरणतः खलु ॥६३॥

Thus Jagadu had constructed a mosque name Khimli to encourage international trade.

■ Brahmin and Bhojak (with Zoroastrian descent Priests in Jain temples)

Many Jain temples in some regions of India have tradition of employing Brahmin priests. Many of the priests in the Jain temples southern Rajasthan and Gujarat belong to the Bhojak community. According to the Bhavishya Purana as well as the internal accounts of the Bhojaks, they were invited from the Shakadvipa (i.e. Central Asia) for the worship of Lord Surya (Mithra or Mihira). The account in Bhavishya Purana make it clear that they were Maga priests (Latin Magi) belonging to the Zoroastrian (Mazdayasni) heritage. (Nabar 2010). The Sanskrit authors Varahamihira, the author of Brihat-Samhita (6th cent), and poet Magha, the author of Shishupala Vadha are regarded to have been bhojakas.

The Bhojakas has been associated with Jainism at least since the Kadamaba Dynasty in Goa, as they are mentioned in three Jain copper-plates from the fifth century. (Telanga 1877)

■ Judaism and Jainism

There appears to have been no clearly recorded interaction between the Jews and the Jain communities except in recent times. (Neaplonists) In Amsterdam, the diamond business has been mainly in the hands of the Jewish merchants until the past few decades when some Jain families settled there. They have interacted harmoniously with friendly relations. (Backman 2005)

■ Independent Thinkers and rationalists

The Jain scholars, including those, belong to the monastic orders tend to be quite traditional. While there are several Jain traditions, with the earliest splits occurring in 3rd century BCE, doctrinally they remain very close.

However, with the emphasis on the spirit of enquiry, the Jain society has produced several notable free thinkers. They include the controversial thinker Osho (formerly known as Rajneesh), Swami Satyabhakta who founded a rationalistic religion called “Satya Samaj” complete with its own scriptures, and Arjun Sethi, the revolutionary who was a founder of the Jaipur Praja Mandal in Rajasthan. Appar Tirunavukkarasar Nayanar, sometimes considered a virtual founder of Saiva Siddhanta in the 7th century, was educated in a Jain monastery in Tamilnadu.

In India, the major Dharmic traditions, Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism, with many individual schools of thought have flourished with mutual coexistence. New schools emerge time to time. The Indian culture has supported an environment where thinking is unfettered. India has a long tradition of pluralism that includes not only mutual support but also critical reasoning

and interreligious arguments (शास्त्रार्थ, literally discussions about scriptures).

In the traditional Jain study practices, the students are encouraged to raise questions and seek answers. The process is described using the Sanskrit word-pair उहापोह (asking questions, responding to them). This is somewhat similar to the Jewish practice of studying the Talmud.

Some of the Jain scholars have used a rational perspective as opposed to one based entirely on faith. Haribhadra Suri has written:

पक्षपातो न वीरे न द्वेषाः कपिलादिपु ।
युक्तिमद्वचनं यस्य तरस कार्यः परिग्रहः ॥

I am not partial to Mahavira and opposed to Kapila and other philosophers. I follow those whose words are logical. (Jain 2017)

■ Meri Bhavana Prayer

Meri Bhavana (my wishes) One of the most popular Jain prayers is the famous 1916 composition by Jugal Kishor Mukhtar, an outstanding Jain scholar, and researcher of his time. While it is a Jain prayer, it is very non-sectarian and invokes human values. The prayer does not seek blessings, but inner resolve to do the right things.

Its opening verse follows the Gupta period Bhaktamara stotra in invoking deities of different traditions:

बुद्ध, वीर, जिन, हरि, हर, ब्रह्मा, या उसको स्वाधीन कहो।
भक्ति-भाव से प्रेरित हो यह चित्त उसी में लीन रहो॥१॥

He may be called Buddha, Mahavira, Jina, Hari hara (Shiva), Brahma or the liberated one. May my mind be devoted to him. Verse 5 states:

मैत्रीभाव जगत में मेरा सब जीवों पर नित्य रहे।
दीन-दुःखी जीवों पर मेरे उर से करुणा-स्रोत बहे।

May I have friendship with all living beings,

may I be kind to all unfortunate beings. Verse 7 hopes:

अथवा कोई कैसा ही भय या लालच देने आवे।, तो भी न्याय
मार्ग से मेरे कभी न पद डिगने पावे। ॥७॥

May I, even in distress or when tempted, not deviate from the path of justice. Verse 10 wishes the ruler should rule all his subjects fairly.

धर्मनिष्ठ होकर राजा भी न्याय प्रजा का किया करे .. ॥१०॥

■ Anuvrat Movement of Acharya Tulsi

Acharya Tulsi (1914-1997) was an Acharya (i.e. leader of the order of monks and nuns) of the Shvetambar Terapanth order. He is known for his Anuvrat Movement launched in March 1949 at Sardarshahar, a small town in Rajasthan, in response to concerns he heard from lay Jains regarding injustices and corruption in the society. It was shortly after India's independence in 1947 and the aftermath of the Second World War. He established a non-religious organization to promote peace and improve individual morality. He hoped to encourage non-violence and to eventually create a more virtuous country through individual behavior. (Strostr 2014)

His Anuvrata Movement included the following general vows that may be considered extensions of the classical anu-vratas found in Jain texts. The vows may be summarized as below.

1. I will not intentionally kill moving, innocent creatures, I will not commit suicide and I will not commit an act that causes the death of a fetus.
2. I will not attack anybody, I will not support aggression and I will try to bring about world peace and disarmament.
3. I will not take part in violent agitations and I will not take part in any destructive activities.
4. I will not discriminate on the basis of caste,

- color etc., I will not treat anyone as an untouchable, and I will believe in human unity
5. I will practice religious tolerance and I will not rouse sectarian hatred
 6. I will practice integrity and moral virtues in business and general behavior, I will not harm others for any reason and I will not practice deceit.
 7. I will practice chastity and will set limits to acquisition.
 8. I will not resort to unethical practices in elections.
 9. I will not encourage socially evils.
 10. I will lead a life free from addictions and I will not use intoxicants like alcohol, marijuana, heroin, tobacco, etc.
 11. I will be alert to preventing pollution in the environment, I will not cut down trees and I will not waste water.

Some scholars have suggested that Acharya Tulsi drew inspiration from Mahavira's theory of mutual interdependence, in which all living beings render service to one another. According to Lord Mahavira, "One who neglects or disregards the existence of earth, air, fire, water, and vegetation disregards his own existence which is entwined with them".

In addition to the general anuvratas, he formulated anuvrat vows for specific groups of individuals like students, teachers, etc. Two of the examples are included here.

Anuvratas for students: I will

- not cheat in examinations
- not take part in violent agitations and destructive activities
- not use obscene language

- not read pornographic literature
 - not watch obscene movies
 - not use intoxicants, such as alcohol
 - not use unethical practices in elections
 - be courteous towards my parents and teachers
- Anuvratas for teachers: I will
- help as much in the building of my student's character as in his or her mental development
 - not help students cheat in examinations
 - give no place to party politics in my educational institution
 - not encourage my students to take part in party politics
 - not use intoxicants
 - co-operate in expanding the Anuvrat Movement

It is notable that the Anuvrat Movement included a Code of Conduct for nations. These voluntary rules for nation states are intended to decrease potential discord between countries. These are:

- No country should commit aggression against another country.
- No country should try to occupy the territory or grab the property of another country.
- No country should interfere in the internal affairs of another country.
- No country should try to impose its form of government or ideology on another country.
- In the event of differences between them, countries should adopt a policy of reconciliation.
- There must be efforts to bring about disarmament.
- Developed countries must have goodwill towards under-developed countries.

The Anuvrata Movement has inspired other scholars. Scott R. Stroud of the University of Texas at Austin has proposed the following Anuvratas for citizens in a democratic country.

- I will act as if every issue has two sides to it.
- I will believe that each side is motivated by reasonable and good intentions.
- I will attend to a wide range of evidence and information.
- I will try to find ways to argue and conclude disagreement while maintaining the value of all participants.

■ Conclusions

The concept of worldly dharma in Jainism was developed with a different objective since it provides guidelines for an individual, while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was developed as a guideline for the modern nations. The article points out that they are similar. The article discusses, one of the key human rights, the freedom of thought, in Jainism based on the concept of anekanta, and provides several specific examples.

■ Biography

Yashwant K. Malaiya has been a Professor in Computer Science Department at Colorado State University since 1982. He has published widely in the areas of security vulnerabilities, fault modeling, software and hardware reliability, testing and testable design. He has also published more than a dozen articles on Jain history and demography, both in Hindi and English. His first publication in 1971 was on Jain history.

He served as a General Chair for IEEE International Symposium on Software Reliability Engineering, Denver, 2003, IEEE Asian Test Symposium, Shanghai, 1999, International

Conference on VLSI Design, Bombay, India, 1993 and IEEE Int. Symposium on Microarchitecture, Albuquerque, 1991. He founded the IEEE International Workshop on IDDQ Testing in 1995.

He edited "Software Reliability Models, Theoretical Developments, Evaluation and Applications" and "Bridging Faults and IDDQ Testing" published by IEEE Computer Society. He has served as an ABET commissioner and has evaluated more than dozen Computer Science Programs in USA and Middle East. He has served as a volunteer for IEEE Computer Society several capacities. He has received the IEEE Third Millennium Medal in 2000 and IEEE CS Golden Core Award in 1996. Novel technical concepts developed by him and his students include "Detectability Profile" (1984) for characterizing random testing and "Antirandom Testing" approach (1995) for generating efficient testing sequences for hardware and software. He developed the Malaiya-Denton model for test coverage-reliability relationship (1994) and the Alhazmi Malaiya Logistic (AML) vulnerability discovery model (2004). He has also published investigated and published articles on the historic wooden St. Louis Jain Temple and the legendary Godiji Parshwanth temple now in Pakistan.

He was the creator of the very first website on Hindi language in 1996 and the first major website on Jainism in 1997. He was the founder of the India Association of Northern Colorado in 1998 and has served as its elected President for four terms.

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Bhagwan Mahavir: A Crusader for Women Rights

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When we talk of Human Rights, we generally mean *MEN RIGHTS* and not Women Rights even though women constitute at least half (50%) of the human population. Women gave births to Rama, Krishna, Mahavira, Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mohammad and Gandhi. Women are compassionate and peace loving. Nearly all wars in human history were started by men; hardly any by women. For generations and in most faiths on earth, women were and have been more religious than men but still denied entry and equal status.

Women deserve the highest respects, honor and status in the society equal to or even greater than that of men. But the fact is that throughout history of human race, in all cultures and countries, women never enjoyed and were never given equal rights to that of men. Among humans, women (of all ages) have been most abused and oppressed. Women were called and treated as property of men. In fact, in

some cultures the way women were treated and are still being treated, one can even say that it is a curse to be born as a woman.

This paper discusses how Bhagwan Mahavira (the last Tirthankar of Jain Dharma) 2600 years ago started an action-oriented crusade against cruelty to women. He used Ahimsa and its subset of anuvrata of Brahamcharya as a tool. He was the first one to talk and preach of Equal Rights, equal treatment and Emancipation for women. In this paper I put forth a point that just like Mahatma Gandhi used Satyagraha (a subset of ahimsa) to bring social and political change, similarly, Bhagwan Mahavira used Brahamcharya anuvrata (vow) to bring about Emancipation of women. Both satyagraha and Brahamcharya are based on ahimsa.

What is Ahimsa/nonviolence?

Before we discuss how and what Bhagwan Mahavira did to uplift the status of women, let us first understand what Ahimsa is.

Ahimsa means the absence of the desire to injure or kill and a disinclination to do harm. It also means both mental and physical concern for the welfare of others; humans and non-humans. Prof. Gary Francione of Rutgers University defines ahimsa as “staying in equanimity” (*samyaktva bhaav*) and notes that any step away from equanimity is himsa (*violence*) or can be understood as walking towards himsa. Himsa (*violence*) refers to any action accompanied by the giving of pain or rise of passions, whereas ahimsa is about not inflicting harm and pain to one’s self or others in thoughts, words, or actions.

Himsa (*violence*) in any shape or form to humans and non-humans causes vibrations (*spandan*) of the soul (*aatmaa*) and hence cause of asrava (*influx*) and bandha (*binding*) of karmas. On the other hand, Ahimsa is the cessation of vibration (*spandan*) of the soul (*aatmaa*). Laws of ahimsa and Karmas apply everywhere and do not change with time or place. Himsa causes suffering (mental, verbal and physical) to self and to other mobile multi-sensed beings. Any himsa in any shape or form to another mobile being is not ok.

In Jain Dharma, foundation of ahimsa is based on that all *jivas* (humans and non-humans) have souls, that all souls are equal in all respects and have the same right, that all souls feel pain and pleasures and all souls have a right to live undisturbed by others and thus complete their own journey of life and therefore *all souls must be treated equal otherwise it is Himsa. We may call it DEMOCRACY OF EXISTENCE too.*

Since Ahimsa is so broad and encompassing, it is hard to fully define ahimsa. Still, one can say that “*Mentally, verbally, physically, directly, indirectly, knowingly, unknowingly, intentionally,*

and unconditionally, not by self, not through others (engage or ask others) and not condone or provide support to others in any shape or form to injure, harm, abuse, oppress, enslave, insult, discriminate, torment, persecute, torture or kill, any creature or living being (humans and non-humans) however so small, is nonviolence (ahimsa).”

■ Jain Dharma and Ahimsa

According to Philip Wolen of Australia, “the most beautiful word ever written in any language, in any culture, anywhere in the world and at any time in the entire history of Human race is Ahimsa.”

In Jain dharma, unconditional Ahimsa is called Parmo-dharma or supreme religion. Ahimsa is the Life Force, the *aatmaa*, the centerpiece, the central pole and the foundation of Jainism. Jainism stands on the pillar of ahimsa. In reality, ahimsa and Jainism are two sides of the same coin.

The wisdom traditions of the world offer pathways for humans to live with each other and with the natural world in a more peaceful and harmonious way. Among the religions, none has made the striving for peace more central, and none has called its followers to higher standards of ahimsa, than Jainism.

■ Bhagwan Mahavira and Ahimsa

Parveen Jain in a paper titled Ahimsa and The Social Reforms Inspired by Lord Mahavira says that “the name of Lord Mahavira the last jina (the liberated soul) of this era, immediately invokes the thought of Ahimsa (nonviolence) – perhaps the most valuable gift ever granted to humanity. There is no one in the history of mankind who promoted the value of nonviolence more robustly than him, and no one is more effective, thoughtful and kindhearted champion of comprehensive nonviolence. The core of Lord Mahavira’s glory is in his meaningful and effective application of nonviolence towards social issues. His teachings led to widespread public

transformations during his time and have continued to inspire social reformers like Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King throughout the history”.

Bhagwan Mahavira said “Kill not, cause no pain. Nonviolence is the greatest religion. In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self. All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor abused, nor tormented, nor driven away.”

This is the essence of ahimsa in Jaina philosophy – it is compassion, empathy, a profound wisdom that a common Atman pulsates in all beings, making each equally worthy of life, and denying the human-made hierarchy that sets a human or more-powerful mammal above a creature that it has the power to kill. Ahimsa is not a passive or mechanical act of merely refraining from an act of violence; it is a proactive affirmation of divinity in all creation.

Prior to and during Bhagwan Mahavira’s times there was rampant himsa and cruelty of all kinds in the society (in pooja, worship, havans, yagna, sacrifice, food, clothing, transport, customs and traditions) to many 1 – 5 sensed mobile beings including to women as well. These included animal sacrifices in food, sports religious rituals; human slavery; societal discrimination on the basis of caste, gender, and economic status; and pollution and destruction of the environment

Bhagwan Mahavira was the biggest crusader to reduce/ eliminate himsa to all 1-5 sensed mobile creatures. 2,600 years ago, he laid down a very specific and detailed code of conduct for Jain laity in regard to the practice of ahimsa in their daily lives. He made ahimsa the centerpiece of his sermons and of his fourfold Sangh (community).

He, through his own self-practice, preaching and practical demonstrations, strongly objected and revolted against the prevalent practices of himsa

(violence) in many customs and traditions of the day.

Women, their treatment in the society, Women Rights, Women Emancipation and ahimsa

Before we talk of Women Rights and Women Emancipation, let us first look at the status of women in the society before, during and after Bhagwan Mahavira.

■ **Status of Women in the society**

To the best of my knowledge, NO religion has ever been kind to women in all societies all over the world. Throughout history, in all cultures and countries, women never enjoyed and were never given equal rights to that of men. Among humans, women (of all ages) have been most abused and oppressed. Women were called and treated as property of men. Women, livestock, and captured or conquered people were property objects contributing to the total amount of capital/wealth. This meant like any property, men accumulated and collected women to exhibit power, wealth, status, affluence, glory, prestige. They were sold and traded openly, enslaved, tortured, raped and abused. Women had no say, no right to vote and to position and power.

Crimes on women



Women existed purely for the pleasures of men, were considered as nothing but sex objects (sex machines) to satisfy the sensual needs of men and to produce children. They had no rights to their own body and property. Their bodies were (and still are) mutilated. *Johar* tradition (when women burned themselves alive in fires when their husbands got defeated/killed in wars and *Sutee* tradition where young widows were burnt alive in a funeral pyre (most gruesome and highest form of himsa) are the very reminders of himsa. Fortunately, in spite of the opposition by Hindu priests, the British Govt. outlawed the Sutee tradition in 1800s. Till recently Devadasi tradition existed for the exploitation of women by male priests.

Wars though horrific to combatants and general population, were potent methods used by the wealthy aristocracy to increase its accumulation of women,

cattle/capital, land, power and prestige. Many wars used to take place just to get more women.

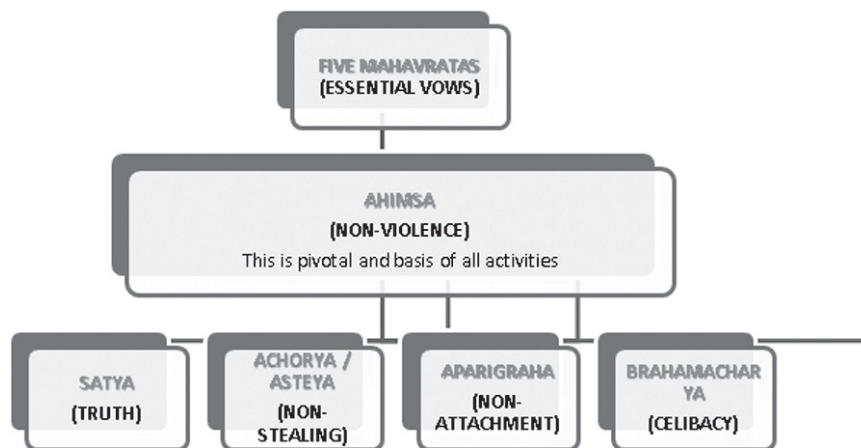
■ Bhagwan Mahavira, Ahimsa and Women Emancipation

Prior to and even during Mahavir's time, women had no Rights, they were made slaves, traded, sold in open markets and tortured. When Bhagwan Mahavira saw this uncontrolled and horrible barbaric himsa to animals and to women in the name of religions and traditions, he was aghast with this kind of himsa/ torture to other fellow human beings.

To give women equal rights and treatment to that of men, **he added the fifth mahavrata/anuvrata (vow) of Brahmacharya.** This was a very bold and revolutionary move. Prior to Bhagwan Mahavira, there were only four (4) Maha/anuvratas.

Why did Bhagwan Mahavira add this fifth vow?

Many people think that Brahmacharya vow



means celibacy only and that Bhagwan Mahavira added this vow to promote celibacy in his SANGH. In my view this is a narrow interpretation of Brahmacharya vrata (vow). If we go by this interpretation, then it means that there was no celibacy in the mendicants/ascetics and householders before Mahavira and that is why Bhagwan Mahavira

added this 5th mahavrata for monks and anuvrata for men to promote and observe celibacy.

In my opinion, Jain ascetics /sadhus have always been required to observe celibacy and were and are always forbidden to have any prigraha/possessions (including women). Therefore, the addition of the fifth vrata did not change anything for them.

For the householders, there is also a general belief within the Jain community that prior to Bhagwan Mahavira, women were included in the Aparigrah anuvrata. Aparigrah means having a limit and not complete abstention from material possessions including women. This interpretation means that men (sravaks) should exercise limits on the number of women they possess but not necessarily on how they treat them. If Brahamcharya vrata meant celibacy only, then sravaks should observe celibacy but not necessarily treat women any better either. But the truth is that women have always been treated like dirt with no respect at all before and after Mahavira.

■ My interpretation of Brahamcharya

It consists of two words; *Braham + Charya*. Braham means soul, Aatmaa or Bhagwan/GOD and Charya means to dwell. Thus, Brahamcharya means to dwell in one's aatmaa or in Bhagwan/GOD / divinity. It also means to live in equanimity, ahimsa, equality and hatred towards none i.e., veetrakta, (वीतरागता). Brahamcharya literally means "going after/seeking Brahman (Supreme Reality, Self or God)".

Celibacy is one part of Brahamcharya. Brahamcharya is a lot lot more than just celibacy only. Celibacy is not for everyone but Brahamcharya is for everyone. Celibacy is highly desirable and expected from ascetics (both male and female) but for the ordinary householders (male & female), celibacy is optional (depending upon one's circumstances and situations).

Celibacy is an integral part of ahimsa and violation of vow of celibacy (by any, mendicant/ ascetic and lay people) is himsa. Any sexual act, in any shape and form results in himsa /killing of *ekendriya* (one sensed) life (semen) is himsa. This is

an ideal view /nishchaya naya point of view.

Brahamcharya for monks and nuns means complete celibacy coupled with self-restraint, and mastery of and perfect/full control over the sexual and sensual organs and desires. It requires freedom from lust in thought, word and deed 24x7.

In certain religious traditions (such as Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and some traditions of Christianity), mendicants/clergy and spiritual teachers may or may not follow celibacy. In fact, it is not mandatory for them. It is a personal choice. Catholic Priests are required to be celibate. The Lay Followers of these traditions are not required to be celibate.

Brahamcharya for householders means control, restraints and limits on fulfillment of KAMA (sensual pleasures). For them Brahmacharya is the virtue -celibacy when unmarried and fidelity and absence of adultery when married.

Brahamcharya also deals with and refers to the fair, ethical, equal and ahimsak use, interaction, treatment and status of women and men in the society. Without this firm attitude, practice of Brahamcharya and even of celibacy is incomplete.

Brahmcharya has 4 components or 4 equally important dimensions. These are;

- ▶ Complete freedom from lust (for monks and nuns).
- ▶ Chastity, Celibacy and limit on fulfillment of Kama (sensual) needs (for house holders).
- ▶ To dwell in Brahman/Aatmaa (for all truth seekers).

All the above fall into the self-penance and spiritual up-liftment of the self (तपस्या).

- ▶ Respect and treatment of women and men (both genders) as fully equal in all respect (by all, monks, nuns, and householders).

This falls into the category of observing ahimsa towards other human beings and also Human Rights, and particularly Women Rights. This is for the treatment of others (other than self).

In, Jain, Hindu and Buddhist traditions, brahmacharya is a must code of conduct (for men and women) to observe strict, moral controls with chastity, purity and ethical limits for the fulfillment of sensual (sex related and procreation) needs and desires. It also means to treat women (opposite sex) as completely equal, with honor and dignity in all respects, aspects and activities in life and in society. Also, to abstain from harming and committing any himsa (directly and indirectly) to women / opposite sex.

For Bhagwan Mahavira, Brahmacharya *Maha/anuvrata* (vow) was the means to eliminate/reduce himsa to women and promote equal rights and emancipation of women in the society and that is the reason why he added this fifth anu/maha vrata

■ **Bhagwan Mahavira, a great Social Engineer and a Reformer**

Along with eliminating himsa to animals in Yagna/ Havans, Bhagwan Mahavira also worked very hard to eliminate himsa to women by and within the society.

Mahavira started an action-oriented crusade against himsa to women. One of the most humanitarian works *Tirthankar* Mahavira started and inspired was eliminating slavery of women. He planned to give (and he did) women honor, respect, recognition, emancipation and equal rights to women. Tirthankar Mahavira taught that both men and women are equal and no acts of violence should be committed towards any living being. He proclaimed that women are not men's property.

He was the first one to give *WOMEN RIGHTS* and women emancipation. He worked to Stop Human Trafficking. Thousands of women used to be bought and sold for sex and were slaves to the kings and kings' men.

As a revolutionary and fearless leader, he broke barriers by initiating women as sadhvis and raising their status high. He accepted and ordained Chandan Bala as the head of 36,000 nuns in his Sangh. Earlier Chandan Bala had been a slave, tortured and sold a few times. He did not just stop there. Mahavir with the help of Chandan Bala, saved a *large number of other women (probably as many as 30,000)* from slavery, initiated them to be on the spiritual path and ordained them as sadhvis/ nuns in his order (sangha). By ordaining these women as Jain Sadhvi, instantly, he changed their status to being destitute to an object of respect and reverence by the society.

This was a very courageous and revolutionary step. He gave to women

- A voice
- Respect
- Dignity
- Equal Rights
- Freedom from torture
- Emancipation
- Was the first one to give them Women and Human Rights

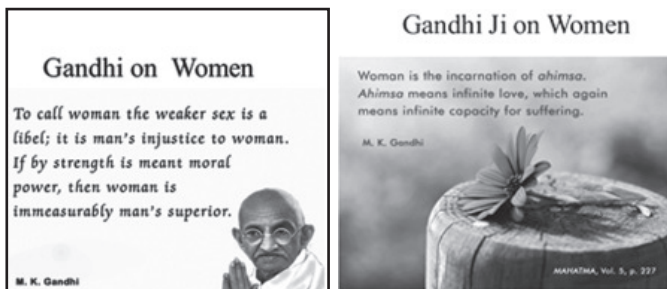
Lord Mahavira's philosophy of a pluralistic society extended to his female followers and women in the society at-large. Mahavira adopted a different system in his ascetic community. Women monks (nuns) thrived in his ascetic fellowship. He made all women (sadhvis and sravakas) as equal member of his 4-fold sangha (congregation).

Bhagwan Mahavir gave us a very powerful tool in Brahmacharya Vrata to actively and proactively

work for the emancipation and Equal rights to women and he was the first one to preach and work for this cause. His message is not only relevant but is very much needed today.

■ Mahatma Gandhi on Women Emancipation

Equality of women in all respect was part of Gandhi Ji's Sarvodaya movement too. Just like ,Mahatma Gandhi coined the word Harijan (people of GOD) to uplift Dalits and untouchables, similarly Bhagwan Mahavir gave Brahamcharya maha/ anu vratas for the upliftment and emancipation of women. After Bhagwan Mahavira, status of women in the Jain Community



Lord Mahavira's initiatives to include women as equal participants were adopted by his household followers also, and gained momentum for the adoption in the larger Indian society. In general, the status and respect of women in the Jain Society is better even today to that of in other societies but over time due to male domination in the society at large, what Bhagwan Mahavira did, slowly it was somewhat undone or not followed with the same vigor by his followers.

Here are a few examples

- The Jain SANGH amongst all other communities in India is highly educated (about 96%) but this is true of male only. The literacy rate amongst Jain women is less. Only recently Jains have started paying attention to the education of girls too.

- Being male dominated society, boys are highly preferred over girls and gender selection, girl fetus abortion, highly skewed ratio, less % of girls than boys is new normal.
 - Tradition of dowry from girl's parents to boy's parents to get their girl married and consequently leading to torture, constant nagging, humiliation, and resultant bad treatment to the girl and her parents are still very common today. This is himsa.
 - Time was when daughters-in-laws were treated with more consideration than one's own daughters. This scene has changed. In several Jain communities, not only are the daughter-in laws treated worse than servants but also are tortured and abused for lack of insufficient dowry and for many other so-called reasons and pretexts. I have seen this myself, and been told by others, that in some houses and communities, a mother-in-law is like a cruel dictator. This is true even in Jain communities --they are not free from this menace and custom.
- Women in Jain and Hindu literature, Pooja and treatment by male ascetics is still discriminatory. Following 2 examples will give you an idea how women are depicted in poojas even today

विष बेल रूप नारी, कह गए योगीश्वरा

(Jain pooja prayer)

Here Women is compared to poison ivy

ढोल गँवार पशु शूर्द्र और नारी, सब ताडन के अधिकारी

Means women are worthy of punishment

- Even amongst Jain Sadhu SANGH, a Sadhvi (no matter how old in age and Diksha) must bow to a male sadhu even of one day old diksha. Sometimes nuns are under the authority of junior monks for a very long period. In order

to reach high positions in the religious hierarchy, the female nuns need to serve for a longer period than their male counterparts. Their religious titles are generally at an inferior rank to those of monks. Many canonical texts were not allowed to be studied as the nuns have been perceived to have lesser intellectual capacity as their male counterparts, which has been disputed in recent times. Academic research and study of women nuns is not encouraged by many groups.

- During the menstrual cycle, women in general are considered impure. Even today, in some parts of India such as Himachal Pradesh, a women must go and live with domestic animals in the cow sheds. Women cannot go to temple, cook and do other normal household chores.
- For the last 800 years and even today, women are not allowed to enter some Hindu temples (example Sabrimala temple in Kerala in India). In many traditions women are forbidden to pray in temples during their menstrual period.
- Incidents of suicides amongst women is the highest.
- There are hundreds of such examples in Jain and non-Jain Communities where women are still considered inferior or subordinate to men Treatment of Women when I was born 80 plus years ago
- Women had very little say and Rights in financial matters.
- No right to parental property.
- No financial security to a widow; a kind of a destitute.
- Covered in Purdah system.
- In -home delivery by uneducated and unhygienic

midwives and hence lot of deaths during delivery, (quite common).

- Hardly any women in position of power
- Victim of Dowery and its lifelong menace and torture.
- High rates of Suicide.
- Gender selection and abortion and as a result now more boys than girls.
- Preference to produce a male offspring otherwise very little respect of the woman in the household and in the society.
- Women could not attend funerals (even of her own husband).
- Not allowed to Participate in weddings.
- Not allowed to study and education of girls was not encouraged.
- Very few schools and colleges for girls then.
- Not allowed to vote
- Not allowed to touch pratimas and do prakshals abhisheks in Digambar Jain Tradition.

■ **Some Silver Lining and Ray of Hope now.**

During the last 100 plus years, much progress has been made particularly in the Western World in regard to more equal rights to women. Most of the Scandinavian countries and Finland have been way ahead of the rest of the world. In USA, women got the right to vote 100 years ago. Equal Employment Opportunities Act is a step in that direction

In India, Indian constitution guarantees equal rights to women. The Hindu Marriage Code Bill, right to parental property, act against dowery and Triple Talaq Law (a tradition in Islam) are a few of the examples.

In Jain Sangh, recently a few Acharyas started campaigns in this direction. But all these are just baby steps. Much more still needs to be done

Acharya Tulsi, a revolutionary, fearless and visionary social Engineer and Reformer Jain acharya worked tirelessly for the emancipation of women during the last 60 years.

He preached for the education of women and against the menace of dowry.

He worked to stop Purdah (veil) and long and painful mourning celebrations on the death of the husband by his widow.

In spite of strong opposition and resistance to change by the Sangh elders, he gave equal treatments to women in many customs and also gave equal honor, status and place to women. in the workings of Terapanth Sangh, and he never wavered.

He established the institution of equal care for the sick and old age sadhus and sadhvis both.

Established the order of semi-Sadhus and sadhvis; samans and samanias with equal status.

■ **Amar Muni Ji, a Jain saint who was thinking outside the box**

Another revolutionary Jain Saint Amar Muni ji ordained a women Sadhvi Chandana ji as Acharya Chandana ji. This was the first after Bhagwan Mahavir.

Just like Mother Thresa and Sisters of Mercy, Amar Muni ji also established the Institution of Veerayatan. This institution provides seva /service during natural calamities, organizes many free medical camps for eye and other operations and opened several Educational Schools in Aadi vaasi and economically dis-advantaged areas.

■ **Status of Women in Jain Society today**

There is a strong emphasis on Education of girls now

Highest literacy rate amongst all sections of Indian society, amongst Jains – 94 percent amongst men and 90 percent amongst women – compared

to 65 percent amongst Hindu men and 53 percent amongst Hindu women.

2-2.5 times more women Sadhvi's than men sadhus (this is what Bhagwan Mahavir did).

Women enjoy higher status and respect than other communities.

Much higher # of Jain women are in law, judiciary, education, medicine, physicians, business, authors and writers, arts, music, corporate world, administration, politics and in Jain organizations.

Women can freely enter all Jain places of worship.

■ **Status of Women in Jain Society in North America**

In JAINA, several women occupy positions of directors, chair persons of several committees, members of EC etc.

Lataben Champsi served as President of JAINA 2009-11

Several Jain Endowed Academic Positions in academia

Mohini Jain Endowed Chair at UC Davis

Alka Dalal Endowed Post Doc at Rutgers U

6 female members of JAINA –Academic Liaison Committee

At least 4 female academics teaching Jainism (CST, UC Davis and, Rice University

Many philanthropists

■ **Conclusion**

Bhagwan Mahavira added Brahamcharya vow for the emancipation of women, for their recognition as equal human members of the society and for Women Rights.

Vow of Brahmcharya is about Women Empowerment and Bhagwan Mahavir was the first one to preach and work for this cause. His message is not only relevant but is very much needed today.

When women are treated with equal respect and their fundamental Rights are protected, their children and families benefits, as does the broader society. *himsa to and upon a woman is committed by men (mendicants and lay people)*. This must stop. Bhagwan Mahavir did.



A Buddhist Perspective on Human Rights, Spirituality and Religious Freedom

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The historic Buddha presciently assigned the greatest existential significance to human life among other realms of existence. Humans have the “right” to choose the Buddhist path to freedom from kammic bondage (samsāra)¹ based on their experience rather than the coercion of inherited religious tradition thousands of years before European concerns about human rights.

The goal of achieving spiritual freedom or the realization of Buddhahood, however, signifies continual, compassionate service to all beings; not only to human beings near and far away, but also to animals, spirits (preta), those in hells, asuras, and devas – each at their respective stage of psycho-spiritual evolution in the cosmos. Rather than human rights as the pursuit of self-interest, individual personal happiness and limited family and communal

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%E1%B9%83s%C4%81ra_\(Buddhism\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%E1%B9%83s%C4%81ra_(Buddhism))

concerns, the thrust of Buddhist spiritual discipline is to dissolve the ego’s small-minded, personal focus. The Buddhist bodhisattva vow diverts egotistic energies to wider and wider recognition and embrace of the needs of others with universal, unbiased, loving compassion, a cosmological morality. All beings, not just human beings, “are equally subject to transiency or impermanency”.²

Buddhists, as human beings, are living in the midst of multiple crises that beset the modern world. They have to negotiate the worldviews and values of the heritage of Abrahamic religions that posit commands of a supreme creator God and permanent souls, and ideas that derive from these unproven notions. For instance, although serious concern for human rights as articulated in the United

2 See Masao Abe, “Religious Tolerance and Human rights: A Buddhist Perspective,” in *Religious Liberty and Human Rights in Nations and in Religions*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Ecumenical Press: Temple University, Philadelphia, 1986)

Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) is widespread in the Buddhist world,³ the exact equivalent term for “a right” as “a subjective entitlement” or “freedom” is not found in canonical Pāli and Sanskrit or East Asian Buddhist translations of the early literature. A similar idea or meaning is expressed in the concept of “what is due” a person or what is owed or deserving of between individuals or parties. Both within the selective, ordained sangha and in the larger, open, lay community, there are sets of precepts (sīla). These outline reciprocal duties and responsibilities, as well as voluntary, personal restraints that are conducive for peaceful family relations, social orderliness, and a sense of justice for everyone.

Social harmony within the Buddhist ordained sangha, or monastic order, is fostered by meeting regularly (on new and full-moon days) to recite their renunciate vows aloud -- Pātimokkha-Disciplinary Code -- as a voluntary, intentional community (uposatha).⁴ The long chant delineates in detail the ordained training rules and norms of behavior and consequent penalties for their infractions. There are hundreds of precepts for both bhikkhus and for

3. The late distinguished Sri Lankan scholar L. P. N. Perera has done us all great service by applying his formidable mastery of Pali Canon and associated literature by offering us erudite commentaries on all 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in *Human Rights and Buddhism: A Buddhist Commentary on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Karunaratne & Sons: Colombo, 1991).

4. The uposatha (Sanskrit, Upavasatha) is a day of observance in Buddhist tradition. Initially, the monks used to hold uposatha on the 8th, 14th, and 15th days of each half month, but as time progressed, only 2 days, that is, 14th and 15th days of each half month, were designated as the uposatha days. The recital of the pātimokkha before the bhikkhu saṅgha was to be done once in a fortnight, that is, either on the 14th or the 15th day, which in due course of time fixed for the 15th day only. Lay people observe the eight precepts do meditation and confess commitment to the Dhamma on uposatha days. See https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-94-024-0852-2_15

bhikkhunis. These are the clergy’s subscribed rules of deportment and reciprocal duties that characterize their respective sangha as a cohesive social unit. These constraints are voluntarily affirmed by adult sangha members as guidelines given by the Buddha. Adherence to the Pātimokkha is understood to hasten progress on the path to realizing nirvana, freedom from the wheel of birth and death, during this life or in future rebirths.

From its ancient beginnings, the Buddhist sangha or Buddhist community of bhikkhus and bhikkhunis was open to sincere petitioners of whatever class or caste. The living Buddhadhamma in the present emphasizes that men and women are each fully responsible for the consequences of their intentional decisions (kamma). It recommends practices to purify the mind and feelings of afflictive emotions with contemplative and meditative techniques, by oneself and in group practice.

Buddha stressed that advancement to nibbāna was determined by personal resolve and effort, regardless of inheritance or social status:

Not by birth do you become an outcaste, not by birth do you become a brahmin; by your actions, your character, you become an outcaste, by your actions, your character, you become a brahmin.

Majjhima Nikāya II, 5.8. Vasetthasuttam “To the Brahmin Vasettha”

This teaching is consonant with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in intent:

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty

According to the Buddhadhamma, it is only our intentional or “owned” actions and not external distinctions or arbitrary political decisions in this transient world that determine who we are to become.

Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, they originate from their actions, are bound to their actions, have their actions as their refuge. It is actions that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.

Majjhima Nikāya 135: Culakammavibhanga Sutta; III 202-6

Within Buddhist societies, fully ordained renunciates individually and collectively are ideally considered “fields of merit”, exemplars and embodiments of the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path (magga) of wisdom (pañña), morality (sīla) and concentration because of their arduous self-discipline. The sangha, throughout its long history and wide geographical spread, has been open to all sincere seekers of whatever ethnic background. In a sense, there are no “aliens” in the sangha as all are considered family — brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the “good friend” (kalyānamitta),

the Buddha, on the same path to liberation and compassion to all beings. Ideally, there is no upper caste or lower caste, but unfair cultural patterns of social hierarchy do intrude within local sanghas, reflecting archaic beliefs of the surrounding society.

The Buddha said that “Noble friendship is the entire holy life”⁵, which we find echoed in

Article 1 that “human beings... should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Openness and regard for the dignity of the individual as just like ourselves may also be a factor in Buddhism’s spread throughout the polyglot Indian subcontinent and across the vastly diverse, multi-ethnic cultures of Southeast and East Asia. Whatever their social and linguistic heritage or personal history, Buddhist monastics are completely dependent on their lay congregations for material support and sustenance and, reciprocally, are honored as venerable guides and models of voluntary, selfless, dhamma teaching for the lay community.

Non-ordained Buddhist laymen and laywomen have a smaller and less restraining set of voluntary training guidelines (Five or Ten Precepts- pancasīla or dasasīla) to moderate their behavior in the world of family and society. They are not excluded, however, from study of the teachings at any and all levels. They are assured by the scriptures that they can achieve extinction of suffering, depending on their effort (vāyāma), mindful circumspection in all activities (sati) and practice of concentration (samādhi) on the Eightfold Path.

As for practical lay life, the Sigalovāda Sutta (Digha Nikāya, D.31) suggests models of

⁵ See Sunil Kariyakarawana, Buddhist Chaplain to Her Majesty’s Forces, https://www.academia.edu/24584417/Aspects_of_Noble_Friendship_Kaly%C4%81na_Mitra-t%C4%81_in_Buddhism

conscientious behavior in social relationships appropriate to the historic Buddha's India, that remain applicable to our own families and society today. The Buddha taught a set of six reciprocal duties in this Sutta -between parents and children; teachers and pupils; husband and wife; friends, relatives and neighbors; employer and employee; clergy and laity. According to Buddhist ethics authority Damien Keown, 'it does not seem unreasonable when analyzing these relationships from the beneficiary's perspective, to employ the vocabulary of rights. Thus, parents have duties to their children, and children have a right to support, nurture, education and protection from their parents.'⁶

The life of the historic Buddha exemplified freedom of thought and freedom of choice to remain faithful to or change religion according to personal discernment. Leaving home and seeking truth with various teachers until his enlightenment (bodhi) and engaging in dialogue with various believers and teachers throughout his forty-five-year mission, Buddha admonished seekers to "ehipassika"⁷ – "see it (dhamma) for oneself"- recognize what is true for oneself, not on faith, unsubstantiated assertions or ecclesiastical authorities.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

⁶ Damien Keown, Human Rights, The Oxford Handbook of Buddhist Ethics (Oxford: Daniel Cozort and James Shields (eds), 2018), 8, (pre-print version of chapter).

⁷ "come and see".

Article 19

Everyone has the right of freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

From its earliest teachings found in core scriptures, the Buddhadharma dignifies both men and women by asserting their free will or agency to examine their own beliefs and mental processes introspectively, as in the ubiquitous **Dhammapada**.⁸ The Buddha is also said to urge all dhamma farers to analyze and question all forms of social, cultural and religious authority and opinion, with skeptical curiosity in the oft quoted "charter of free inquiry" the **Kālāma Sutta**.⁹

Shifting now from Buddha's focus on the development of personal discernment and insight into the nature of the mind for the sangha and laity, Buddha also addressed important worldly concerns of good governance in kingship and wholesome social life of model citizenry, much in keeping with the values expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; not in the modern terminology of current political institutions words but in a similar attitude of benevolence towards all peoples and cultures.

In a legendary past life story (Jataka V, 378), the Buddha teaches that a good king has to follow strictly the "tenfold virtues of the ruler" (dasavidha-

⁸ A congenial translation of The Dhammapada is by Eknath Easwaran, (Nilgiri Press, Petaluma, 1986). The first verses read:
1. Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draws it.

2. Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves.

⁹ Soma Thera, <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/soma/wheel008.html>

rājadhama) -- that head or chiefs or rulers of people, countries, nation or other organs ought to adhere to-- and that may have been held in mind by Buddhism's most famous ruler Emperor Asoka (304-232 BCE) when he had his Edicts inscribed in stone all over the Indian subcontinent.¹⁰

Dasavidha-rājadhama

Tenfold Virtues of the Ruler

1. dāna (charity) - being prepared to sacrifice personal pleasure for the well-being of the public, such as giving away wealth and property to support or assist others, including giving knowledge and serving the public interest. He should not try to be rich by making use of his position.
2. sīla (morality) - practicing morality in both mind & body and being a good example for others. Leaders should at least observe the Five Precepts.
3. pariccāga (sacrifice of comfort), being generous and avoiding selfishness; practicing altruism to inspire efficiency and loyal service for the common good.
4. ājjava (honesty) - being honest and sincere towards others, performing your duties with integrity and warm-heartedness

Having entered a royal court or a company of people

one should not speak lies.

One should not speak lies (oneself)

nor incite others to do so.

One should completely avoid falsehood.

Sutta Nipāta 2.399

5. maddava (gentleness)—having gentle temperament, avoiding arrogance and never defaming others. Firm yet kind in administration. Uprightness.
6. tapa (self-control) -- restraining passion and indulgence and performing duties without indolence. Exemplifying austerity and circumspection.
7. akkodha (non-anger nor hatred) – being free from revenge and remaining calm in the midst of confusion. Avoiding political victimization
8. avihimsa (non-violence) – exercising non-violence, promoting peace and avoiding war
9. khanti (forbearance) - practicing patience in service of public welfare; equanimity in praise and blame
10. avirodhana (uprightness) - respecting opinions of other persons, avoiding prejudice and promoting public peace and order; spirit of amity and harmony among his people.¹¹

Other virtues mentioned by the Buddha that need be contemplated by national and international leaders who wish to implement the UN UDHR Articles in spirit and action are found in Digha Nikāya, II, 196, and III, 223. Here it is taught that the king must not have any partial or jaundiced views against his subjects as the ruler of the country. He must direct and spread the contemplative cultivation of Brahmavihāra – bhāvanā - Four Divine Abodes or States of Mind- towards all sentient beings, animals and humans alike:

1. mettā - loving-kindness and friendliness for all
2. karunā: compassion or mercy, feeling others' suffering as if one's own

¹⁰ The Edicts of King Asoka http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/edicts-asoka6.pdf

¹¹ <http://www.lankalibrary.com/Bud/dasa-raja-dhamma.htm>

3. muditā: sympathetic joy, being happy for others' happiness and successes, without envy
4. upekkhā - equanimity - the ability to accept others as they are.

In the Digha Nikāya III,182,288, the ruler of a country must avoid the Four Biases or Prejudices (agati) against his subjects, wherever they live and whatever their skin color; namely,

1. chandagati- biases because of like
2. dosagati- biases because of dislike
3. mohagati- biases because of delusion or stupidity
4. bhayagati- biases because of fear.

This means that rulers must nurture every subject in their states equally and fairly.¹²

Of course, the dhamma teachings of ancient India are recommendations and ideals that are aspirational than and challenging for any political leader in our complex modern times of pandemics, nuclear threats, climate change and widespread media disinformation and brainwashing to realize.

There are a few outstanding personalities who are human rights advocates in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist countries. Each national situation represents complex sociopolitical conditions and vexatious assaults and challenges to the free expression of human rights and human dignity.

Doubtlessly the most famous spokesman for human rights in the Buddhist world is the longtime exiled 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, Tenzin Gyatso. Many books, articles, TV and radio news interviews, full-length films and documentaries have chronicled his

¹² <https://www.scribd.com/document/38464523/Some-Buddhist-Thoughts-on-Good-Governance-Edition-3#download>

extraordinary life and the tragic plight of the Tibetan people since the invasion by Chinese Communist troops in 1949. The destruction of thousands of ancient monasteries and holy places and the killing of untold thousands of Tibetans are well-established facts. Many Tibetans were tortured and incarcerated during the early decades of mainland Chinese occupation.¹³

The harsh political repression of Tibetan dissidents continues unabated in forced labor camps.

Countless native Tibetans have been and are displaced from their property and home territory.

Pristine Tibetan mountains, valleys and rivers continue to be despoiled and natural resources of

Tibet are being plundered for the economic development of China and the multitudes of Han

Chinese settlers in Tibet who now outnumber native Tibetans. Tibetans themselves are now a minority in their own country and their rights to assembly as Tibetans using their own language are ignored.¹⁴

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 20

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.*
2. *No one may be compelled to belong to an association.*

¹³ <http://www.tibetjustice.org/reports/un/detention.html>

¹⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/29/china-crackdown-tibetan-social-groups>

Whatever justification the Chinese Communist regime has for advancing into Tibet in 1949, it is in blatant disregard of and an affront to the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Dalai Lama has remained a strong advocate of nonviolence in the face of the Chinese near genocide of his people and destruction of Tibetan Buddhist culture. He fled to India in 1959 and continues to be defended by the Indian government. The Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. China has demanded that he and the hundred thousand and more Tibetan refugees who followed him return to Tibet. There is no assurance that they will be protected from abuse if they do so. More recently in the news, the Chinese government has committed outrageous human rights violations against the Uyghur Muslim minority as well as the Falon Gong religious sect.

Article 13

1. *Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State.*
2. *Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.*

Article 14

1. *Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.*
2. *This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.*

Volumes have been and are being written in print and online about events in Tibet and the charismatic Dalai Lama. He has received numerous international human rights rewards despite ubiquitous PRC

propaganda and protests. A search of “human rights” on the Dalai Lama’s website yielded 341 hits this morning alone.¹⁵

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Human Rights Watch provides up-to-date news about the “highly repressive rule” and curbing of human rights and religious belief in Tibet and other ethnic minority regions in China.¹⁶

Another Buddhist paragon of peace and equanimity when confronted with horrific human rights abuses is the late Supreme Patriarch Venerable Maha Ghosananda of Cambodia. Called the “Gandhi of Cambodia”, he, too, like the Dalai Lama, witnessed the wholesale slaughter of thousands of his sangha members and murder, torture and forced servitude of two million of his countrymen—25% of the population—during the Khmer Rouge genocide of Cambodia by the Pol Pot regime 1975-1979.

Practically every Article of the UN Declaration was violated in these years. Capitalism, Western culture, city life, religious expressions, and all foreign influences were extinguished in favor of an extreme form of peasant Communism...Newspapers and television stations were closed, radios and bicycles confiscated, and mail and telephone curtailed. Money was forbidden. All businesses were shuttered, religion banned, education halted, health care eliminated, and parental authority revoked.

15. <https://www.dalailama.com/search/results?q=human+rights&x=6&y=7> May 19, 2019

16. <https://www.hrw.org/ya-zhou/china-and-tibet>

Cambodia's cities were forcibly evacuated. In Phnom Penh, two million inhabitants were evacuated on foot into the countryside at gunpoint. As many as 20,000 died along the way...

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

As the Cambodian sangha's surviving patriarch Somdech Maha Preah Maha Ghosananda, while losing his entire family, had to provide consolation to thousands of desperate Cambodian escapees living in refugee settlements, returning to a bombed-out homeland still invested with enemy guerilla fighters. He is renowned for leading meditative Dhammayietras—peace walks through extremely treacherous, land mined fields.¹⁷ Nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize five times, Maha Ghosananda's deep compassion and forgiveness are reflected in the following poem, which can be intoned as a contemplative prayer:

Cambodia has suffered deeply.

From deep suffering comes deep compassion.

From deep compassion comes a peaceful heart.

From a peaceful heart comes a peaceful person.

*From a peaceful person comes a peaceful family
and community.*

*From peaceful communities comes a peaceful
nation.*

*From peaceful nations come a peaceful world.*¹⁸

One practice that the venerable employed in the very hot and dirty, makeshift tent camps to help heal his grieving and materially devastated people was the repeated chanting, all day-long and all night-long, of these lines from chapter 1: Twin Verses of the **Dhammapada**:

“He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me,

he robbed me”- those who dwell on such thoughts will

never be free from hatred.

“He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me,

he robbed me”- those who do not dwell on such thoughts will

surely become free from hatred.

For hatred can never put an end to hatred; love alone can. This

*Is an unalterable law. People forget that their lives will end soon. For those who remember, quarrels come to an end.*¹⁹

Unfortunately, nearly every Asian country with a majority Buddhist population has experienced civil war, foreign invasion, self-defeating war mongering or systemic poverty and tyranny during the past hundred years. We have mentioned the challenges faced by the Dalai Lama and Maha Ghosananda. Other Buddhist leaders responded with their

18. <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/the-dhammayietra-patience-compassion-understanding-and-a-border-conflict-part-1>

19. See The Dhammapada, translated by E. Easwaran, 78, cited in Note 7.

17. <https://www.amazon.com/Step-Maha-Ghosananda/dp/0938077430>

own distinctive forms of social engagement with remarkable energy, innovation, even creative genius.

The prolific Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam responded to the war in Vietnam by trying to reach out through international avenues outside Vietnam to negotiate with both sides to make peace. His efforts did not yield fruit but rather distrust from both sides. Martin Luther King, Jr., however, admired his attempts to save lives and nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. Like the Dalai Lama, followers of Nhat Hanh have translated many of his works and sermons and established centers all over the world, to deepen their understanding of his interpretation of engaged Mahayana Buddhist philosophy,²⁰ modernized vows and meditation methods and concern for the environment.²¹

Internationally less well-known but nationally influential are the Theravāda Buddhist laymen Sulak Sivaraksa of Thailand²² and A.T. Ariyaratne of Sri Lanka.²³ Both are very prominent in their own country and among Buddhist human rights activists in Asia. Each has responded to national human rights violations in creative ways, with their distinctive cultural conventions and “engaged” dhamma applications.²⁴

A.T. Ariyaratne has been called the “Gandhi of Sri Lanka”. He has received many international awards for his deep commitment to Gandhian principles of nonviolence, rural development and self-sacrifice for the welfare and “awakening of all”. His grassroots, village-based initiative

20. <https://thichnathanhfoundation.org/>

21. <https://plumvillage.org/>

22. www.inebinstitute.org

23. <https://www.sarvodaya.org/founder>

24 A. T. Ariyaratne was recipient of the Gandhi Peace Prize in 1996. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gandhi_Peace_Prize

movement in Sri Lanka is called the Sarvodaya Shramadana movement. He considers his movement an “educational experiment”, a “kind of spiritual revolution” that empowers rural villagers (most of the people of Sri Lanka, the “Common Man”) with a spirit of selfless service to help one another, respect each other’s rights, and build strong community bonds.²⁵

Harmonious communication and sharing of resources in health, education and technical skills leads to the development of the local economies and alleviates needless suffering caused by distrust and conflicts. Sarvodaya places disadvantaged villagers at the center of equitable and moral social change, which allows neither extreme poverty no extreme affluence.

According to Ariyaratne:

*Sarvodaya means the Awakening of All – from an individual Human Personality to Humanity as a whole. This awakening has spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political dimensions. Whatever we do in one of these sectors influences all other sectors.*²⁶

Article 25

1. *Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*

25. <https://www.sarvodaya.org/collected-works-vol-1>

26 Ariyaratne, A. T. Buddhist Economics in Practice in the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement of Sri Lanka. New York: Sarvodaya Support Group, 1999

2. *Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance.*²⁷ *All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.*²⁸

The many multifaceted international programs of Buddhist socially engaged activism and human rights advocacy pioneered by the indefatigable scholar and outspoken author Sulak Sivaraksa cannot be summarized briefly.²⁹ He established The International Network of Socially Engaged Buddhists (INEB) in Siam (Thailand) with other Buddhist and non-Buddhist thinkers and social activists in 1989.³⁰ INEB is a loose umbrella organization that encourages and supports a spectrum of human rights programs. It embraces humanitarian support of Rohingya refugees, understanding Buddhist approaches to the dying and hospice care in Taiwan, fact-finding commissions on Buddhist-Muslim relations in Myanmar's Rakhine state and support for the establishment of a bhikkhuni sangha in Thailand. INEB also issues many public statements of Buddhist concern regarding the many social, political and ecological crises affecting our globe.³¹

An important, advanced educational organization within INEB is its Institute for Transformative Learning. Founded by Sulak Sivaraksa, the Institute aims to become a model of Buddhist higher learning in Asia. The Institute aims to “nourish the moral imagination while cultivating

peace and reconciliation, environmental healing, alternative education, sustainable economics, and the capacity for spiritual growth and leadership.”³²

Article 26

2. *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

Thanks to the universal vision of Sulak Sivaraksa, INEB has a special place in the Buddhist world for bringing together leaders of disparate, far-flung and unrepresented dhamma traditions for interactive tours, retreats and socially engaged, problem-focused working groups. In past decades, they only met in formal conferences for diplomatic or honorific purposes, often with strict government scrutiny, as when South Korea was under a series of dictatorships until the 1990s. The lifting of travel restrictions has allowed Korean Buddhists to make pilgrimages to the homeland of the Buddha in India and visit other Buddhist countries and meet activists like Sulak and his talented associates.

Perhaps the most recognized Korean Buddhist leader to reach out beyond the Korean peninsula is Venerable Pomnyun of South Korea. Venerable Pomnyun is uniquely distinguished for his multidimensional activism within South Korea and ongoing efforts to reach out to his nation's secretive, belligerent and totalitarian neighbor North Korea.³³ He and his JungTo Society (JTS)–

27. <https://www.sarvodaya.org/vishva-nikethan>

28. <https://www.vishvaniketan.org/>

29. A comprehensive analysis of Sivaraksa's career and critique of modern society and Buddhist reform is Donald Swearer's firsthand field research Sulak Sivaraksa's Buddhist Vision in Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia, eds. C. Queen and S. King, (SUNY: Albany, 1996).

30. <http://inebnetwork.org/about/>

31. <http://inebnetwork.org/public-statement/>

32. <https://www.idealists.org/en/nonprofit/550f27dfa88e4c0e83a8c5514ed3e047-the-ineb-institute-bangkok>

33. <https://www.jungtosociety.org/pomnyun/>

“Sukhāvati” sangha- are experienced, former student dissidents who fought the repression of human rights in Korea for many years. Rather than “fight fire with fire”, however, they bring the bodhisattva vow of patient, loving kindness and compassion to their activism. JTS demands that all members demonstrate their determination to act as sincere dhamma-farers when confronted with obstacles. Members are required to complete a strenuous, monastic-like initiation process.³⁴

While venturing to the major Buddhist sites of India for the first time in 1991, Venerable Pomnyun was appalled by the dire poverty and hopelessness he witnessed in the lowest strata of Indian society in Bihar and Calcutta. Because he felt deep regret for not being more generous to suffering people in the past, he made “an oath to compensate for (his) behavior by working for a greater number of unfortunate people who suffered from hunger, disease and illiteracy.”^{35, 36}

The pursuit of basic human rights, social ennoblement, and human dignity for millions of oppressed people in India, was the primary vision and passion of the distinguished Indian statesman Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956). He eventually chose Buddhism as the vehicle of social transformation after investigating Christianity, Sikhism, and other faiths. Despite his lowly birth as an Untouchable, he was granted generous support to acquire advanced education in economics and law in the United States and Great Britain. Returning to India, he was eventually recognized for his brilliance and

legal acumen. Urged by Mahatma Gandhi himself, the Congress-led Indian government appointed Ambedkar to serve as the nation’s first Minister of Law and Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee on Indian Independence Day 1947. Only two years later, the Constitution he designed was adopted in 1949!

Reflecting Ambedkar’s concern for universal human rights, especially for the most deprived people within Indian society, his text provided constitutional guarantees and protections for a wide range of civil liberties for citizens. It included freedom of religion, the abolition of Untouchability and the outlawing of all forms of discrimination. Ambedkar argued for extensive economic and social rights for women, support for a system of reservations of jobs in the civil services, and not least, schools and colleges for members of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. It was akin to “affirmative action” in the United States. However, conservative factions within the government resisted his reforms. Subsequently, Ambedkar resigned from the cabinet in 1951, following rejection of his draft of the Hindu Code Bill, which guaranteed gender equality in laws of inheritance, marriage, and the economy.

Withdrawing from public life for a few years, Ambedkar devoted the rest of his unexpectedly short life to the revival of Buddhism in India. He executed what may be his greatest contribution to Buddhist history by dramatically embracing the dhamma in a public conversion (diksa) ceremony in Nagpur on Oct. 14, 1956. This date is also associated with Emperor Asoka’s conversion to Buddhism.³⁷ The next day Ambedkar administered the Buddhist

34. Frank M. Tedesco, *Social Engagement in South Korean Buddhism*, Action Dharma, eds. C. Queen et al. (RoutledgeCurzon: London, 2003) 170.

35 F. Tedesco, *op.cit.*, note 21, 181.

36 <https://www.jungtosociety.org/pomnyun/>

37. See our earlier discussion of the Edicts of Asoka and the Dasavidha-rajadhamma.

vows to nearly half a million Untouchables, thereby initiating a peaceful revolution for human rights and dignity in India.

“I feel Ambedkar is the first social engaged Buddhist, although that word was unknown in his time... because he was to feel that Buddhism and politics must go together” -Sulak Sivaraksa.³⁸

It is estimated that there are over 50 million “new Buddhists” in India today. Outside of Asia, this is probably the least known of all Buddhist movements. Ambedkar died less than two months after his historic diksa ceremony.

Dr. Ambedkar’s Buddhist revolution is being spearheaded by an all-India network of dhamma activists organizing and teaching all levels of schools in towns and villages in over twenty-five different states in India.

The major training centers for Buddhism, Ambedkar thought and human rights advocacy, are the Nagaloka Conference Center, the Nagarjuna Training Institute, affiliated with Nagpur University³⁹ in Nagpur, Maharashtra, India and Manuski Trust in Pune that trains and develops human rights investigative teams for grassroots activism wherever needed.⁴⁰

‘My final words of advice to you are educate, agitate and organise; have faith in yourself’. B.R. Ambedkar

“Indeed, his words could be a rallying cry for human rights defenders everywhere.”

Dr. Corinne Lennox, School of Advanced Study,
University of London 14 April 2016 ⁴¹

Article 26

1. *Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.*

2. *Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

3. *Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.*

Most of the Buddhist human rights leaders discussed above have already passed away or like Thich Nhat Hanh, A.T. Ariyaratne and Sulak Sivaraksa are very elderly and ailing. It is up to the next generations to apply the Buddhist perspective of the rights of humanity and all sentient beings in our interdependent and interconnected ecosystem. Our material and spiritual survival depends on this comprehensive and compassionate vision for the rest of the century.

38. Interview excerpt in Arising Light documentary film preview by David Blundell, 2006. www.arising-light.org

39. <http://www.nagaloka.org/>

40. <http://manuski.in/programmes/human-right-advocacy/>

41. “Dr. Ambedkar: a visionary for human rights” <https://talkinghumanities.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2016/04/13/dr-ambedkar-a-visionary-for-human-rights/>

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Governing Globe the Spiritual Way: Exploring Sri Aurobindo's Ideal of Human Unity in a Polarizing World

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The post-cold war era witnessed end of ideological rivalry and the rise of a globalized world with multiple centers of power. Though the end of the cold war led to many positive developments including a decline in the arms race between major powers, it, however, did not end all the problems that afflicted individuals, states and the world. The questions that have gained ground in the post-war world can be summarized as: Is the state mechanism adequate to guarantee security of the individuals and groups of individuals? Who determines the contours of security discourse and for whom? When the problems are global and transcend the borders of states, and when the issue is not only the survival of the state but also the survival of individuals living in it, can the state be the sole guarantor of security? Both the idea of global governance and an older ideal of human unity as put forward by Indian philosopher and yogi Sri Aurobindo respond to these questions by arguing in favor of interactions among nation-states in a framework in which preponderance of

state-mechanism is given away to the security of the globe.

The evolving discipline of global governance veers away from a purely state-centric focus in International Relations (IR) without marginalizing state apparatus and attempts to link sub-state actors to supra-state actors through an overarching concern for the globe. Idealism may appear prominent in such an orientation but idealism nevertheless has always played a role in guiding and shaping the discourse on the politics among states. The chapter emphasizes that the global governance ideal is an eclectic one and it has endeavored to guide conduct of nation-states while undertaking an inclusive approach to relations between the states. While embarking on such an exercise on global governance, the chapter argues that such a perspective on the conduct of nation-states works as an appropriate mechanism towards the ideal of human unity, as developed by Sri Aurobindo. The ideal of human unity is based on an integral and evolutionary perspective on human

society, while making a distinction between state and nation and arguing that state is construction of a physical necessity without an identity consciousness – the distinct mark of a nation. Sri Aurobindo further develops this distinction and differentiates between national ego and national consciousness, the later of which brings nation-states together towards ideal human unity. The chapter demonstrates that the ideal of human unity provides an ideal framework towards the realization of global unity and the concerns of global governance intersect with this ideal.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part elaborates global governance as a discipline of post-cold war vintage with emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach to study developments in the world with the goal to address global problems through effective global instruments. The second part of the paper emphasizes the core arguments of the ideal of human unity as developed by Sri Aurobindo. The third part elaborates the intersection of the two towards the establishment of an equitable and united world through the mechanism of international organizations. The last part summarizes the main arguments of the paper.

■ Global Governance

Global governance can be broadly defined as effective management of global problems which the wherewithal of a particular actor or a particular group of actors is not enough to deal with as these problems transcend borders or confines of a particular actor. It is relatively a nascent phenomenon. The discipline with having ethical as well practical dimensions emerged in last decades of 20th century though ideas about global governance can be traced to earlier periods. From an ethical perspective its roots are older and can be linked to Immanuel Kant's idea

of perpetual peace (Kant 1903), Norman Angell's ideas about futility of war (Angell 1913), Barbara Ward's idea of only one earth, which needs care and maintenance (Ward and Dubos 1972), Susan Strange's argument about the failure of Westphalian system (what she refers to as Westfailure system) (Strange 1999) and ideas that emerged during inter-war years particularly that of Clarence Streit's 'union now' (Streit 1939) and W. B. Curry's 'federal union' (Curry 1939). Sri Aurobindo's ideal human unity is one of the founding roots of global governance. The common element in all these ideas is that the prevailing governance system has not been effective to address emerging realities across the globe.

Global governance emerged initially as a kind of 'nebuleuse', a vague idea implying "a sort of governance without government," reflecting "states reactions to globalizing influences of technology and market" (Mott IV 2004, 138). In the later part of the twentieth century the concept gained increasing currency and wider acceptance among state as well as non-state actors. Rosenau and Czempiel in their work *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, published in 1992, articulated how 'disorder, contradiction and change' in global order have necessitated the rise of new mechanisms of global governance (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992). Liberal international relations theory already posited cooperation among nations through various international institutions to promote cooperation and avoid conflict. This theory has been based on the assumption that states can gain from cooperation without sacrificing their national interests (Keohane and Nye Jr. 2011). This theory, however, has explained part, not whole, of the mechanism and necessity of global governance.

Primarily, the rise of transnational actors, movement of people and ideas across borders, deteriorating health of the planet earth, rapid development in information and communication technologies and their use and misuse by various actors have provided important spokes in the wheels of global governance. Cooperation in terms of establishment of commissions and bodies such as International Commission on Interventions and State Sovereignty, World Commission on Dams, World Commission on Environment and Development, World Social Forum, World Economic Forum and United Nations Global Compact to regulate transnational affairs also reflected multi-stakeholder initiatives for global governance. The global problems including, but not limited to, greenhouse gas effect, melting ice caps and prospects of submergence of coastlines and islands under water (for example, Maldives is likely to be extinct from the face of earth by in a few decades under the impact of global warming), widening gap between poor and rich, fierce scramble over scarce resources, religious extremism and terrorism and diseases have necessitated the cooperation among nations to address them. The rise of economic prowess of the South and increasing demand from that part of the world to reshape and reform global institutions to reflect the changing international scenario have also impacted the prevailing discourse on ordering of global structures. The rise of Asia, argues Kishore Mahbubani, “may be seen as pure wishful thinking by sceptical Western minds. But the evidence that history has finally turned a corner in the second decade of the 21st century is undeniable” (Mahbubani 2012). The aspirations and the demands of newly emerging powers have clashed with the old patterns

of international governance, and this clash of interests has necessitated the urgency of accommodation and cooperation, rather than conflict.

Global governance discipline draws richly from social science disciplines particularly economics, politics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The past few years have witnessed the rapid rise of the global governance discipline with new studies. Works on transnational governance (Murphy 1994, 2004, Nayar 2006, Dingwerth 2008, Hale and Held 2011, and Fanta, Shaw and Tang 2013), alternative approaches to development (Payne and Phillips 2010), critical environmental security (Schnurr and Swatuk 2012), transnational crime (Jojarth 2009, Friman 2009), global standards (Murphy and Yates 2008, Ponte, Gibbon and Vastergaard 2011), global migration (Castles and Miller 2009), transnational transfers (Brown 2012) and a host of other studies have contributed richly to the theoretical body of the global governance discipline. The concept is less guided by the presumptions of realist theory of international relations as it does not emphasize on relative gains of actors. But it may be inappropriate to conclude that realism is not at all useful to explain global governance. When states, one of the key actors in global governance, perceive global problems as national problems and find connections between national interests and global issues, realism can provide the requisite urgency to cooperate to address the global problems. Such an eclectic approach could be possible in the framework as developed by Sri Aurobindo in which nation-states rise above zero-sum thinking and are guided more by the ideal of human unity.

■ **Ideal of Human Unity**

Sri Aurobindo’s concept of ideal of human unity

is predicated on the argument that human society has evolved throughout history and is destined to move towards better organization of human life. This argument is Darwinian in the sense that like biological evolution of species, Sri Aurobindo believed in spiritual evolution of human life. According to him, the state represents a stage in this evolution: man by nature seeks the association of his fellow beings, and this seeking of association of individuals begins within the family followed by the tribe, then the clan, the community, the state and subsequently the nation. The need for compactness, single-mindedness and uniformity to promote security and strengthen national defense is sought to be fulfilled by the state-idea. Sri Aurobindo made a distinction between state and nation – the state represents the transition of society from the infrarational organic stage to the rational stage. It attempts to bring about an organic unity of the aggregate people's political, social and economic life through centralized administration. He argued, "The state has been most successful and efficient means of unification and has been best able to meet the various needs which the progressive aggregate life of societies has created for itself and is still creating" (Sri Aurobindo 1962). The state is only an outward form, a convenient machinery to enforce unity and uniformity, while the nation idea implies the living unity of the aspirations and powers of its peoples. The progression, however, does not end at the nation idea because there is a drive in Nature towards larger agglomerations and this drive can lead to the final establishment of the largest of all and the ultimate union of the world's people (Sri Aurobindo 1962, 797).

Sri Aurobindo argued the concept of nationalism as emerged in the 18th century Europe proceeded

from some kind of expediency, mainly geographical and historical. In the beginning, it surfaced as a secondary or even tertiary necessity which resulted not from anything inherent in the vital nature of human society but from circumstances (Sri Aurobindo 1962, 743). It lacked the idea of larger human unity in its core. Though Sri Aurobindo did not reject the role of external factors, i.e. geography, language, and common objectives, or the internal factors such as common sentiment and culture in the emergence of the nation-state idea, he applied the logic of evolution to explain the concept and goes to the extent of imputing religious spirit into the concept. He argued, "nationalism is not a mere political programme; nationalism is a religion ... If you are going to be a nationalist, if you are giving assent to this religion of nationalism, you must do it in the religion spirit (quoted in Singh 1991, 78)."

On the surface, such an approach may appear as an advocacy of crude revivalism, but a deeper analysis does not support such an assumption. Karan Singh argued, "Sri Aurobindo's nationalism never descended into chauvinism or obscurantist revivalism. He always placed it in a broader, international context" (Singh 1972, 55). The psychological feeling of being in nation brings together people of different shades of opinion as it makes the principle of unity in diversity possible. It helps in developing a collective consciousness leading to collective goals in national affairs; and transcending national divides bears the seed of a larger formation, towards a greater unity of human beings. Nationalism is evolutionary in nature and its evolution towards a higher form of synthesis of mankind is mandated in its very nature. There is always an urge in nation idea even in a way to 'destroy it' in the larger synthesis

of mankind. In the growth of human civilization nationalism is an intermediary stage towards higher forms of union, transcending national boundaries because the nation idea finds its consummation in the development of human unity. But, the nation idea must be developed to its full before any possibility of formation of world union arises. In his book *The Human Cycle, The Ideal of Human Unity, and The War and Self-determination* Sri Aurobindo explicates the possibility of emergence of world union. For him, the exact name does not matter, whether it is called world union or federation or government or confederation of states, what matters is the highest possible achievement of human civilization in which different nations live in peace and harmony.

The characteristic feature of Sri Aurobindo's concept of nationalism is the distinction between 'national ego' and 'nation-soul' to explain global developments. While national ego, i.e. a vague sense of group subjectivity is reflected in national idiosyncrasies, habits, prejudices and marked mental tendencies, nation-soul embodies a deeper awareness of group subjectivity (Mohanty 1993, 142). While national ego is a barrier towards larger unity of mankind, nation-soul has in itself a tendency towards larger unity of mankind. Wherever there is domination of national ego, there is a tendency on part of national leaders to profess supremacy of their nation and to proclaim their right to expand influence into other territories, thus leading to imperialism. In the imperialism of 19th and 20th centuries, Sri Aurobindo found an inherent urge in imperial powers to assert supremacy and domination over other nations and cultures.

For Sri Aurobindo nationalism is neither aggressive nor imperialistic but a significant

phase towards the ideal of human unity. While Sri Aurobindo argued for moderation of aggressive nationalism towards evolution of larger human unity in the wake of the First World War, the same line of argument was followed by two scholars on the eve of the Second World War. Clarence Streit's *Union Now* and W. B. Curry's *The Case for Federal Union* were full of insightful arguments for moderation of aggressive nationalism, especially as practiced in Germany under Hitler. Curry appealed nations to come out of their narrow chauvinism to make the idea of federal union possible. For the survival of the civilization, he argued, "the groups which we call nations should become like other groups, less fierce, less exclusive, less aggressive, less dominating, admitting allegiance to, and submitting to some measure of control by the community consisting of mankind as a whole" (Curry 1939, 65). Streit called for the establishment of a Union of the North Atlantic democracies, with the scope for further expansion. Under Streit's scheme of the Union, though national governments will have separate existence, the Union will provide "effective common government in our democratic world in those fields where such common government will clearly serve man's freedom better than separate governments," and "create by its constitution a nucleus world government capable of growing into universal world government peacefully and as rapidly as such growth will best serve man's freedom" (Streit 1939).

Nationalism in its true spirit leads to ideal of human unity as it cannot provide the anchor for the final solution to the problems emerging out of the nation-state mechanism. When nation-states do not mature and transform themselves to a larger possible human unity, they become subject to evils of

aggressive and imperialist impulses. When the spirit of nationalism is developed to its full, it graduates to the higher goal of human unity. Attempts were made in the past to establish some kind of ideal world order, howsoever limited in scale, but these failed mainly because these were not based on intrinsic values of the ideal human unity but purely on mechanical and superficial means. Empires such as the Roman and the Persian adopted absolutist and monarchical means to bring some kind of unity and order among divergent units. These attempts failed largely because they did not address the basic values of humanity in its genuine form. Sri Aurobindo developed the idea of religion of humanity to make his scheme of human unity a feasible initiative. The underlying basis of this religion is not any kind of dogma or exclusivist tenets or ideas, rather three supreme values- liberty, equality and fraternity. This supreme social trinity or 'three godheads of soul,' as he termed the three concepts, can provide a stable basis for a new world order. But, these three supreme values cannot develop and transform the world until the nation-states rise to the occasion and cultivate them in habit, thinking and ways of life. None of these values has really been realized in true spirit in spite of all the progress that has been achieved by the human society. He wrote: "The liberty that has been so loudly proclaimed as an essential of modern progress is an outward and mechanical and unreal liberty. The equality that has been so much sought after and battled for is equally an outward and mechanical and will turn out to be an unreal equality. Fraternity is not even claimed to be a practicable principle of the ordering of life and what is put forward as its substitute is the outward and mechanical principle of equal association or at best a comradeship of labor" (Sri Aurobindo 1962,

762-763).

Liberty, equality and fraternity are largely in conflict with each other, unless transformed and reconciled. Liberty on its own emphasizes on human freedom, some kind of laissez faire, thus neglecting the principle of equality. Similarly, the principle of equality on its own contradicts the principle of liberty as it emphasizes on parity - at the cost of individual freedom, hence the never-ending debate in political theory concerning the principles of liberty and equality. Sri Aurobindo argued these two apparently contradictory principles could be reconciled with the higher principle of fraternity. But this reconciliation appears unworkable in the present scheme of things which put emphasis on mere perfunctory order because fraternity as it is implied in its present working means mere formal coming of nation-states together or just some kind of ceremonial unity without change in character and motives. The religion of humanity is the true embodiment of the three supreme values in proper harmony. Liberty in its true sense is not exclusive. Freedom not only implies 'freedom to' but also 'freedom from'. Similarly, equality in its true sense not only implies equitable rights but also equitable duties. This harmonious working of the principles of liberty and equality is possible only when the spirit of brotherhood encompasses all human minds including the minds that govern the nation states. Only then the ideal of human unity will emerge not as a distant possibility but as an imperative for the mankind because, as Sri Aurobindo argued, with the passing of time nations have come closer to each other. The major contributions made by 'science, commerce and rapid communication' in this regard cannot be ignored (Sri Aurobindo 1962, 617). Sri

Aurobindo's allusion in the early decades of the 20th Century to these three important vehicles of globalization brings forth the seminal character of his approach and its relevance in the 21st century. As the achievements of commerce, science and technology transcend national boundaries, similarly the religion of humanity transcends national idiosyncrasies and all those forces that confine national mentality to rigidities.

■ The Intersection

The concept of ideal human unity of Sri Aurobindo chimes well with global governance. When global governance is perceived as effective management of global problems in a collective framework, the ideal of human unity finds ready acceptance as a goal. The globalized world can no more be viewed in silos, but in a more interactive and cooperative format – both ideal human unity and global governance adhere to this dictum. The cold war world was primarily guided by realism which provided state actors the power to govern international relations in a system of anarchy, while the post-cold war world is comparatively more liberal, more flexible, in which nations tend to realize the gravity of global problems and the need to act globally. The common themes in ideal of human unity and global governance can be identified as follows: both do not solely rely on state as dispenser of security and justice; their concerns transcend boundaries of state; both espouse interdisciplinary approaches and evolutionary in their mode of working; and, they bring fresh perspectives to the understanding of the state and society and enrich the discourse on how to govern state and the globe. Both concepts are constructivist in their approaches as they are not based on any fixed, or dogmatic, presumptions about

the nature of human being, or the state, or the world. For both the disciplines, the goal is 'positive peace', the enabling peace which is realized by peaceful means, which is sustainable and accommodative and which addresses concerns of all stakeholders in a fair and democratic manner. They include not only up-bottom process, implying a process imposed from above by national and international actors, but also bottom-up process, implying the role of individual, civil society organizations and other non-governmental organizations at various levels in fostering global peace.

One of the international bodies that contributed to the discourse on global governance and also is well placed in the discourse of the Ideal of Human Unity is the United Nations. Though the organization in its foundation embedded the global peace agenda, it was in its post-cold war reincarnation that the body could be viewed as a crucial pillar of a globalized world. The 1992 Agenda of Peace under the leadership of then United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali raised the post-cold war concerns and argued for necessity of international cooperation towards a peaceful world. In this report the Secretary General argued, "In these past months (aftermath of the end of the cold war) a conviction has grown, among nations large and small, that an opportunity has been regained to achieve the great objectives of the Charter - a United Nations capable of maintaining international peace and security, of securing justice and human rights and of promoting, in the words of the Charter, "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" (UN 1992). The concepts such as responsibility to protect, humanitarian intervention, though contested and subject to varying interpretations, encompass, in

their core, management of global problems through global governance mechanisms. It is the harmonious resolution of conflicts at all levels that can prove an effective bulwark for a peaceful and sustainable world, the goal of global governance and ideal of human unity.

The Human Development Report of 1994, written under the auspices of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) argued for human security beyond state-centric security, and for which it emphasized on collective action by the states. The threats to human security, the report argued “are no longer just personal or local or national. They are becoming global” as these problems “respect no national border” (UNDP 1994, 2). Though the post-cold war world has witnessed developments in science and technology and in indicators of economic development, the report argues, “we still live in a world where a fifth of the developing world’s population goes hungry every night, a quarter lacks access to even a basic necessity like safe drinking water, and a third lives in a state of abject poverty” (UNDP 1994, 2). The state-centered global order did not witness significant transformation even as the 20th century lapsed and the 21st century emerged. The co-chair of the Commission on Human Security, Sadako Ogata reflected on this situation in the report Human Security Now, 2003, “In a world of growing interdependence and transnational issues, reverting to unilateralism and a narrow interpretation of state security cannot be the answer. The United Nations stands as the best and only option available to preserve international peace and stability as well as to protect people, regardless of race, religion, gender or political opinion” (Commission on Human Security 2003, 4). The UN envisions the ideal human unity through

global governance. The preamble of the UN Charter affirms “faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small” and believed in promotion of “social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom” (UN 1945). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN 1966) reflected the same concerns as it recognized “the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.” The UN is considered as a major pillar of global governance and the ideal of human unity reflected in the principles of this organization. One of the core assumptions of the ideal is that individual’s interests can be best realized through international organizations, which are based on universal values of liberty, equality and fraternity. This assumption expands status of individual not merely as a citizen of a nation-state but as a member of the globalized world and this assumption chimes well with the assumption of global governance.

Crossing the Divide written under the auspices of the UN in 2001 and forwarded by then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, challenges the theories of ‘Clash of Civilizations’ and ‘End of History’ and posits hope on the UN for the resolution of the global problems. It envisages the emergence of the UN as a kind of ‘global social contract,’ which recognizes the principle of equality and distinction among the nations and rejects the old paradigm of international relations and advocates for a new paradigm governing the relations between nations on the following bases: equal footing, reassessment of ‘enemy’, dispersion of power, stake holding, individual responsibility, and Issue-driven alignments (Giandomenico and

et al 2001, 109-152). Did the UN live up to the expectations with which they were established? Did it make the world better for the progress of nations and for the humanity at large? Sri Aurobindo wrote in the context of the League of Nations, considered to be the precursor of the UN, “The League was eventually formed with America outside it as an instrument of European diplomacy, which was a bad omen for its future” (Sri Aurobindo 1962, 710). The League of Nations failed because it was not truly representative of the nations and the member nations frequently violated its principles. Many members of the League gave the impression that they joined the League not for universal peace and harmony but the fulfillment of their interests. This was reflected in frequent violation of the League principles and agreements such as Kellogg-Briand Pact and Nine- Power treaty. The defeat of Germany in the First World War and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 opened up the possibilities of the rise of aggressive nationalism. Instead of resolving the problem it gave vent to the suppressed frustration of Germany to come out in open two decades later. These developments finally led to the Second World War, denting the hopes for the building of a new world order.

In the post-cold war scenario the UN was stipulated to provide avenues for divergent nations to display their diversities in a harmonious way under one roof, where the differences among them could be resolved under the framework of international law applicable equally to all nations. The UN, which emerged as a ‘global social contract’, appeared to be more representative in comparison to its predecessor the League of Nations. The General Assembly comprises almost all nations of the world (at present

the number of the members is 193; in 1945, the year it was established, the number was 51). The Assembly has been working on the principle of one nation, one vote, thus giving equal voice to all nations, big or small, powerful or marginal. Through its various bodies UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, etc. the UN has done a commendable work in adopting and organizing welfare activities throughout the world. This international body was expected to provide the ground for the emergence of a just and fair world order but as its working reveals the powerful nations in the UN Security Council used their special powers arbitrarily, thus denting the prospects of the UN as an impartial inter-state mechanism. The provision of veto power for the five permanent members of the Security Council marred the prospects of the rise of an egalitarian world structure. Sri Aurobindo warned about the danger of assigning ‘preponderant place to the five great powers in the Security Council’ of the UN, thus ensuring a ‘strong surviving element of oligarchy’ in the international body (Sri Aurobindo 1962, 782). He further warned that its defects might lead to pessimism and doubt regarding its effectiveness. As the developments indicate, this veto power has been exercised arbitrarily by the big powers for the fulfillment of their interests. Ostrom J. Moller argued, “The five victorious nations decided that they should govern the world. Is that the best solution? Whether the world should be governed by the Security Council is itself an interesting question, but if so should it then be these five nations who should do it?” (Moller 2000, 173) Moller pointed that a new international system cannot be built upon sovereign nation-states as participant but has to be built on the transfer of sovereignty from the nation-state to international institutions. He did not reject nation-

states as participants in international mechanism but for success of international endeavors they have to partially transfer their sovereignty (Moller 2000, 146). For this to happen, some kind of ‘creative destruction’ on part of the nation-states needs to take place.

The defects in the working of the UN and in its structure gives rise to the formulation that the system built more than fifty years ago has not developed suitable mechanisms to realize the set goals. The challenges emerging out of market economy and globalization, the north-south divide, the problems related to human rights and democracy have not been tackled by the world body effectively. The permanent five countries by the means of veto power have weakened the real motive behind the establishment of the UN. The crisis in Syria reflected the weakness of the body in terms of evolving a common front to address the crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay lamented this indecisiveness of the Council, “There will always be some disagreement within the international community on how to respond to a given situation; but when tens of thousands of civilian lives are threatened, as currently in Syria, the world expects the Security Council to unite and act” (Pillay, cited in UN, 2013a). The UN further lacks effective means to enforce its rules and regulations. It does not have adequate financial means to implement its plans and programs. In many cases the effectiveness of the UN has been challenged or dominated by other international bodies such as International Monetary Fund and World Bank, controlled by the developed nations. Alexandra Novosseloff argues that the UN has failed to anticipate emerging problems concerning globalization, ethnicism, poverty,

migration, IT revolution, etc. and it needs both structural and conceptual reforms to remain relevant in the post-cold war global order (Novosseloff 2001, 945-963).

There have been attempts to impart greater visibility and dynamism to multilateral organizations towards bringing regional centers of economic power in playing an important role in global economic management. The rising clout of the G-20 and coming together of developed and developing countries shows a clear inclination on part of crucial players in international politics to promote multilateralism to manage global economic crisis. Since 1999 the grouping has played an effective role to set common principles for sound economic management, broaden the Washington consensus on economic development, devise strong measures to curb illegal finance. It has also adopted the Accord for Sustained Growth outlining policies to promote monetary and financial stability, enhance domestic and international competition, and empower people to participate successfully in markets. The G-20 may appear small in terms of its membership but the grouping represents about 90 per cent of the world’s economic output with 67 per cent of world population and its success in meeting global crisis shows this body with diverse countries with different levels of growth and societal make up have struck a right balance between legitimacy and effectiveness (Martin 2005, 2-6). Paul Martin, who chaired the first G-20 meeting, argued that the G-20 model which is primarily a multilateral economic instrument in international politics can be replicated in the form L-20 (Leaders-20) to meet the global challenges. The lessons drawn from working of the G-20, i.e. crucial decisions are taken at political level, commonality

despite differences and focus on larger issues of stability and predictability can be further extended in creating another organization L-20 which can focus on political issues confronting nations of the world. The complex international relations of the 21st century appear to be fraught with same old problems as in past towards creating a multilateral body to solve the global crises. For instance, in case of the proposed L-20 who will be the members? Who will set the agenda for the body to deliberate upon? Whether the body will meet the issues of common concern (which are much contested), or environmental degradation (too much divergence as the climate change summits reveal), or pandemics (politics about vaccines, etc.) with mechanism to enforce its decisions, or it will just impart guidelines leaving nation-states to follow their will?

The post-cold war world so far lacks the needed momentum to evolve a global egalitarian architecture. Attempts or ideas such as L-20 will be fraught with the similar problems as that of the UN. The structural and conceptual reform of the UN including inclusion of new permanent members in the Security Council has been marred by disagreements. The reluctance on part of some of the big powers to come out of their national egos and accommodate the rising aspirations in the council has delayed the reform process. The same kind of 'confinement' and 'exclusion' mentality will likely continue for the near future, thus obstructing any attempt towards the ideal of human unity through global governance mechanisms such as the UN.

The weakness of the UN machinery as mentioned above does not make it a body to be considered defunct as its predecessor the League of Nations. Two simultaneous developments, following the argument

of Sri Aurobindo, need to be undertaken in order to make the body relevant in the post-cold war world. First, nations must shun narrow considerations and participate in the international process towards peace and development in an egalitarian framework. Regional organizations such as European Union have proved effective in developing platforms to take collective decisions. This collective spirit should be imparted in the working of the UN. Besides various regional organizations centered on states, various non-state actors such as World Constitution and Parliament Association, World Citizens' Assembly, World Federalist Movement, International Registry of World Citizens and many others have played roles to realize the goal of a peaceful and harmonious world (Basu 1999). These organizations can be actively engaged in the UN reforms. Second, the structure of the UN and its decision-making process need reforms. Measures such as the enlargement of the membership of the Security Council, financial autonomy, and giving wider recognition to the leadership of the Secretary General can be undertaken to this effect. Richard Falk made the case for a Global People's Assembly, in which non-state actors and their concerns can be represented, and an Economic Security Council for a reformed Security Council for the reform of the international body (Falk 2001).

It is not that the UN is without its utility, but its prevalent working still presages preponderance of national actors over the global unity. Unless the UN is transformed into a genuine representative of divergent nations, it will not be able to cater divergent aspirations of nation-states in a global framework and hence will not be an effective mechanism to achieve the goals of global governance

and ideal of human unity. The idea expressed by Sri Aurobindo regarding the UN as a mechanism towards the ideal of human Unity had been echoed by the noted scientist Albert Einstein, who observed, “The United Nations is an extremely important and useful institution provided the peoples and governments of the world realize that it is merely a transitional system towards the final goal, which is the establishment of supranational authority vested with sufficient legislative and executive powers to keep the peace” (quoted in Basu 1999, 1). Similarly, Emery Reves in his *The Anatomy of Peace* wrote, “World government is not an ‘ultimate goal’ but an immediate necessity. It has been overdue since 1914” (Basu 1999, 4). Likewise, the Parliament of World Religions in 1993 advocated for the adoption of the Golden Rule (Giandomenico and et al 2001, 74) by the nations for the evolution of a world union. Golden Rule has both positive and negative dimensions: in its positive dimension it embodies the principle: do unto others what you would want others to do unto you; and in its negative dimension it embodies the principle: do not do unto others what you would not want others to do unto you. If nation-states could adopt this rule shared by all great religious traditions the authors of the *Crossing the Divide* argue, it will help in the evolution of a global ethic to be equally observed and respected by different nations towards evolution of the ideal world without compromise of national interests rather elevating them to a higher pedestal in which peace, harmony and sustainable development will be core principles.

The underlying impulse behind the ideal of human unity is the achievement of the highest possible world unity among nations and their peoples. It may take any shape but what is more

important is that the nations must come out of the confinements of the collective ego to participate in the widest possible human unity. Hence, the world union will neither be rigid nor dogmatic nor subject to dictates of a particular nation or group of nations. It will not succumb to hegemonic ambitions of any particular nation because a true world union will be based on the ‘principle of equality in which considerations of size and strength will not enter’ (Sri Aurobindo 1962, 783). It will give equal respect to diverse cultures and patterns of life. It will, in the language of *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue Among Civilizations* (Giandomenico and et al 2001), recognize the principles of equality and distinction, not domination and disintegration. It will not allow big, powerful nations to usurp the rights of other nations in violation of the basic principles of the world body. This world structure will be akin to a rich tapestry in which different shades of color are beautifully placed in their own places or like an ornament in which different precious stones are placed in their requisite order.

■ Conclusion

The element of force as effective means for the establishment of an ideal world union is ruled out in the scheme of the ideal of human unity. History makes it evidently clear that force may bring some kind of formal world unity but it will not last long unless the mechanism of force gives way to the means of harmony and order. Though Sri Aurobindo analyzed the possibility of administrative unity, common economic policy, common military force, he did not give any specific guidelines regarding the future structure of the world body. The emergence of world unity for Sri Aurobindo is the manifestation of a higher consciousness in an evolutionary

scheme in which the march from the state to the higher, world construction can be explained as a movement of nature from infrarational to rational and then to suprarational forms of consciousness. Sri Aurobindo's ideal of human unity provides the rationale for the nation-states to come out of the rigid foreign policy postures. Sidney Kartus emphasized the importance of Sri Aurobindo's ideal of human unity and argued: "The Western world knows far more of Marx's call to the working men to unite than it does of Sri Aurobindo's message to the humanity to unite. Yet it is a message such as that

of Sri Aurobindo with which humanity must become familiar and which it must need in order attain human unity" (Kartus 1960, 314). Once the ideal of human unity is embedded in the approaches of nations in their mutual conducts, the world order free from aggressive tendencies will be stable and the question of force as a foreign policy tool will become largely obsolete. The power alignments meant to contain one power or the other will be viewed differently from the evolutionary perspective towards ideal human unity through global governance mechanisms.

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Human Rights - A Perspective from Sikhism

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Sikhism is the world's fifth-largest religion. It was founded during the late 15th century in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent. Its adherents are known as Sikhs. Currently, there are about 30 million Sikhs worldwide. Most of them live in the Indian state of Punjab. As per Sikh tradition, Sikhism was established by Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and subsequently led by a succession of nine other Gurus. Before his death, the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), bestowed the status of Guru to the sacred scripture of Sikhs, Adi Granth, which is presently known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) [1].

The Adi Granth was first compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, in 1604. Its second and final version has been the handiwork of Guru Gobind Singh, who added the hymns of his father, Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru [2], at Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo, Punjab, in 1705. The holy

Sikh scripture, SGGS, contains 1430 pages of text in poetry form. In addition to the hymns of the six Sikh Gurus and four Sikhs, it includes hymns composed by fifteen saints (Bhagats) and eleven poet laureates (Bhats) of the Guru's court. Muslims and Hindus, Brahmins, and "untouchables" all come together in one congregation to create a universal scripture. It is a compendium of mystic, metaphysical and religious poetry written or recited between the 12th and 17th centuries in the Indian sub-continent [3].

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, through its comprehensive worldview, offers a perfect set of values and an applicable code of conduct. Its cardinal message is addressed to the welfare of all humans irrespective of their caste, color, creed, culture, and religion. SGGS emphasizes love, respect, empathy, and acceptance of others' existence. It prohibits us from infringing on the freedom and rights of others. The life and works of the Sikh Gurus exemplify

the practicability of these ideas. Their inter-faith dialogues highlighted that human unity and oneness could be achieved through tolerance, communication, and respect for others [4].

Besides a matchless elaboration of spirituality, Sri Guru Granth Sahib enshrines a powerful expression of the message of revolutionary ideals of social welfare, human rights, multicultural distinctness, and religious freedom. In the present era, when the threats and fear of interfaith conflicts, military aggression, terrorism etc., have overpowered the human sentiments, the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are even more relevant to resolve all these problems.

■ Human Rights

Human rights are benchmarks that recognize and protect the dignity of all human beings. These rights are essential to all humans, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, race, language, religion, or gender. They comprise the right to life and liberty, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom from slavery and torture, the right to education and work, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights without discrimination [5].

Sikh Gurus called for universal freedom and the establishment of the benevolent rule of justice for all. Their unique, revolutionary, and liberating philosophy of universal humanism emphasizes primal human rights, e.g., freedom, equity, dignity, and justice for all [6-8]. It also supplements our current understanding of human rights.

■ Right to Life

Right to life means that nobody, not even the Government, can try to end one's life. It also implies that the Government should take apt measures to safeguard life by making laws to protect all and, in

some circumstances, by taking steps to protect the person if his/her life is at risk [5]. Sikh doctrines strongly endorse this view about the right to life for all. Sikh Gurus proclaimed that human life is precious as it is God's gift; thereby, nobody has the right to terminate it. Guru Amar Das states:

ੴ ਕੈ ਭ੍ਯਾਨੈ ਜਾਨਮ ਪਾਦਾਰਠ ਪਾੜਿ ਆ ਮਾਠੁ ਊਤਮ ਹੋਇ।
Har kai bhāṇai janam paḍārath pāḍiā maṭh ūtam hoī.

By the pleasure of the Lord's Will, the prize of this human birth is obtained, and the intellect is exalted. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 365)

Guru Nanak emphasizes that both birth and death happen as per the command of God. Thus, none has the right to interfere in this natural process.

ਜਮਾਣ ਮਰਜਾ ਹੁਕਮ ਪਾਚ੍ਯਾਨ।
Jamaṇ marṇā hukam pachhāṇ.

Understand that birth and death take place according to God's Will. (M.1, SGGS, p. 412)

■ Right to Food

The right to adequate food states that every man, woman, and child, alone or in a community, should always have physical and economic access to adequate food or means for its procurement [5]. According to Sikh doctrines, this right for accessibility of food to everyone is a God-given right to all, so none should be devoid of this right. Guru Ram Das proclaims it as:

ੴ ਕੈ ਜਾਨੁ ਉਪਾੜਿ ਆਨ ਮੁਖਿ ਆਪੇ ਦੇਵੇ ਗਿਰਾਸ।
vich āpe jant upāḍiān mukh āpe deḗ girās.

He (God) created the beings here (on Earth), and He also makes the food available to them. (M.4, SGGS, p. 302)

■ The Right to Water

Pure, clean, and good quality water is second only to oxygen as the most crucial nutrient for sustaining human life. It has an essential action in

almost all primary functions of the human body. It regulates body temperature and carries oxygen and nutrients to cells. Water is a major component of blood and lymph. It greases the walls of the arteries, cushions joints, and is crucial for metabolic reactions. It regulates the body's temperature by absorbing heat produced by physical exercise and cell metabolism. It cleans the body tissues by removing wastes and toxins. Seventy percent of our body is water. It is essential for life. Without it, one would die within days. The average person requires from 1.5 to 3.0 liters of clean, unpolluted water daily. Without this, our bodies slowly become dehydrated. A dehydrated body is open to disease and degenerative conditions [9].

The right to water has been recognized as being derived from the right to an adequate standard of living. Therefore, it is implicitly contained in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It has also been recognized as a legally binding right in many national constitutions. The right to water includes the availability of sufficient water for personal and domestic uses, physical access within or near each household, affordability, and adequate quality of water [10]. Access to water is also an element of other rights. It can be essential to realize the rights to food and secure livelihoods for farmers or others who rely on water for their daily work. Water is a dire necessity for life to flourish. This crucial role of water is pointed out by Guru Nanak as;

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ॥ ੧੦੦ ॥
 Pahilā pāṇī jīᵒ hai jīᵒ hariᵒā sabḥ koᵒe.

Firstly, water is fundamental to life. All living beings flourish by its usage. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 472)

Guru Amar Das asserts that water is essential for the perpetuation of life; without it, none can survive. He articulates:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ॥ ੧੦੦ ॥
 Ih jal merā jīᵒ hai jal bin rahaṅ na jāᵒe.

This water is essential to my life; I cannot survive without water. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 1283)

Guru Ram Das states that water is one of the blessings bestowed upon us by the Creator. Therefore, it implicitly endorses the fact that each of us has a fundamental right to the accessibility of water to maintain our lives and good health.

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ॥ ੧੦੦ ॥
 Sabḥ jīᵒ pind mukḥ nak dīᵒā varṭaṅ kaᵒ pāṇī.

He gave all beings souls, bodies, mouths, noses, and water to drink. (M. 4, SGGS, p. 167)

■ Rights to Marry and have Family

Without any limitation due to nationality, race or religion, men and women of full age have the fundamental human right to marry and have a family. They are authorized to have equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. The intending spouses shall enter marriage only with free and full consent [11-12].

In Sikhism, marriage is regarded as a sacral bond of mutual help to reach the pinnacles of worldly and spiritual life. It denotes a unity of mind and soul. It is a means to achieve spirituality. The fundamental goal of marriage in Sikhism is the union of both souls with the Almighty Lord. Therefore, the Sikh Gurus had very high regard for the institution of marriage, and they themselves entered matrimony. They asserted that marriage is not merely a social or civil contract but that its most ideal and highest purpose is the union of two souls so that they become spiritually inseparable. Guru Amar Das states:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Ḍhan pir ehi na ākhī^ᵃan bahan ikṭhe ho^ᵃe. Ēk jot̄ ḍu^ᵃe
mūrṭī ḍhan pir kahī^ᵃai so^ᵃe.

Don't call them husband and wife, who merely sit together. A couple can genuinely be called husband and wife, who is consciously one (united) despite separate bodies. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 788)

The family is a fundamental and natural unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. Family is also a primary social group in the Sikh community. Besides the endorsement of the right to marriage, family life has been encouraged by the Sikh Gurus. SGGS encourages Sikhs to live as a family unit to provide for and nurture children. Guru Arjan Dev states that one's birth in a family happens as per God's will.

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Jā ṭis bhāṇā tā jammi^ᵃā parvār bhālā bhā^ᵃi^ᵃā.

According to His (God's) Will, a child is born, in a blessed family. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 921)

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Māt̄ piṭā bhā^ᵃi^ᵃ suṭ̄ baniṭā ṭin bhīṭar parabhū sanjo^ᵃi^ᵃā.

God has placed you among your mother, father, brothers, sons, and wife. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 77)

Thereby, Sikh doctrines advocate the God-given right to have a family life for everyone. Guru Arjan Dev articulates:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Girsatī girsat̄ ḍharmāt̄ā.

The householders affirm their faith in family life. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 71)

Furthermore, he encourages us to maintain cordial relations with our family members and others too, to lead a peaceful life.

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Sukḥ baishu sant̄ sajan parvār.

O Pious ones! Sit in peace with the family and friends. (M.5, SGGS, p. 185)

■ Right to own things

In everyday life, we use many essential things that are ours. For example, everyone has the right to own property alone or jointly with others. None shall be arbitrarily divested of their property. It is a fundamental right because a person needs to be able to own what one wants without having it forcibly taken away. Without this right, one wouldn't be able to possess things [11-12].

Sikh doctrines emphasize that God has blessed us with the gifts of life and property. Guru Teg Bahadur states it as:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Fan ḍhan sampai sukḥ dī^ᵃo ar jih nīke ḍhām.

He (God) has given you your body, wealth, property, peace, and beautiful mansions. (M. 9, SGGS, p. 1426)

According to the Sikh Gurus, to deprive others of their rights amounts to injustice. Even to covet other's things or property is sin. Guru Nanak says:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Hak parā^ᵃi^ᵃā nānkā us sū^ᵃar us gā^ᵃe.

To take what rightfully belongs to another must strictly be taboo as pork eating is for a Muslim and beef-eating is for a Hindu. (M.1, SGGS, p. 141)

Guru Arjan encourages us to repudiate what is rightfully others.

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸਾਖੀ ॥

Par ḍhan par ḍārā par nindā in si^ᵃo parīṭ nivār.

Others' wealth, others' wives, and the slander of others - renounce your craving for these. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 379)

Thus, Sikh doctrines strongly endorse the human's right to own things.

■ Right for Human Dignity

The cognition of innate dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all humans is the foundation of freedom, justice, and world peace. A human being's dignity is not only a fundamental right but constitutes the genuine basis of fundamental rights. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 1 states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." Thus, human dignity isn't something that people earn because of their race, caste, class, social status, or any other distinction. All human beings are born with it. Just by being human, all people deserve respect. Human rights naturally spring from that dignity [13].

The concept of human dignity isn't restricted to human rights. For centuries, world religions have recognized human dignity as we now understand it. Most religions teach that humans are essentially equal on one account or another. In Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, it's because humans were created in the image of God, becoming children of God. Dignity is something that a divine being gives to people. In Catholic social teaching, this term is explicitly used to support the church's belief that every human life is sacred. In Hinduism and Buddhism, respectively, dignity is inherent because humans are manifestations of the Divine. In the Shvetasvatara Upanishad, it is stated, "He is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the Self within all beings [14]. Buddhism begins with the understanding that humans are "rare" because they can make choices that lead to enlightenment. Our dignity arises from this responsibility and ability, uniting all humans in their quest [15].

One's dignity includes having a sense of control, making one's own decisions, experiencing hope and meaningfulness, feeling valued as a human being, and being in a treasured and nurturing environment. When everyone is equal, they are all equally deserving of basic respect and rights. Guru Ram Das emphasizes that God's essence is pervading among us all. Thereby dignity is inherent as all humans are manifestations of the Divine. He states:

ੴ ੴ ੴੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ
ੴੴ ੴ
Sabḥ ek ḍarisat samaṭ kar ḍekhḥai sabḥ āṭam rām
pachḥān jīo.

Look upon all with equality and recognize the Supreme Soul (God) pervading among all. (M. 4, SGGS, p. 446)

Thus, every human being has been granted dignity by God as a human right. When God has given that right, taking that right away or restricting it is a crime against humanity. The gist of freedom is that humans should not have sovereignty over humans. When someone dominates another person, it leads to the dignity loss for the other person. Such a person loses the opportunity for self-determination becomes a victim of hopelessness and worthlessness. The repressed person becomes a victim of the violation of his/her personal life. Such a situation enhances one's sense of disconnection and alienation. Baba Farid, a saint-poet of Sri Guru Granth sahib, opines that it is better to die than lose one's sovereignty. He states:

ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴੴੴੴ ੴੴ
ੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴ
Farīḍā bār parāi^oai baisḥā sā'n^oī mujḥai na ḍēh. Je tū
evai rakḥsī jīo saṯrahu lehi.

Fareed says: O Lord! do not make me live at the

mercy of others. If this is my fate, it is better to let me die. (Shaikh Farid, SGGS, p. 1380)

Thus, Sikh doctrines strongly advocate the right to human dignity.

■ **Right to Equality**

The right to equality connotes the absence of legal discrimination based on caste, race, religion, sex, and place of birth. It ensures equal rights for all citizens. The egalitarian principle [16-17], as laid down by Guru Nanak, advocates all human beings' equality, regardless of gender or birth. It disapproves of all distinctions of caste and color. Guru Nanak vouched for the right to equality for all by raising his voice against demarcation based on religion, race, and gender. He urged treating everyone in the same respectful way. He articulates:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ॥
ਸਾਧੂ ਸਾਧਿਕਾ ਸਾਧਿਕਾ ਸਾਧਿਕਾ ਸਾਧਿਕਾ ॥

Gurmukh ek darisat kar dekhu ghat ghat jot samo
ji.

As Gurmukh (Guru oriented person), look upon all as equal; in each heart, the Divine essence is contained. (M. 1, SGGS, p 599)

ਜਾਨਹੁ ਜੋਤ ਨਾ ਪੁਚਹਾਹੁ ਜਾਇ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਤ ਨਾ ਹੇ ॥

Recognize God's essence within all and don't discriminate on the basis of social class or status. There are no classes or castes in the world hereafter. (M. 1, SGGS, p 349)

Guru Ram Das emphasizes unity in diversity by proclaiming:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਾਮ ਦਾਸ ਜੀ ॥
ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਾਮ ਦਾਸ ਜੀ ॥

Èko pavan matī sabh ekā sabh ekā jot sabāīā.

All inhale the same air. All are made of the same clay. The life essence within all is the same. (M. 4, SGGS, p 96)

Bhagat Ravi Das, a saint poet of Sri Guru Granth Sahib denounces the class or caste division among people as:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿ ਦਾਸ ਜੀ ॥
ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਰਵਿ ਦਾਸ ਜੀ ॥

Kāim dāim sadā pāṭisāhī. Dom na sem ek so āhī.

God's Kingdom is stable, steady, and eternal. Therein none has second or third status; all are equal there. (Bhagat Ravidas, SGGS, p. 345)

In the egalitarian society as enunciated by Sikh Gurus, all are equal, the lowest to the highest, in the creed as in the race, in religious hopes and political rights. In this approach, women enjoy equal status with men. Sikh Gurus sought to release the people from the bondage of caste tyranny by emphasizing the unity of humankind. It has been given an explicitly social character through a series of measures adopted by the Gurus. The establishment of the institutions of Sangat (a corporate body of the devotees), Pangat (seating of the devotees in rows on the same level), Dharamsala (a place for public worship), Kirtan (collective singing of hymns) and Langar (community kitchen) has led a powerful movement to release people from the stranglehold of the ritualistic, caste-ridden, priest-dominated and a retrogressive social order. The establishment of the institutions of langar, pangat, sangat and dharamsal are outstanding examples of social equality among the Sikhs.

■ **Gender Equality emphasized**

Having noted several rituals and traditions of his time, Guru Nanak comprehended that men frequently degraded women. Women were thought of as property and considered as lowly and unworthy. He condemned these practices. Guru Nanak spoke against gender discrimination in India's highly

male-dominated environment [18]. He opposed established orthodoxy with the radical assertion that women were worthy of praise and equal to men. Besides, God is gender neutral. It is both man and woman, and its creative aspect is portrayed as that of a mother:

ੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴ ੴ
 Āpe purakh̄ āpe hī nārī.

God is both man and woman. (M. 1, SGGS, p 1020)

Guru Nanak proclaimed that the same divine essence pervades through both men and women.

ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴ
 Nārī purakh̄ sabāī loe.

Among all the men and women, God's essence is pervading. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 223)

Bhagat Kabir articulates that man and women are all forms of the Creator (God).

ੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴ ੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴੴੴੴੴ ੴ
 Ète a^ouraṭ mardā sāje e sabh̄ rūp ṭumhāre.

You have fashioned all these men and women, O Lord! All these are Your Forms. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p. 1349)

Gur Nanak emphasized that rather than being denigrated and mistreated, women should be cherished and respected. Guru Nanak proclaimed:

ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴ
 ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ
 ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴ ੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴ
 ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ
 ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴ
 ੴ

Bḥand jammī^oai bḥand nimmī^oai bḥand mangan̄ vī^oāhu. Bḥandahu hovai doṣṭī bḥandahu cḥalai rāhu. Bḥand mu^oā bḥand bhālī^oai bḥand hovai bandḥān. So ki^o mandā ākhī^oai jīṭ jamēh rājān. Bḥandahu hī

bḥand ūpjai bḥandai bājḥ na ko^oe. Nānak bḥandai bāhrā eko sachā so^oe.

We all are born of women; we are conceived in a woman's womb. To a woman, one is engaged and married. One makes friendship with a woman; future generations are born through women. When a woman (wife) dies, a person marries another one; we are bound with the world through woman. So why should we talk ill of her? From her, kings are born. From a woman, a woman is born; without women, there would be no one at all. O Nanak, God alone is without a woman. (M. 1, SGGS, p 473)

Guru Nanak and his successor Gurus ardently advocated women's participation in worship, society, and the battleground, as equals. They promoted freedom of speech, and women were urged to participate in all religious activities, including the SGGS's reading. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, allowed equality to women by admitting them into the Sangat (congregation) without any reservations or restrictions. He declared that his message is as much for women as for men. His successor, Guru Angad, the second Sikh Guru, encouraged the education of all Sikhs, both men and women. The third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Das, disapproved of the use of the veil by women. He inspired women to take up a leadership role in society. As a practical measure, he entrusted women with overseeing some communities of disciples. Furthermore, he forbade the practices of Sati (custom of widow burning) and female infanticide and encouraged remarriage of widows. Guru Amar Das proclaimed:

ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴੴੴੴੴੴੴੴ
 ੴੴੴ ੴੴੴੴੴੴੴੴ ੴ ੴੴੴੴ ੴੴ ੴੴੴੴੴੴੴ

Saṭī^oā ehi na ākhī^oan jo maṛī^oā lag jala^onniḥ. Nānak saṭī^oā jāṇī^oaniḥ jē birhe cḥot mara^onniḥ.

Do not call them 'sati' (means: truly faithful), who burn alive on their husband's funeral pyre. Nanak says: They alone be called 'sati', who die from the shock of separation. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 787)

Noting that the custom of dowry, which led to various social evils, was highly prevalent in the strong patrilineal culture of India, the Sikh Gurus strongly condemned it. The fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das, proclaims it as:

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥
ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ॥

Hor manmukh dāj jè rakh dikhālèh so kūr
ahañkār kachh pājo.

An arrogant person, who offers dowry and makes a show of it, indulges in only false egotism and a worthless exhibition. (M. 4, SGGS, p. 79)

The sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind, bestowed great respect upon women by declaring, "woman is the conscience of man." The tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh made the Khalsa initiation ceremony open, both to men and women, proclaiming a woman being just as worthy [19]. He bestowed the honorific "Kaur" (meaning princess) to all the baptized women. Furthermore, he accorded parity among the Khalsa, men or women, by allowing them all to keep the 5 K's. He directed the Khalsa fraternity to avoid the company of kanyapapi (a person who sins against a woman). He also interdicted Sikhs to exercise any proprietary rights over women captured in battle; they could not be kept as enslaved people or wives but were to be treated with the utmost respect. Sikh doctrines also assert that both women and men carry the same divine spirit. So, they both have an equal right to cultivate their spirituality and attain salvation. Women can participate in all social, cultural, secular,

and religious activities. In 1870s, during the Sikh revival movement, the Singh Sabha raised its voice against the female infanticide, child marriage, the practice of dowry, extravagant expenditure during marriage ceremonies, purdah system, sati practice and poor condition of widows.

Gender equality has always been one of the hallmarks of Sikhism. Several women have made important contributions in the past. Sikh history is replete with such instances which portray women as equal to men in devotion, service, bravery, and sacrifice. A few examples are the extraordinary contributions made by Bibi Nanaki Ji, Bibi Bhani Ji, Mata Khivi Ji, Mata Gujari Ji, Mata Sahib Kaur, Mai Bhago, Rani Sada Kaur, Rani Sahib Kaur, and Maharani Jind Kaur in various domains of life. And this progress is continuing even today. Now a days, Sikh women are playing leadership roles not only in leading congregations but in several diverse fields. They join the Sangat (congregation), work with men in Langar (community kitchen), and participate in other religious and social activities in the gurdwaras. Furthermore, they enjoy the same voting rights as men to elect the members of the Gurdwara Managing Committees, which administers Sikhs' places of worship. Thus, Sikhism strongly supports the human right to equality for all irrespective of one's class, status, caste, race, religion, or gender.

■ Right to Education

The right to education encompasses the right to free and compulsory primary education and increasing access to secondary, technical, vocational, and higher education. Based on verifiable data, it is realized that people's right to education reduces their vulnerability to child labor, early marriage, discrimination, and other human rights abuses. It also

increases their opportunities to realize other human rights, including the right to health and participation in public affairs.

Education as a fundamental human right is central to UNESCO's mission. The right to education is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) [20]. Education is an empowering right. It is one of the foremost tools by which socially and economically marginalized persons and children can take themselves out of poverty and participate fully in society. Having recognized education's potential to develop our most excellent abilities, Guru Nanak encouraged his disciples to acquire it to learn about all spheres of life. However, he emphasizes that learning must include apt understanding. He asserts.

ਮੁਕਾਤ ਨਾਹਿ ਬਿਦਿਅਾ ਬਿਗਿਅਾਨੁ
 Mukaṭ nahī biḍi^a bigi^an.

Liberation (from ignorance) does not come from learning without understanding. (M. 1, SGGS, p 903)

ਗਿਅਾਨੁ ਕੁਹਾਰੈ ਲਾਇ ਮਨ ਸਿਉ ਲੁਯੁਹਾਇ ਮਨਸਾ ਮਨੇਹੁ ਸਮਾਇ
 Gi^an k^harai lai man si^o lūj^hai mansā manēh samāⁱ
 he.

With the sword of knowledge, one must destroy evil thoughts and selfish desires inherent in the mind. (M. 1, SGGS, p 1022)

The ability to read opens worlds for an individual. Without literacy, the exposure to new ideas is minimal, as is one's ability to communicate their thoughts and participate in society. The ability to read enhances the ability to access ideas and information from outside of one's own experiences, promoting cross-cultural awareness and understanding other points of view. According to many experts, education is crucial in alleviating poverty and fostering development. Guru Nanak inspires us to be well educated. He articulates:

ਜਾਹਿ ਗਿਅਾਨੁ ਪਾਗਾਸੁ ਅਗਿਅਾਨੁ ਮਿਟਾਇ
 Jah gi^an pa^gās agi^an mi^tai

Wherever spiritual wisdom appears, ignorance is dispelled. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 791)

Guru Nanak emphasizes that wisdom thus acquired should be used for the benefit of society. He encourages us to adopt a generous attitude towards needy and proclaims that only through selfless service to others can one attain inner peace. He proclaims:

ਵਿਦਿਅਾ ਵੀਚਾਰੀ ਤਾਨੁ ਪਾਰੁਪਕਾਰੀ
 viḍi^a vīchārī tāⁿ pa^rupkārī.

Contemplate and reflect upon knowledge, and you will become a benefactor to others. (M. 1, SGGS, p 356)

ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਵਾਇ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਨੀਅਾ
 Suk^h hovai sev kamāⁿi^a.

You shall find peace, doing selfless service. (M. 1, SGGS, p 25)

Guru Angad was an ardent advocate for education and built several schools for children to learn, read and write. To carry forward his mission, several Sikh organizations, e.g., SGPC, Amritsar; DSGMC, New Delhi; Sikh Educational Society, Chandigarh; Chief Khalsa Diwan Charitable Society, Amritsar; Akal Academy, Baru Sahib (Himachal Pradesh), and Sikh Education Society, Hyderabad etc. have taken great measures to make education easily accessible to all. Following Guru Angad's footsteps these organizations are running over 260 schools, more than 70 colleges and four universities to date. Thus, Sikhism is largely instrumental in actively supporting the right to education for all.

■ **Right to Work**

The right to work implies that people have a right to engage or work in productive employment. They should not be barred from doing so. The right

to work is contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, it is recognized in international human rights law through its inclusion in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The right to work emphasizes social, cultural, and economic development [11-12, 21]. In his hymns, Guru Nanak emphasizes that the Creator of the world has itself assigned some work to every being. Thereby, it is a fundamental human right. He says:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਯਾਗੁ ਅਪੈ ਕਾਇ ਤੁਧੁ ਆਪੈ ਧੰਦੁ ਆਲੈ ॥
 Tuḏh āpe jagat upāe kai tuḏh āpe ḏhandḏhai lāiā.

You Yourself created the world, and You Yourself put it to work. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 138)

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਯਾਗੁ ਅਪੈ ਕਾਇ ਤੁਧੁ ਆਪੈ ਧੰਦੁ ਆਲੈ ॥

Janṭ upāe ḏhandḏhai sabḥ lāe....

Having created its beings, He (God) has put them all to work. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 434)

Guru Amar Das declares that the Creator of us all encourages us to do work.

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਕਾਰੈ ਕਰਤੈ ਸੋਏ ॥

Āp karāe kartā soī.

The Creator Himself inspires us to work. (M. 3, SGGS, p. 124).

Guru Arjan Dev recognizing the fundamental nature of the human right to work urges us to lead a life of action and earn one's living to lead a worthwhile life. He articulates:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਕਾਰੈ ਕਰਤੈ ਸੋਏ ॥

Uḏam kareḏiā jīo tūn kamāvḏiā sukh bhunch.

Live a life of action. Do work, earn your living, and thereby lead a comfortable life. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 522).

The core message of SGGS is Nam Japna (Contemplation on God), Kirt Karni (the honest labor) and Wand Chhakna (sharing of earnings). It proclaims:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਕਾਰੈ ਕਰਤੈ ਸੋਏ ॥

Gḥāl khāe kichḥ hathahu ḏeē. Nānak rāhu pachḥāneh seē.

Nanak says a person who earns his/her living working arduously; and shares it with others has discovered the path of righteousness. (M. 1, SGGS, p 1245)

Not only the right to work is recognized in SGGS, but all are encouraged to choose the right (honest work) type of work for a living. Guru Arjan says:

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਕਾਮ ਕਾਮੈ ਜਿ ਮੁਖੁ ਉਲੈ ॥

Soī kamm kamāe jī mukḥ ujlā.

One must do only that work, which shall bring commendation from others. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 397)

Thus, Sikh Gurus were supporters of right actions and good deeds. They not only preached but also lived what they preached. For example, after his long travels, Guru Nanak settled himself at Kartarpur Sahib. Therein, he, for almost two decades, worked hard to earn his living via farming. His actions set up an example for others to follow. Thus, the life examples of Sikh Gurus and Sikh doctrines emphatically support human beings' right to work.

■ Right to Freedom of Thought and Expression

The Human Rights Act's Article 10 protects our right to hold our own opinions and to express them freely without government interference [22]. It includes the right to express our views aloud (for instance, through public demonstrations and protest) or through published leaflets, articles, books, television or radio broadcasting, works of art, the internet, and social media. The law also protects our freedom to receive information from other people

by, for instance, via reading a newspaper or being part of an audience.

The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, was a strong proponent of these ideas. He encouraged people to adhere to the right of freedom of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship for all. Guru Nanak articulates that sharing views and ideas (Freedom of thought and expression) must be a continuous process.

ਜਬ ਲਗ ਢੁਨੀਆਂ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਿੱਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਆਂ ਕਿੱਛੁ ਕਾਹੀਂ।

Nanak says that as long as we are in this world, we must listen to others and express our views too. (M. 1, SGGS, p 661)

Bhagat Kabir, a saint-poet of SGGS, recommends that one must share one's views with others and learn from spiritually wise persons.

ਸਾਣੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਕਿੱਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਆਂ ਕਾਹੀਂ।

On meeting a spiritually wise person, talk to him, and listen. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p. 870)

Guru Arjan Dev, however, makes us aware that one must not misuse the right to freedom of thought and expression. He emphasizes:

ਕਰਨ ਨਾ ਸੁਣੈ ਕਾਹੁ ਕੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ।

Neither one should slander anyone nor listen to such talk. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 274)

■ Right to Religious Freedom

Religion has an important place in society. People and religious organizations need physical, social, and legal space to practice their religion and exert its positive influence. In addition to being just private worship, religion involves public expression on moral and social issues [23].

Religious freedom is defined as the right to have religious beliefs of one's choice, declare these beliefs openly, manifest these beliefs through worship and practice, or by teaching and dissemination without any fear of hindrance or reprisal [24]. The right to religious freedom is vital for protecting the conscience of all people. It permits us to think, express and act upon what we deeply believe. Freedom of conscience or religious freedom is crucial to the health of a plural society. It allows different beliefs and faiths to flourish. This fundamental human right protects the rights of all groups and individuals, including the most vulnerable, whether religious or not [23].

Because of its teachings and history, Sikhism has a particular commitment to religious freedom. The freedom to choose and practice religion is at the foundation of Sikhism. Sikhs believe that there are many paths to God and many avenues to seek the truth. Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Teg Bahadur, and several Sikhs [25-28] laid down their lives for the right of freedom for all. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, favored taking a stand against the mis-rule or any discrimination, be it on a religious basis. The subjects must be prepared for it and not let the ruler misuse his authority. He, even, proclaims the right to die while facing the challenge for a righteous cause. He says:

ਜਾਓ ਤਾਓ ਪਰਮ ਖੇਲਾਨ ਕਾ ਚਾਓ। ਸਿਰ ਢਾਰ ਠਾਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਓ। ਇ ਮਾਰਗ ਪਾਇ ਢਾਰੀਜੈ।

Ja^o ta^o p^orem k^helaṅ kā c^hā^o. Sir ḍ^har ṭalī galī merī ā^o. Iṭ mārag pair ḍ^harījai.

If you wish to play this game of love (of God), then adapt my way of life only if you are ready to sacrifice your life for the cause. On adopting this way of life, don't bother about public criticism even

if you may have to lay down your head for it. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 1412)

Guru Nanak appreciates the sacrifice of the warriors for a righteous cause. He articulates:

ਮਰਾਣ ਮੁਖਸਾ ਸੂਰਿ ਆ ਹਕ ਹੈ ਜੋ ਹੋ ਏ ਮਰਾਣ ਪਰਵਾਨੋ
□.....

Maraṇ muṣṣā sūri^a hak hai jo ho^e maraṇ parvāṇo.

A warrior's death is commendable if it is for a righteous cause. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 579-80)

Bhagat Kabir emphasizes that a person who lays down his life for the cause of religion is a true spiritual warrior.

ਸੂਰਾ ਸੋ ਪਾਹਿਚਾਨਿ ਐ ਜੋ ਲਰਾਇ ਫਿਨ ਕੇ ਹੇਠੁ. ਪੁਰਜਾ ਪੁਰਜਾ
□.....

Sūrā so pahichānī^aai jo larai ḍīn ke heṭ. Purjā purjā
kat marai kabhū na chhādai khet.

Recognize only him as a true warrior (spiritual hero) who fights in defence of a righteous cause (dharma). Such a warrior may be cut apart, piece by piece, but he never leaves the battlefield. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p. 1105)

The fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev, had the boldness to challenge the contemporary ruler's oppressive ways and faced martyrdom [25-26]. Finally, Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, had to resort to military action for the purpose [29]. Ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur did not accept the oppressive policy of the ruler of his time and stood against the religious persecution and reign of terror let loose on those who did not conform to the state's religious policy. The Guru, who believed in the freedom of religion, voiced his protest against the policy of Aurangzeb of forcibly converting Hindus to Islam and laid down his life in 1675 to uphold the principle of religious freedom [27-28].

His son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, created the Khalsa and fought against the unjust rule

of Aurangzeb, the then ruler. He devoted the best part of his life to fighting against oppression. Clearly stating his non-submissive policy towards the royal oppression, he writes [30] in the Zafarnama, the epistle of victory:

ਚੁ ਕਾਰਾ ਅਜਾ ਹਮਾਹਾ ਹੀਲਾਟੇ ਫਰ ਗੁਜਾਸ਼ਾਟਾ
□.....

Chu Kaara Aza Hamaha Heelate Dar Guzashata □
Halaala Asatu Burdan Ba Shamashera Dasata □22□

When all attempts to restore peace prove futile and no words avail; Then, lawful is the flash of steel, and right is the sword to hail. V.22 (Patshahi 10, Zafarnama, 22/1-2)

For him, it is better to die while facing such a challenge than to submit to repressive and unjust policies of the rulers. Moreover, the examples of the sacrifices of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Teg Bahadur inspired several Sikhs to lay down their lives for the right of freedom for all. Thus, the right to religious freedom is one of the core principles of Sikh theology.

■ **Right to Association**

One of the fundamental human rights is the **freedom** : of association. This right ensures that every individual is free to form, organize, and participate in groups, either formally or informally. The concept of Sangat is central to the Sikh way of life [31]. Sangat is a term that denotes a group of persons (men, women, and children) with similar feelings, ideas, and values. Guru Nanak initiated the institution of Sangat in Sikhism. He laid great stress on sangat which he called Sat Sangat or Sadh Sangat. Wherever he went during his travels, he asked the people to establish Dharmshala or a place of Sikh worship. He nominated devout Sikhs as Sangatias, who used to officiate in the Sangat in place of the Guru. To perpetuate this tradition, Sikh

Gurus established Manjis and Masand system. Guru Hargobind introduced congregational prayers.

Bhagat Kabir, a saint-poet of SGGS, emphasizes that one should associate with spiritually wise and virtuous people. He asserts that only such an association can be everlasting.

ਕਬੀਰ ਸੰਗਤ ਕਰੀ ਐ ਸਾਢ੍ਹ ਕੀ ਅੰਤ ਕਰੀ ਨਿਰਬਾਹੁ।
 Kabīr sangat̄ karī=ai sād̄h kī ant̄ karai nirbāhu.

Kabeer says: associate with the Holy people. Only such an association can be everlasting. (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS. p. 1369)

Guru Nanak elaborates on the role of a Sadh Sangat (association of holy persons) as:

ਸੰਗਤ ਮਿੱਲ ਮਿਲਾਪ ਪੁਰਾ ਨਾਵਨੋ।
 Sangat̄ mīt̄ milāp pūrā nāvno.

O friend, association with the Holy is the perfect cleansing bath (for the human mind). (M. 1, SGGS, p. 687)

Guru Arjan proclaims the benefits of being a part of Sadh Sangat as:

ਸਾਢ੍ਹਸੰਗ ਪੁਰਾਨ ਸਾਭ ਕਾਮਾ।
 Sād̄hsang pūran sab̄h kāmā.

In association with the Holy, one's all works are brought to fruition. (M. 5, SGGS, p.189)

But he also cautions us to be beware of the company of self-conceited or self-centered persons. He articulates:

ਫਿਨਹ ਸੰਗ ਸੰਗ ਨਾ ਕੀਚੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਸੁਆਓ।
 Finh sang sang na kīch̄=ī Nānak jinā āpṇā su=ā=ō.

Nanak says: Do not associate with those who are overly concerned with their own desires, needs, or interests. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 520)

The existence of various Sikh societies and associations, such as Sikh Educational Society, Chandigarh, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, All

India Pingalwara Charitable Society, Amritsar, Eco Sikh, USA, Khalsa Aid, U. K., United Sikhs, USA etc. caters to various needs of the community and public. Thus, Sikh doctrines and practices actively support the human beings' right to association.

■ **Right to Assemble**

All humans have the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. However, no one may be compelled to belong to an association [5, 11]. Assembly means a group of people associated or formally organized for a common purpose, interest, or pleasure. At Kartarpur (now in Pakistan), Guru Nanak regularly conducted the assembly of his disciples. Other Sikh Gurus followed the tradition in their daily lives. Thus, the human right to assemble has been explicitly commended by Sikh Gurus. Guru Amar Das inspires us to be a part of the holy congregation. He states:

ਸਾਤਸੰਗੀ ਸਾਢਾ ਮਿਲ ਰਾਹੇ ਸਾਚੇ ਕੇ ਗੁਣ ਸਾਰ।
 Saṭsangī saḍā mil rahe saḥe ke guṇ sār.

Remain forever merged with the Sat Sangat (the holy congregation); Dwell upon the Glories of the True One (God). (M.3, SGGS, p. 35)

Guru Nanak encourages us to associate with the spiritually wise persons. He says:

ਸੰਗਤ ਮਿੱਲ ਮਿਲਾਪ ਪੁਰਾ ਨਾਵਨੋ।
 Sangat̄ mīt̄ milāp pūrā nāvno.

O friend, association with the spiritually wise is the perfect cleansing bath (for the human mind). (M.1, SGGS, p. 687)

Guru Nanak cautions us to avoid the company of naïve persons.

ਅੰਢਾ ਜ਼ਾਗਰਾ ਅੰਢੀ ਸਥਾਈ।
 Anḍhā jhagrā anḍhī sathai.

The assembly of naive people argues in naivety. (M. 1, SGGS, p. 1241)

In Sikhism, the establishment of the institutions of Sangat (holy congregation) and dharamsal (gurudwara) affirm this assertion. Almost all the Gurudwaras generally have large Diwan Halls, wherein Sikhs often assemble to discuss/take decisions about the crucial issues facing the community. This practice of the Sikhs fully endorses the human right to assemble.

Sikh history is also replete with numerous examples, wherein Sikhs have successfully put in practice the human right to freedom of assembly and association. For instance, during the Gurudwara reform movement (1920-25), Sikhs made unparalleled sacrifices to liberate their places of worship from the clutches of the corrupt priestly class, which was supported by the colonial state, by organizing various morchas (peaceful demonstrations) [32-33]. These practices of the Sikhs fully endorse the human right to assemble and protest peacefully.

The Kisan Morcha (farmers' protest) on Delhi's borders, against the current Indian government, during 2020-21, attracted many ordinary people, including a large number of Sikh farmers, both men and women, agricultural and industrial workers. The protest developed through speeches, slogans, and Seva (voluntary service) was molded in that tradition [34].

■ Right to democracy

Democracy is widely defined as the "rule of the people." Nowadays, democracy is a common practice in most countries of the world. There are four basic principles [35] of democracy, also commonly called pillars of democracy. These pillars are basic guidelines that help learn how democracy works.

These four pillars are Freedom (Liberty), Equity (Equality before law), Justice, and Representation.

Freedom: All citizens have their fundamental freedoms such as the right to free speech, religion, travel, and the right of assembly, etc. protected by law.

Equity: means that every man, woman, and child is given the same opportunity to succeed and be what they wish to be and do what they want to do. It also means that all citizens can participate fully in the democratic process regardless of income, gender, religion, race, or ethnicity.

Justice: It means all citizens are equal before the law. They have the right to a fair trial, and governments are subject to the rule of law.

Representation: This principle of democracy means that every citizen must possess the opportunity to vote for their representatives in the conduct of the government. Every person has their own political views that they should freely express, and electing the representatives is a practical implementation of these views.

In 1628, England's Parliament passed the Petition of Right, which established certain liberties for subjects. Great Britain's first Parliament was established in 1707, after the merger of England and the Kingdom of Scotland. The American Revolution led to the adoption of the United States Constitution in 1787. It provided for an elected government and protected civil rights and liberties for some (about 6% of the population). But Guru Nanak raised his voice in favor of these rights of people as early as the early sixteenth century. As described above, he attempted to make people aware of their rights of Liberty (Freedom) and Equality (Equity). For the third pillar of democracy, i.e., Justice for all, he proclaimed:

ੴ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ॥

Rāje chulī niāv kī paṛiā sach̄ dhiān.

For the king, cleansing is justice; for the scholar, it is true meditation. (M. 1, SGGS, p 1240)

He urged people in power to deliver justice to all by following the path of truthfulness.

ੴ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ॥

Lāhā sach̄ niāo man vasāīai.

It is advantageous to enshrine Truth and justice in mind. (M. 1, SGGS, p 420)

ੴ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ॥

Aḍal kare gur giān samānā.

One must administer justice by being absorbed in the spiritual wisdom of the Guru. (M. 1, SGGS, p 1040)

The fourth pillar of democracy, representation, find expression in the life activities of Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus, wherein through the governance of the institutions of Sat Sangat, Langar and Gurudwara was vested in Sikh Sangat. The institution of Panj Piaras (Five Chosen Ones) was established and is in practice to date to guide and direct the Sikh community's affairs. Any adherent to Sikhism can participate in any of the above institutions without any discrimination based on caste, color, or status. All Sikhs have the right to participate in the election of members of S.G.P. C., Amritsar and D.S.G.M.C. New Delhi is a shining example of their representation in the governance of various Sikh institutions. Thus, Sikhs not only endorse an individual's right to democracy but also implement it in their life practices.

■ Right to Justice

Social Justice is the wish to create a socially mobile and fair society through equality of opportunity for personal development, protection

of human rights and wealth distribution. To achieve social justice is the bedrock of the Sikh faith and teachings. The central message of SGGS is of humanism and universal fellowship. It is an excellent source of inspiration for those who seek social justice, the equality of all people, the empowerment of women and the underprivileged [36]. People have a right to be protected from violent crime and a right to justice when they are their victims. Sikhism vouches for the right to justice for all. Guru Nanak proclaims that the administrators of justice must use their spiritual wisdom while delivering justice.

ੴ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ॥

Aḍal kare gur giān samāna.

One must administer justice by being absorbed in the spiritual wisdom of the Guru. (M. 1, SGGS, p 1040)

Bhagat Kabir, a saint-poet of SGGS, declares that delivering justice to the needy is as pious a work as a prayer to God.

ੴ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ... ॥

Nivāj soī jo niāo bichārai kalmā aklahi jānai.

(For a Judge) to administer justice, should be like a prayer (to God). (Bhagat Kabir, SGGS, p. 480)

Guru Arjan Dev laments if injustice is done to anyone. He says:

ੴ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਮ ॥

Faō kaīai je aniāe ko martā.

We should feel sad if someone dies from injustice. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 1140)

Sikhism declares that the main objective for humanity is to live in harmony with the whole creation. To strive for a life of communion with all also implies supporting individual rights. It is the life that works against injustice toward anybody and anything. For the Sikhs, justice requires the

participation and inclusion of all in obtaining and enjoying the fruits of God's creation. Justice achieved through cooperative effort is desirable. The ideal for the Sikhs is to strive for justice for all, not merely for themselves.

■ **Right to Freedom from Slavery and Torture**

All of us have the right not to be enslaved and tortured. It is one of our fundamental rights. No one could ever take away these human rights. But unfortunately, some people who violate other people's rights will tell their victim not to tell anyone. Unfortunately, once their victim has been forced to agree, things get terrible [37].

Notwithstanding the different religious backgrounds of humans, treating them all as spiritually same and ethnically equal is imperative for maintaining a harmonious relationship between other communities and nations. Suppose we want the world to be set free from the siege of distrust, disharmony, oppression, violence, and the reign of terror. In that case, we must see others as our siblings. We must learn how to affirm our own identity without threatening the identity of others. The holy Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, proclaims:

ੴ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਾ ਫੈ ਨੇਹ ਨੇਹ ਭਾਇ ਮਾਨਾਏ ਆਨ ॥

Bḥai kāhū ka^o ḍeṭ nēh nēh bḥai mānaṭ ān.

Don't threaten others nor be afraid of anyone.

(M. 9, SGGS, p 1427)

It affirms the spirit of universality as:

ੴ ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬਾਇਰੀ ਨਾਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸਾਂਗ ਹਮ ਕਾ ਓ ਬਾਨ ਆਇ ॥

Nā ko bairī nahī bigānā sagal sang ham ka^o ban āⁱ.

No one is my enemy, and none is stranger; I am in accord with everyone. (M. 5, SGGS, p 1299)

The ideals of the Universal fellowship of humans and the Universal Parenthood of God, as laid down in SGGS, are of prime import to settle all

conflicts of man.

ੴ ਪਿਤਾ ਏਕਸ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਬਾਇਕ ॥

Ēk piṭā ekas ke ham bārik.

One God is the father of all, and we are His children. (M. 5, SGGS, p. 611)

One God is the father of all, and we are His children, happens to be the central message of SGGS. The concept of God's love for all beings teaches us to value others in their otherness. It makes love for God the sine qua non-factor for humanity and seeks the expression of this love through selfless service (Seva, philanthropic activities). Following these doctrines of Sikhism, several Sikhs such as Bhai Ghanaya Ji, Baba Nidhan Singh, Bhagat Puran Singh, Bibi Inderjit Kaur, Baba Balbir Singh Seechawal, Baba Labh Singh, Anandgarh and Baba Sewa Singh Khandoor Sahib have made notable contributions in the fields of universal fellowship and service to humanity.

In 1699, the tenth Sikh Guru established the Order of the Khalsa. The members of the Khalsa Order practice the spiritual discipline of Sikhism. In addition, they are committed to ensuring the preservation and prevalence of a World Society. During the last 325 years, the Khalsa fellowship has stood up for the rights of the oppressed and disenfranchised, even at a considerable cost to its members. The Khalsa's vision of the World Society is:

ੴ ਹੁਖ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋ ਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨ ਫਾ ॥ ਪਾਇ ਕੋ ਏ ਨਾ ਕਿਸਾਇ ਰਾਨਾਫਾ ॥ ਸਾਭੁ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਠੀ ਆਇ ਹੋ ਆ ਹਾਮੇ ਮੀ ਰਾਇ ਜੀ ਓ ॥

Huḥ hukam ho^a miharvān ḍā. Pai ko^e na kisai rañāḍā. Sabḥ sukhālī vuṭhī^a ih ho^a halemī rāj jī^o.

Now is the merciful God's ordinance promulgated: Let no one exploit or coerce another; Let all abide in peace, under this Benevolent Rule.

(M. 5, SGGS, p 74)

Indeed, these ideals carry within themselves an injunction against arbitrary rule and a model that conforms to the present-day concept of a welfare state with secular credentials of co-existence and guaranteeing fundamental human rights. Guru Nanak elaborates the above position in one of his hymns.

ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ॥ ੧ ॥
 Fakḥaṭ bahai takḥṯai kī lā^ṯik. Pancḥ samā^e gurmaṭ
 pā^ṯik.

Only such a worthy person be seated on the throne, who, by attaining the spiritual wisdom, has subdued the five demons (lust, rage, greed, attachment, and narcissism) and has become God's foot soldier. (M. 1, SGGS, p.1039)

Since its birth, Khalsa has opposed any force that has threatened the freedom and dignity of human beings. In the eighteenth century, it battled the oppressive rulers of northern India and invaders from Afghanistan. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it struggled against the oppression by European colonists and Indian governments. Khalsa's ideal is not only to fight for the right to freedom from slavery and torture but also to strive for justice to all, not merely for themselves.

■ Conclusion

Human rights are moral principles or norms that describe specific standards of human behavior. These are regularly protected as legal rights in municipal and international law. Everyone born in this world has human rights that the law must protect. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, through its comprehensive worldview, offers a perfect set of values and an applicable code of conduct, which fosters human rights remarkably. SGGS's cardinal message is addressed to the welfare of all humans irrespective of their caste, color, creed, culture, and religion. It emphasizes love, respect, empathy, and acceptance of others' existence. Furthermore, it prohibits us from infringing on the freedom and rights of others.

Sikh Gurus' life and works exemplify the practicability of these ideas. Besides a matchless elaboration of spirituality, SGGS enshrines a powerful expression of the message of the revolutionary ideals of social welfare, human rights, multicultural distinctness, and religious freedom. In the present era, when the fears and threats of interfaith conflicts, military aggression, and terrorism are galore, the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are even more relevant to resolve all these problems.

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HUMAN RIGHTS, SPIRITUALITY & RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: A SIKH PERSPECTIVE

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■ SIKHS: HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT

In this chapter our search is for a Sikh perspective on Human Rights, Spirituality and Religious Freedom. We start with giving a short historical synopsis of Sikhs and the early development of Sikhi/Sikhism, a more recent Faith, compared to the ancient traditions whose perspectives are included in this Book.

Guru Nanak [1469-1539], who founded Sikhi was born at a place, then known as Talwandi, in Punjab - part of the larger territory known as Hindustan, a good part of which had been ruled, at that historical point, by dynasties of Muslim invaders from the west.

Guru Nanak lived mostly through Afghan Lodhi period. During Ibrahim Lodhi's time, Mughal Babar invaded Punjab twice in 1519, again in 1520 and yet again in 1524. At urging of the then Governor of Punjab, Daulat Khan Lodhi, Babar invaded

again in 1526, defeated Ibrahim Lodhi in battle and established Mughal rule. Most of Sikh story under the Gurus, extending over almost two centuries, played out during the period when Mughals were the rulers of most of Hindustan.

In those times while the people were endowed with same sensitivities, desires and longings as we do but from the vantage of rulers, there was hardly any concept like 'Human Rights.' The victors were vigilant of internal uprisings and external invaders and ruled by enforcing their word as the law. The power elite could be self willed and the poor had to bear the brunt of their prosecutorial ways. Even though, Muslim invader dynasties were rulers, some local Rajas exercised control in small jurisdictions by collaborating or entering into working arrangement with the rulers.

In this milieu, Guru Nanak talked of a vision of a shared divine creator of all beings and each of

the humans bestowed with divinely ordained innate dignity!

■ FAST FORWARD - HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

The recognition of need of Human Rights came in wake of World War II, after massive killing of civilians resulted in the identification of thirty [simplified] rights and freedoms to which all the people were deemed to be entitled. The original document is known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR].

Human Rights were based on the fundamental assumption that each person deserves to be treated with dignity. Their scope included right to freedom of speech, belief, choice, opportunity, obtain a job, adopt a career, raise children, travel and right to work environment without harassment, abuse or threat of arbitrary dismissal and access to leisure.

The intent of Human Rights is to set the standards that may help guide mutuality of relations the individuals have with the state, society and with one another. This inter alia involves :

- Laws to guide the Governments so that individuals and groups do not do anything that violates rights of any other.
- All human beings are equal and enjoy inherent dignity. The entitlement of human rights is without discrimination of race, color, sex, ethnicity, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, disability, birth et al.
- All are entitled to active and meaningful participation in endeavors through which rights and freedoms can be realized
- Human Rights are natural rights and cannot be given up or taken away. All Rights are equal and

have no hierarchy but can be and are interrelated.

- Compliance and redress of grievances will be in accordance with rules and procedures provided by law.

■ UDHR: VALIDITY COMMENDED

UDHR was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948. It recognizes that ‘the inherent dignity of all members of human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.’ UDHR includes a range of civil and political rights and also economic, social and cultural rights but does not directly create legal obligations for countries. The Laws are passed by the various jurisdictions per their systems and obligations.

However UDHR, having been invoked for more than sixty years is said to have become a part of the customary international law. It has triggered several international agreements that are legally binding on the countries that ratify them. Examples include International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Conventions against the Racial and Gender based Discrimination, Torture, Rights of Child and Persons with Disabilities expand on UDHR.

■ UDHR & FAITHS - A BROAD COMMENT

With above background of UDHR, our presumption is that the primary interest of this Book is to explore how various Faiths interface with the concept and scope of UDHR, while being aware of the fact that the operative parts of UDHR have to interface with the laws enacted by Jurisdictions where the Faith communities reside.

The other comment is that notwithstanding the fact that the concept of ‘rights’ as ‘entitlement’ is not directly addressed in SGGS , as we likely will find, that the Sikh precepts and praxis seem to be aiming

at the same objectives as the UDHR – a feature that may be true, to varying degrees, of the other faith traditions too. We also sense that expectations similar to Rights and Freedoms of UDHR are deeply and intimately intertwined in the minds of most Sikhs by their beliefs and embedded historical memory. While some such examples may be seen in the text following but in the main, lived Sikhi is tempered by culture of sharing. That characteristic manifests in Sikh spiritual quest in several ways, including betterment of human condition. We however will leave broader discussion on that aspect for another occasion.

We would therefore limit to giving the readers a flavor of the Sikh beliefs, precepts, praxis and some examples from their history and experience. In this quest, we are guided by the view that broadly human beings search for an understanding of the process of life, its larger role as part of the divine purpose and the individual's role in the society. Most humans crave their lives to be morally, ethically and spiritually enhancing experience that may bring them closer to the Creator; help them be able to savor the bliss and partake in the joyous appreciation of life's mysteries and miracles. They place value on continuity and heritage being carried forward.

■ LIVED SIKHI: PRECEPTS TO PRACTICE

To get closer to God, reflective meditation on Shabd [Word] is important. The SGGS says, one has to use one's physical assets to constructive effort while keeping mind focused on the Lord. Selfless service - *nehkam* - is highly commended for achieving union with the divine. In fact the suggestion is to curb the desire for any reward. One cannot think of liberation without love in their hearts. The feeling of

love divine can be so strong as to subsume any desire to rule, riches or even the urge for liberation.

In life, Sikhs are enjoined to live as householders. To share with others is commended. Society of the virtuous brings peace and tranquility. Pursuit of learning does not bring peace unless one can control desires.

Sikhs should retain sense of - *chardi kala* – buoyant optimism that God wants the good of all, is kind and bestows Grace on the devotees. Whilst one must accept God's will, one must resist and work for removal of injustice, discrimination and exploitation of the weak. In fact the Sikhs pray that God grant them courage and fortitude not to shy away from righteous action.

With the above in the background, if we now go back to the 'scope' and 'intent' of UDHR, the purport of the declaration is that, in life, the humans should receive the divinely ordained dignity that the Faiths talk of. We propose to first explore how this foundational desiderata is addressed in Sikhi and then go on to other leading rights and freedoms included in UDHR by sharing some examples from Sikh sacred texts, history and contemporary experiences.

■ Innate Dignity of Human Beings

In the Sikh cosmology it is believed that God is eternal and when God willed, creation came into being. In the midst of this creation God installed earth, the abode of duty, action for the beings of myriad hues and infinite forms. Of all living beings God gave humans extra merits. Human comes into being when God infuses His light into it. Along the continuum of body and soul is the mind, conceived as part physical and part divine. The mind is a doer but critical of choices it makes.

God is the one who watches over all, creates, sustains, develops, destroys and recreates, seen or unseen in the universe. The entire universe is subject to God's will and is real. Spiritual growth is open to all humans who are bestowed innate dignity to receive divine nadar – grace.

Equality is an important plank of Sikh thought but Sikhs understand that some inequalities and differences are inherent in the Divine dispensation due to prior karma and men are asked to look for Divine light in others and not enquire their caste, because distinctions of caste do not exist in God's court.

God pervades this 'creation' and 'this' world is his home. Human birth provides us the chance to meet Lord of the Universe. All of us are children of one father. None is foolish or wise - we become what the Lord puts us on to. It behooves us to recognize the whole human race as one for the light radiant within us is the one that illumines all the hearts. Each human being is thus blessed with innate dignity by Divine bestowal!

■ **Caste Hierarchy**

The ancient religiously sanctioned Indian practice of stratification of the society along caste lines had resulted in consigning lower castes to domial work from generation to generation, denied education and even the right to worship/liberation. Gurus strongly opposed caste based practices and prejudices and lived Sikhi does demonstrate belief to promote participation of all castes. Nonetheless, some caste differentiation may continue to be observed in crevices of Sikh society.

■ **Women's Status**

The place of women in the society was another such practice. Guru Nanak giving them coequal

place in mundane relations, proclaimed – how can we call them low who gave birth to the wise and the best among us . He condemned the practice of designating women as polluted during the menstrual cycle that had caused to deny them entry into spaces considered clean or sacred - thus recognizing that involvement of women in Sikh religious life was a given.

Significantly Gurus consistently used the metaphor of a women's loving adoration of her lover to express their own deep devotion to the Divine. Guru also explains that there is one husband Lord while all other beings in this world are his brides. While this may seem to portray a male Lord, the tenor of Guru's teachings is clear that the divine entity is not a male, female or any other kind of being.

The Gurus prohibited women from covering their faces in congregation; rejected the practice of sati, promoted widow remarriage, gave them leadership roles in Sikh dioceses and participation in lived Sikhi including worship. Sikh women did find their voice early but the needed change in cultural values and customary practices has not yet taken root across the board.

■ **Linguistic Hegemony of Clerics**

The Gurus also freed their followers from the linguistic and cultural hegemony by writing sacred texts and preaching in the spoken language. It has relieved people's exclusion from clerical roles but with the spread of Sikhs and Sikhism in distant places, the problem is beginning to manifest in different forms with generational changes.

■ **Inter Religious Acceptance**

Guru Nanak had numerous dialogues with leaders of various persuasions during his missionaries. The Gurus included writings of some Hindu, Muslim and

Dalit saints in SGGS which are revered as much as the writings of the Gurus by the devotees. Entry into the Sikh Gurdwaras has always been unrestricted and open to people of all persuasions. This tends to make Sikhs open to and accepting of religious diversity in their societal relations. Inter-religious weddings however are not allowed in Gurdwaras.

■ **Suffering of the Innocent**

Guru Nanak was witness to the horrible suffering inflicted on the hapless civilians - men, women and children - by the invading forces of Babur. He was deeply troubled by insensitivity of clergy and officials to the problems of the people. The Guru's anguish at the suffering of innocent was so deep that he even chided God "Didn't Thou feel any compassion for their cries of pain?" The issues of social involvement, equality, freedom of conscience thus became important in teachings of Gurus and Sikh faith adopted a proactive approach in this important area.

■ **Justice and Individual**

At the societal level, functionaries of the state turn corrupt and will deny justice for graft. Guru Nanak says the rulers are tigers, and high officials are dogs; they intrude on people in their sleep to harass them and as their minions inflict wounds with their nails and the dogs [high officials] lick up the blood that is spilled. The society therefore presents lamentable scenario where rulers act as butchers, and protectors of faith abjure their role, while people in ignorance behave like effigies filled with straw. The Guru cautions that in the true court of the true One, each and every action choice that we make will be judged. In this environment, the Guru does not commend being guided by the instinct to survive through conformity.

The ideal in Sikhism is a modest and caring rule [halemi raj] under which the subjects may live in peace and harmony. Perfect is the divine justice and Guru Gobind Singh saw own mission to be to resist tyranny and promote justice and righteousness. The persuasion suggests that if rule is oppressive, pursuit of justice is an imperative for the believers.

While an expectation to receive justice is the norm, actualization of that expectation mostly is not that easy. At least that is what the Sikh experience tends to suggest. The reasons could be many - mostly in domains beyond the victim's control. Sikhs continue with the guidance – rajai chulee niaon kee – similar to ethicist John Rawls' view expressed, in modern context, that justice is the first virtue of social institutions.

■ **Accountability of Master in Conflict Situations**

A fundamental Sikh belief is that God intended this world to be a place for virtuous deeds and moral action. Sikhs are persuaded not to shy away from righteous action --- and be determined to right the wrongs, fight to win. They must endeavor that those in leadership role must be held accountable for their decisions to be just and equitable. This paradigm of moral imperatives in a conflict situation seems to run through Sikh thought gleaned from the SGGS, pithily expressed by Guru Nanak saying in his Babarvani verses that if a mighty one beats up his equal, it may not be a cause for grievance--but if a tiger mauls herding cattle, its Master must be made to answer.

The above kind of scenario is possible when security forces are alleged to have used excessive force or in riots, hate crimes, lynching, and molestation by a gang or a mob. The master minds

instigating such violence rarely get brought to justice due to underlying political dynamic.

■ **Advice for Leaders – DON'Ts**

The following advice for leaders by Guru Gobind Singh from his Zafarnama would resonate with our above theme[s]:

1. Do not hurt or molest those who had not aggressed against you. (28)
2. Bravery does not consist in putting out a few sparks and in the process stir up a fire to rage all the more! (79)
3. God could not have wished for a King to create strife but instead to promote peace, harmony and tranquility among the people. (65)
4. Nor should the ruler use his strength, power and resources to harass, suppress or deprive the weak. This will only weaken the society, erode his ability to rule effectively and make the State unsafe. (109)
5. He should not recklessly shed blood of others lest heaven's rage should befall him. (69)

■ **Alien Influences**

Guru Nanak points to decay in moral moorings of society and the emerging influence on culture, language and religious freedom from discriminatory practices by the ruling dispensation saying: 'Now that the turn of Sheikhs has come this is what it has brought. Temples of gods are taxed and the Primal Being is addressed as Allah. Muslim devotional pots, calls to prayer, prayers and prayer mats are everywhere and even Banwari is clad in blue robes. People in every home use Muslim greetings and even their speech has changed.'

■ **Love of Hindustan**

Guru Nanak voiced concern that while God took Khurasan under protection, He sent Mughals to

punish and terrorize Hindustan. His poignant lament about the city of Lahore suffering terrible destruction for four hours - is also said to be linked to Babar's excesses. The Guru obviously was open about his love of Hindustan, Lahore and was deeply pained by suffering of all the victims - Muslims or Hindus, high or low, men or women. He was truly a lover of inclusive Hindustan.

■ **Freedom of others to Practice their Faith**

"Freedom of religion or belief, including ability to worship in peace and security, is a universal human right. It is enshrined in both Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, among other key human rights documents."

The above is intended today but in Aurangzeb's time, Brahmins at major pilgrimage centers and Kashmir were told to turn Muslims or face death. In other words, their freedom to observe Hindu faith was made insecure and they had to choose between life and conversion to Islam. It was then in May 1675 that a group of Kashmiri Pandits led by Kirpa Ram came to Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur to seek his help. The Guru, 'after long discussions with prominent Sikhs and Kashmiri Pandits' made up his mind to sacrifice himself for the cause of "Righteousness" and for freedom of "Dharma."

The Guru's offer was conveyed to Aurangzeb who was said to be pleased to accept it. The Guru with his three disciples – Sati Das, Mati Das and Dayal Das – set out from Anandpur. They were arrested and brought to Delhi. In time, the authorities offered three alternatives to the Guru viz: (1) show miracles, or (2) embrace Islam, or (3) face death. The Guru accepted the last and did not budge from his resolve even after his three companions were tortured to

death. He was then publically put to death by severing the head from his body in Delhi's Chandni Chowk. The event of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur has been briefly but succinctly recorded by Guru Gobind Singh in Canto 5, Verses 13-16, Dasam Granth.

■ **Freedom of Expression**

Guru Nanak emphasizes that as long as one is in this world, listen some and say some. Also he says, wherever one sits and talks, say good things and again advises that those words, which, when spoken, bring honor, are acceptable. Listen, foolish and ignorant mind, harsh talk brings only grief! So while one is invited to engage others, cautions do abound!

■ **Leisure**

UDHR talks of right to leisure – yes to that, for Guru says that Sikhs living the Guru's way, will by divine grace, succeed in crafting such perfect balance in life that helps them achieve liberation while laughing, playing, wearing fineries and savoring delicacies. Lived Sikhi answers to both spiritual and mundane quests - it also does not shut the door on leisure.

■ **PRECEPTS & INSTITUTION BUILDING: AN IN TANDEM PROCESS**

The above narration would give an indication of range of social concerns that Sikh Gurus wanted addressed by Sikhi. It would also be obvious that Sikhi precepts have affinity with key objectives of UDHR. Both are aspirational and offer no guarantees that every individual will benefit but the Gurus, given prevailing constraints, did attempt actualization of such aspirations.

They initiated the process by spreading awareness about the desired foundational changes among lay believers and built institutions to nurture

the change to take root. The Sikh collective came to be known as panth – literally path - associated with sangat –congregation, in the SGGS. The Sikh Sangat at Kartarpur, in Pakistan, was given shape by Guru Nanak. It took thoughtful deliberation and broad choices then made have withstood the test of times.

Guru Arjan introduced the system of masands responsible for all administrative functions in their region including initiation of neophytes into the growing faith. Sikhs thus could access guidance and support in their locales and were also able to generate resources for the centralized activities. The Guru assembled the sacred text and gave it the place of highest reverence - thus providing an anchor for Sikh worship as well as communal religious life.

Guru Hargobind constructed Akal Takht, the Temporal Seat of the Divine and held court there to hear and resolve temporal problems of Sikhs. He nurtured the doctrine of Miri [temporality] and Piri [spirituality] - the concept implying that the secular arena cannot be isolated from spiritual beliefs and moral codes of Sikhs. This dynamic principle has been variously interpreted but did inspire Sikhs to bounce back with renewed assertiveness post martyrdom of Guru Arjun and any grave challenges since.

Creation of the order of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699, with symbolic outward identity markers, challenged all Sikhs to carve out their place in society on their own in the full glare of visibility. Sikhs accepted SGGS as the Guru incarnate immediately on passing of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. A contemporary of the Guru, Prahilad Singh, wrote - Panth has been established as ordered by Akal Purakh. Sikhs are now ordained to accept the Granth

as Guru. Accept Khalsa as the embodiment of Guru and those desirous to meet me [Guru Gobind Singh], search within the Khalsa.

Left on their own, Panth gravitated to Akal Takht as the primary seat of Sikh Authority where the Sikhs took collective decisions. Khalsa by then had imbibed the essence of Sikh ethos and objectives to resolutely further the missionary of the Panth as needed.

During the turbulent 18th Century, Sikhs had to withdraw to the Hills under Mughal pressure, but the Sikh struggle for survival weakened the Mughal rulers and Afghan invaders and Sikhs gained control over Lahore by 1765. The Sikh story acquired a different tenor then on.

■ AS TENSIONS GROW, MOBILIZATION CHALLENGES MULTIPLY

Past the Sikh rule and Colonial phase, the period since 1947 partition of India has been pretty testing for Sikhs. Division of India involved massive transfer of Sikh and Hindu population to India from the territories going to Pakistan. The concepts used to construct UDHR had been in awareness but hardly mentioned as a million got killed. A collateral effect of the partition seems to have been that the strong traditional Sikh kinship with Hindus suffered a setback due to the divisive politics that has since sharpened on all sides.

The Punjab situation continued to worsen for various reasons and in June 1984 the Government launched a military assault to neutralize some Sikh militants who had taken refuge at Akal Takht within the Golden Temple Complex, Amritsar. This attack at the most sacred Sikh site was very hurtful to the Sikhs globally. Few months later two of the Sikh members of the security staff of PM Indira

Gandhi shot and killed her. Organized mob attacks led by Congress leaders followed in Delhi in which thousands of Sikh men were brutally killed. It was a highly traumatic period for Sikhs and a sad reflection on the state of human rights in India.

As if traumas of 1947 and 1984 were not enough, the September 11, 2001 terror attack became a source of unexpected trauma for Sikh Americans. By late that night, the Federal Govt. placed the responsibility on Bin Laden. The anguish of viewers started turning into anger at a perpetrator – identified only by his images – wearing a turban and a beard! Only Sikh males came close to the image of Bin Laden! Sikh freedom for religious observances got sacrificed without a murmur of regret in the media or by US Administration!!

Suddenly Sikhs had become fearful of hate - worsened when a Sikh became the first victim of this hate for no fault. Volunteers like me got Sikhs mobilized locally and in the States as Sikh advocacy organizations were created and reoriented to support the community in dispelling the misconceptions created by their unintended scapegoating as the kin of Osama. A few years later, killing of six Sikh worshippers at Oak Creek Gurdwara, in Wisconsin, on 5 August, 2012 by a Supremacist intensified alarms about the grave risks that misdirected hate had come to make the practice of Sikhi face in the egalitarian US.

The conundrums faced by the Sikh community were analyzed recently by Prema Kurien and her somber view was that in India, Sikhs went from being a privileged minority under the British to discriminated-against minority after end of colonial rule. In the United States, Protestant Christianity has dominated the nation as Judeo Christian and

minority religious groups are motivated to mobilize to educate the wider society about their religion, challenge stereotypes, and obtain recognition and rights for their beliefs and practices.

Not a great position for any Faith group to be placed in sixty years after promulgation of UDHR - and that too when both India and USA are known to be law abiding, functioning democracies and pride in talk of Fundamental Rights.

Sikhs as a Faith group, though known for their enterprising spirit, constitute less than 2%, of the total population of India and barely make a majority in their home state of Punjab. Therein may lie the key to riddle of Sikh transition from a 'privileged' to 'discriminated-against' minority. It is a long story that may inhere human rights, we will avoid that diversion for this paper.

Sikhs also are dispersed over the globe and constitute a minority in all societies that they live in. It seems unfair that the burden 'to educate the wider society about their religion, challenge the stereotypes, and obtain recognition and rights for their beliefs and practices' is transferred to new immigrants, especially when the security of 'persons and property' of the community is at stake.

■ UDHR & MINORITY RELIGIOUS GROUPS

With the above trigger about Sikh experience in India and the US, we tried to find out if the UN watchdog on Human Rights had any opinion on the subject and views of two of the largest world religions, when in a minority situation in a third country. Their views and further comments are presented in the following paragraphs.

■ United Nations Organization

The UN's Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, Andrew Gilmour, acknowledged in an interview on the 70th anniversary of the UDHR in 2018 that while UDHR has become a yardstick to measure Member States' commitments to human rights, one of its biggest challenges is the 'cruel scapegoating of minorities'. More current information can be searched at the Amnesty International website or US State Department Country Reports on State of Human Rights.

■ Hindu Minorities

The following extract from a blog by Samir Kalra on Human Rights Day, December 12, 2016, entitled 'Promise of Human Rights Remains Unfulfilled for Hindu Minorities' is indicative of the prevailing view: "Hindu minorities are subject to varying degrees of legal and institutional discrimination, restrictions on their religious freedom, social prejudice, violence, social persecution, and economic and political marginalization. In several countries where Hindus are substantial minorities, non-state actors advance a discriminatory and exclusivist agenda, often with the tacit or explicit support of the state. Persecution by state and non-state actors alike has led a growing number of Hindus to flee their country of origin and live as refugees or become internally displaced within their own country."

■ Christian Minority

A report by the Guardian says that persecution of Christians has increased dramatically in parts of the world. The July 2015 list of the top 25 most anti-Christian countries includes India – the report saying 'Levels of persecution vary around India. In some

states there are anti-conversion laws, and attacks on Christians – including beatings and sometimes murder – occur frequently. This is particularly true of those Christians who have converted from Hinduism in regions where the BJP rules. Church buildings and Christians' homes have been destroyed.'

■ **The Conundrum**

The premise of universal human rights implies that all rights to freedoms carry responsibility to not infringe the same right to freedom of others. The religious in all faiths do tend to display a penchant for wresting other faiths on various differences. This has fuelled several inter-religion conflicts, invasions, forced and induced conversions etc resulting in inter-religious divides. Such unsavory developments have continued to create public disturbances, riots and led to outbreak of violence.

Minority groups may not have the resources to protect the faith institutions from acts of violence by zealots of various persuasions. Sikh American, Pardeep Singh Kaleka, whose father had been killed by a supremacist in the attack on Gurdwara in Wisconsin, in a Hearing entitled 'The Rise in Violence against Minority Institutions' before the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security of the House Judiciary Committee, pleaded for support to Sikh institutions in the US to cope with such incidents. His plea may not be considered practical by the authorities but it would be difficult to deny that minority faiths do face disproportionate risks of violent acts, arson and vandalizing in most societies. The underlying issues can be complex but incidents can impact the societal peace and harmony

■ **RELIGIONS IN HELPING OUT ROLE**

Religious organizations have claim to moral rectitude that can help in promoting conciliation and

forgiveness. They also have internal infrastructure and communication network giving them the capability to mobilize people. Religions thus can be credible source to make peace overtures if they do not have links with the perpetrators of discord or violence.

With increasing recognition of the power of religious belief to inspire social action, the UN and its agencies have launched initiatives involving religious groups. In fact the UN encourages the member states to act proactively --- and solve disputes in a non-combative way. This approach makes involvement of religious organizations fitting for the facilitation of restoration of peace and harmony in a fragmented society through interfaith dialogue. Such dialogue interventions have been attempted in some cases and effort has also been made to develop tools for rigorous evaluation of impact and effectiveness of such dialogue projects. US Institute of Peace model for evaluation of interventions is commended to help to understand potential relationship between an intervention and the desired outcome.

Attempt was made at the initiative of Prime Minister Vajpayee in 2001, to resolve the centuries' old Babri Masjid dispute through intervention by the well known Spiritual Leader Sri Sri. The issue was finally settled by the judgment of Supreme Court in 2019 but the mediation effort by Sri Sri and his team of mediators was well spoken about. That is a positive.

Sikhs, even as a small minority, contributed significantly to alleviate the suffering of people in India during the recent Pandemic – firstly when extended lockdown was stringently imposed in 2020, it caused serious disruption to the homeless and daily wage workers' ability to get food. Sikhs

opened langar for free supply of cooked food to all comers in several areas. Later during the outbreak of the deadly second wave, oxygen supply was severely restricted, Sikh volunteers added sewa of administering emergency Oxygen support to the gravely sick patients, in cars or three wheelers, stabilized patients were then sent over to hospitals for further medical attention. Some Sikhs took on collecting dead bodies from homes and take care of their last rites when the families were scared to get out at all.

An interesting example comes from the Catholic community of San Egidio in Rome whose work facilitated a Peace Agreement in Mozambique in October 1992.

There are so many different ways in which religious communities continue to serve the deprived, poor and suffering and quietly serve the objectives of UDHR!

■ PERSPECTIVE: LOOKING AHEAD

In this Chapter, we have briefly dwelt on a few lead aspects of the Sikh Faith and their harmony with the aspirations inherent in the UDHR. It is gratifying that the promulgation of UDHR and other related developments over the last few decades have helped to hasten raise people's urges to better their condition and the communities have learnt to mobilize to try and achieve the new benchmarks they think reachable. This change is very visible in the US, including among the newly arrived Sikhs, though back home in India the Sikh community would perhaps benefit by re-envisioning their profile of how to position itself in the emerging dynamic of a mix of vibrant, aggressively competitive, transforming yet traditional, society.

Regarding the spiral of aspirations triggered by UDHR there is a considerable body of literature that already is cautioning the communities across the globe to diligently search for putting some practicable, yet necessary limits, because this planet can sustain only so much. Concerns raised by thoughtful persons include: can environmental degradation and rights of future generations be taken care of by human rights regime that was built upon ---- the UDHR, even if experience is not encouraging.

Staying with the aspirations unbound by the UDHR and other changes, some experts have also suggested that 'A bridge can be adequately built between human rights and the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. For all these reasons, it is time for the entire international community to take the right to development more seriously.' Obviously there is a growing realization of the need for fresh thinking on how to balance the pressure of human aspirations within the limits of likely resource availability.

This problem is not new and we may have to fall back to our sacred texts for some guidance e.g. the Guru says clearly that the desires of the greatest of the great kings and landowners cannot be satisfied. So we have to give more thought to the inspired wisdom that we are already familiar with. Let us accept that 'rights' carry responsibilities and provide no assurance that each one of us will receive what we think we deserve or deserve what we manage to secure!

The other sane advice is to go beyond the reciprocity of rights and responsibilities to the joyous abandon of sharing – giving to the extent one can, including kind words, compassion, empathy and things that the other beings may be in need of, to

all including those one may not ever deal with again. One way that acknowledges the innate dignity of the other humans!

Finally let us hope that this Book, bringing together the perspectives of diverse Faiths on UDHR, triggers some initiatives to bring changes for the better in lives of the many neglected segments of global human population. We should therefore

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Paganism, Polycentricity and Human Rights in the United States

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■ Perennial Paganism: The Waning and Waxing Moon of Philosophy

Owing to the Enlightenment and Renaissance in Europe, much of the discourse on Human Rights in the West has always borrowed heavily from ancient Pagan philosophy that was fundamentally compatible with a diversity of cultural and faith traditions, a more balanced view of gender relations, and a greater awareness of mankind's relationship with the environment.

Even before the Western Enlightenment, all attempts at formulating a sophisticated gnostic philosophy by the two major non-Polycentric religious and ideological traditions, viz., Christianity and Islam, borrowed heavily from Hellenic Paganism, albeit in a somewhat reductionist manner, with Christianity leaning towards Aristotelian thought and Islam choosing Platonism and Neo-Platonism. This was a central part of the polemic and dialectic between the two.

The recent full resurgence of Paganism as an openly declared faith tradition in the West not only fully resonates with the current state of the Human Rights movement and contributes a great number of activists and academics to the discourse, but it is uniquely poised to refine the fundamental semantics of this discourse and alter what is considered canonical and what is remarked upon as exceptional.

This chapter will throw light on the particulars of Paganism that are relevant to Human Rights and sociology, as well as provide a bird's eye view of the current state of Western Paganism in order to address widely held misconceptions about this community.

■ What is Polycentricity?

A new slant on Human Rights

As a philosophical term, polycentricity is tentatively defined as a socio-cultural system of many decision centers, each with limited and autonomous prerogatives, all operating under an overarching set of rules.

This implies that each participant in a polycentric system is an individuated node, meaning that the participant cannot be pigeon-holed into a particular role to the exclusion of other functions, but rather performs different roles along different relational vectors, sometimes serving and sometimes supervising. Therefore, the hyper-specialization of roles and responsibilities is not a fundamental aspect of polycentricity. Rather, it is an agile system with high mobility and transference of skills, roles and knowledge, based on necessity, possibility and individual ability.

There may be a transactional hierarchy among participants based on a particular state of the system, but a transition away from that state would necessitate a reconfiguration of that order. Thus, it is a dynamic system focused on consequential pragmatism and politic decision-making, rather than a static system modeling a ritual principle.

■ Polycentric philosophy and the real world

The term was first introduced by Hungarian-British polymath Michael Polanyi in 1951 in his book *The Logic of Liberty*. Polanyi was a researcher in physical chemistry, as well as economics and philosophy. The concept of Polycentricity was born of his interest in creating and maintaining social conditions conducive to the preservation of freedom of choice and expression as well as the rule of law. Polanyi had visited what was then the USSR, and met with Nikolai Bukharin, Soviet politician, Marxist philosopher and economist. Bukharin described the Soviet Union's five-year plans and said that all scientists in the realm took directions on what to work on from a centralized planning commission. Scientists there did not choose what to work on based on their inner interests, or what struck them

as the need of the times in their society, nation or the world. Rather, the framing of problems, necessity and possibility were all done by a central committee, and the actual research and development was then farmed out to experts in various streams of science. Although this brought great leaps in technological progress in an under-developed society, Polanyi was skeptical of this as a model conducive to the progress of science itself. He was also alarmed that a set of intellectuals of a Marxist persuasion in the UK were advocating for a similar centralized system of thought and function there.

Polanyi argued that good science was not merely the product of a set of rigorous academic processes and procedures, but rather involves the creativity, inspiration and extra-sensory insight of the human mind. Borrowing from Gestalt psychology, he described science as a spontaneous order that arises from open debate amongst specialists. It is a non-linear process of discovery, a major part of which wells up from beyond the horizon of conscious thought.

Gestalt philosophy holds that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and that knowledge of science or art cannot be divorced from the personalities (including the subconscious) of those that produce it. Leaving aside the arts, many famous scientists and mathematicians across cultures and the ages have described their cognitive experiences as involving non-empirical processes like dreams and visions. A few examples: African-American scientist Sylvester Gates would speak of sudden flashes of understanding in his sleep. German organic chemist August Kekulé solved the structure of benzene in a dream. Indian mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan obtained formulae from the Goddess Shri in a dream.

Physicist Niels Bohr had a vision in a dream of electrons revolving around the nucleus in fixed orbits. Dmitri Mendeleev had a dream of the periodic table of elements. Alfred Wallace was once suffering from a high fever and had a dream that left him with the evolutionary theory through natural selection (which he had independently conceived and then jointly published after discussions with Charles Darwin).

■ **Polycentricity vs. Positivism**

Here, Polanyi leveled a critique of the philosophy of logical positivism (Comte), which hypothesizes that anything that is genuinely true holds true for all times, circumstances and people of varying levels of maturity. Positivism also holds the empirical method and observable evidence as the solely genuine means of generating new knowledge. However, the reality of many major discoveries in science and mathematics clearly illustrates a non-empirical aspect to the cognitive process. Yet, logical positivism does not capture that aspect in its narrow epistemology.

■ **Polycentricity vs. Critical Philosophy**

Polanyi's critique also questions the premises of critical philosophy (Kant), which holds that the primary role of philosophy is to skeptically criticize science and culture, rather than to understand and justify different knowledge systems while vetting them for sanity within an overarching framework of epistemology. Kant's transcendental idealism and critical philosophy is associated with overturning 'unprovable' philosophical, social or political beliefs. It arose as an extension of Hume's skeptical empiricism that attacked metaphysics in particular. It does not see perception and cognition as being significantly influenced by the subject's

own psychological condition. It may be tangentially noted here that Immanuel Kant himself is alleged to have been autistic with Asperger's Syndrome.

■ **Polycentricity and Religion**

It is but a short step from philosophy to religion, and Polycentricity finds its application in religion – both, in examining the fundamental tenets of different religions as well as their social organization and methods of propagation. In general, religions that embody polycentric principles tend to have a fluid doctrine and emphasis on personal experience and growth. Their concept of deity is not exclusive in terms of name and form, nor is it anchored in a particular historical event or personage. They subscribe to a set of meta-religious principles that describe the contours of human sanity and ethics. This interpersonal framework then becomes a common ground between several separate religious traditions that honor one another in their own way.

■ **Polytheism and the rehabilitation of religion itself**

Religion in the West has struggled to justify itself under the cynical glare of modernity. This is in great part due to how monotheism put religion on a precarious ledge that was sustainable only when it wielded absolute political power in a largely uneducated and disenfranchised society. This is no longer the case. Pagan philosophy offers a basis for rehabilitating religion on a sound footing in contemporary times without being in conflict with science and democratic values of Human Rights. Without this new religious foundation, the threat looms of a popular longing for the sacred to drag society back into medieval traditionalism involving political absolutism and large-scale disenfranchisement.

A Polycentric theory of religion, much more so than science, argues that religious experience must understand its own epistemological limitations and defer to philosophy and an ontological classification of various Gods and Goddesses that people of refinement have experienced a relationship with. Experience is necessarily positive in character, even more so in the case of religious theophany. Hence, one can experience a God as the God of all things, but one cannot experience that this God is the only such God. This is the fine line between uniqueness (one of a kind) and unicity (being ontologically unitary).

In that perspective, monotheisms that negate or subordinate other sectarian religious experiences, based not on a gnostic and philosophical evaluation of sanity but purely on sectarian considerations, are effectively undermining religious experience as a whole and eventually of their own subjective truth-claims. Taken to its logical conclusion, via rationales such as Hegelian Absolute Idealism, it results in atheism. Modern atheists often consider Abrahamic monotheisms as a necessary step towards atheism, just as Marxists see Capitalism. In the words of Platonist and Polytheism Prof. Edward Butler:

“One cannot simply treat the objects of religious regard in diverse traditions as either confused representations of some reality beyond them, on the one hand, or as mere patterns of human behavior, on the other, and claim to be pursuing knowledge. This is rather the pursuit of power, and an example, moreover, of the functional identity of monotheism and atheism, which is obscured by the conflict between them. They have a common goal in the suppression of the primary experience of Gods, which is theism itself. Polytheism just is theism.

This is why the existence of other people’s Gods wasn’t and isn’t, generally speaking, a problem for polytheists. It’s not because they think all Gods are the same; you don’t get to tolerance by annihilating difference, but by recognizing it. And this is the basis of all knowledge, as well.”

Concepts like Human Rights, Environmental Rights, etc. arguably rest on the experience of the sacred, or are at least greatly helped by it. The erosion of religion in modern societies with a monotheistic cultural background will likely erode a healthy respect for Human Rights as universally applicable across a broad spectrum of humanity. It is argued by some in Western academia (see the section ‘Pagan undercurrents of Culture Wars’) that Paganism provides a solid philosophical and devotional basis for sacred experience as a civic religion in modern, educated societies the world over, and especially the West.

■ **From Exclusivist schismatic monotheism to Integral devotional monotheism**

While Polycentricity is often naturally equated with polytheism in the religious sphere, this need not necessarily always be the case. Certain religious traditions which tend to be classified as ‘monotheistic’ (or describe themselves as monotheistic) can also be polycentric. Their devotional cynosure is an integrative monotheism, i.e., one with a syncretic amalgam of other deity forms within their deity in a way that respects the integrity of those deities’ own separate traditions and does not seek to annihilate them. This is in contrast to those monotheistic devotional traditions that may or may not appropriate parts of other traditions, but have an essentially exclusivist dogma that demands complete annihilation and replacement of the separate identities

of other traditions in order to achieve human progress according to their particular conception of it. The mentality of dogmatic exclusivism typically begins with a schism from a pre-existing parent tradition and then recursively leads to violent schisms within its own tradition with the passage of time. This description may be extended beyond religion to monocultural, exclusivist revolutionary ideological movements in the political space. Examples of polycentric monotheisms are the Vaishnavism of the Hindu philosopher Madhva, as well as many interpretations of Sikhism. Examples of schismatic, exclusivist monotheisms are found in most historical sects of Christianity and Islam.

The positive implication of this distinction is that there is a pathway for monocentric exclusivist monotheisms to transform into polycentric integral monotheisms without losing their basic devotional character built around a cynosure. This may be achieved by a process of doctrinal maturation and reform, combined with structural change within their societies as well as in their worldview of universal ethics, inter-religious dialogue, freedom of thought and human rights.

■ Ideology and politics

That the philosophy of Polycentricity undermines critical philosophy has many implications for modern intellectual discourse, especially in the fields of sociology and Human Rights. Much of modern and postmodern thought is based on Critical Theory, which has its roots in Kant's critical philosophy and Marx's application of it to political economy and ideology. While Critical Theorists often transactionally (and selectively) support pluralistic notions and cultures in society, their philosophy is not rooted in Polycentric theory.

Yet, one finds many intellectuals from fundamentally polycentric cultures such as Paganism falling in with a section of political ideologues of the critical school. This may be in order to protect themselves from other majoritarian, dominant non-Polycentric cultures that they have historically faced persecution from. However, in the long run, it appears to be an incompatible alliance.

This paper will briefly describe the history and present challenges and opportunities confronting American Paganism, and propose that a new, unified ideological platform for Pagan cultures worldwide is needed in order to move to the next stage of sustainable growth as a culture and straighten out the semantics of the Human Rights discourse.

■ Pagan Beliefs

Due to prevailing myths about what Pagans believe and practice, it is important to briefly summarize their common beliefs and practices.

There is no single source text, but there are many ancient and medieval texts that modern Western Pagan beliefs draw upon. Many will also borrow from similar existing, unbroken Eastern polycentric traditions such as Hinduism and Buddhism. A prominent modern Pagan, specifically Wiccan, text is the Pagan Rede, which is a code of ethics for spiritual practice. It contains beliefs such as the Rule of Three, which states that whatever a person does, good or bad, comes back to him or her threefold.

Pagan spirituality is based on discipleship under the guidance of senior practitioners. Thus, in any Pagan group, one may find neophytes, hierophants and adepts. However, the social organization of such groups is not necessarily hierarchical, with mentorship often modeled on a rotating basis. In some Pagan societies in the US today, the first

actual initiation is given after one year of committed discipleship. This is a high bar for conversion as compared to other mainstream religions.

Pagan exegetics involves reinterpretation of their beliefs or codes in present time, and is not anchored in a past golden age or a future paradise of apocalypse. Rather, the concept of time is cyclical. Pagans believe that all natural processes, physical and mental, follow a cyclic pattern.

Pagans believe in the existence of many Gods, but often have one chosen Beloved. Their belief may involve a hierarchy of Gods. Sometimes, these Gods are integrative in the sense that one telescopes into the next higher hypostasis. Pagans believe that the many faces of the Divine are not in conflict with one another, even though some may appear benign and others warlike. Each Pagan is free to choose his or her own beloved Deity.

Pagans hold the individual to be responsible for his or her beliefs. An individual's beliefs are not to be dictated by a book, person of authority, the government or society. Rather, a person must evolve his or her own beliefs in consultation and dialogue with others, and is solely responsible for the beliefs he or she subscribes to.

Similarly, Pagans hold that a person is responsible for his or her actions, as well as personal spiritual growth. No salvation is won solely by subscription to a credo or membership of a devotional cult. No personal edification is validated by in-group testimony alone, but rather only by being one among men in the wide world. Pagan beliefs, practices and fellowship are assets that an individual may draw upon to facilitate his or her own growth, correction and maturity. Thus, a person's lifestyle must be

consistent with his or her beliefs, and there is no dichotomy between faith and works.

Pagans believe in the sacredness of everything – all humans, all plants and animals, all of Nature and the cosmos. Pagans tend to be pantheistic, and see the Deity as more immanent in Nature than transcendent. This firm belief underlies prominent Pagan political beliefs such as social egalitarianism, ecological conservationism and a respect for all beings.

Pagans believe in a wide scope of spiritual consciousness, wherein consciousness is not just limited to human beings but also to animals, plants and inanimate objects. To a great extent, this is accepted by society today, but from a religious and historical standpoint this is a departure from Western Christianity, which, until the Middle Ages at least, denied that animals and plants had consciousness or even a soul. Even mathematicians like Descartes referred to animals as non-sentient automata, and would hold public demonstrations torturing dogs and explaining to shocked rural audiences that the shrieking animal is not experiencing pain in the same way humans do. Many Christian sects also did not believe women to be souls, but that only the human male is made in the image of God and 'has' a soul. In that light, Paganism is a radical departure from this religious tradition.

Pagan disciples value personal experience over doctrine. A Pagan practitioner's worth is judged by his or her personal maturity and spiritual realization rather than the orthodoxy of his or her doctrines. In this regard, Pagans emphatically believe that there are many paths to the divine.

Socially, Pagans emphasize community cooperation and human interdependence. Systems

that value personal relationships are preferred over impersonal systems. Family values, good neighborliness, spiritual fellowship and activism for human and environmental causes are fundamental to participation in the universe.

Pagans value a healthy skepticism in disciples. One is encouraged to question beliefs and practices. Blind acceptance of doctrine, or embracing a doctrine, ritual or fellowship for the wrong reasons is criticized.

■ Pagan cultural practices

There are some typical cultural practices that make Pagans easily identifiable. Here is a list of a few. The historical significance of these is that all of them were once banned in the West, and a person could be accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake for any of these. Some of these continue to cause Pagans to be identified and persecuted by society today.

The first of these is herbal medicine. Pagan priests and priestesses used to be skilled herbalists of native European traditional medicine. Just like Ayurveda in India, Chinese traditional medicine and Persian traditional medicine, these Pagan ‘witch-doctors’ were keepers of that traditional knowledge. In their community, they functioned as healers of body, mind and soul. They took a holistic view of disease, and modern Pagans continue to strongly advocate holistic solutions to real world problems.

Pagans practice different types of meditation. The most common daily practice is “grounding” meditation and helps relieve accumulated mental stress. Pagans also meditate to “raise energy”. In addition to silent personal meditations, Pagans sing, play musical instruments and chant, either individually or congregationally. Drum circles,

orchestras, group chanting, and festive dances are common cultural features.

Pagans believe that knowing one’s genealogy and connecting with one’s ancestors is an important part of self-knowledge and psychological health. Therefore, some importance is placed on ancestor worship and the ethno-cultural history of one’s ancestry.

Pagan life includes several rites of passage: naming ceremonies for newborns, initiations (during which they may take on a spiritual name), home-blessings, marriage, divorce and funerals. There are also cronings, which is when a Pagan woman is past middle age, has completed her duties raising children and entered old age. A woman’s life is divided into three parts: maiden, mother and crone. The experience and wisdom of aged women is considered very important in Pagan social groups.

Daily or seasonal ritual is another feature of Pagan worship. Pagans will often have a sacred space and altar set up at home. Invoking a deity or deities is also common. Among deities, Goddess imagery is prominent. While Pagan deities are both male and female, there is a preponderance of Goddess imagery and the Divine feminine is emphasized. Divination is popular among Pagans. This may take the form of astrology, tarot cards and other arts.

Pagans are known to ‘purify’ and prepare sacred spaces before performing a meditation or group worship. This includes “casting circles” as a group, and drawing geometric symbols such as circles and spirals. Pagans may also wear sacred vestments, and amulets or talismans to protect their personal body and space. Personal ablutions and hygiene of spaces is a part of purification.

■ Contributing to the common good

Pagan priests and priestesses are often frontline activists for environmentalism and sustainability. They also vigorously advocate for Human Rights, pluralism, tolerance, ethics and diversity. They propose and research holistic approaches to real-world problems. They contribute to the communities they live in by organizing lively cultural festivals, engaging in social service, volunteerism and stepping into public affairs.

Pagans are active members of philosophical and scientific movements in the US, such as naturalism, humanism and secularism.

It is worth mentioning that Pagans are overwhelmingly patriotic Americans who serve in the Armed forces, government, the non-profit and private sectors.

■ Paganism and Environmentalism or the Sustainability Movement

As indicated earlier, in Pagan culture there is an emphasis on discovering and connecting with the Divine feminine. This is partly in reaction to the patriarchal nature of Christian religion as well as the exploitative and materialistic attitude toward Nature that sprung from it. The celebrated 6th century British Christian monk Gildas (known as Gildas ‘the Wise’) wrote in his scathing religious polemic *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*:

“I shall not speak of the ancient errors common to all races, that bound the whole of humanity fast before the coming of Christ in the flesh. I shall not enumerate the diabolical idols of my land, numerous almost as those that plagued Egypt, some of which we can see today, stark as ever, inside and outside deserted city walls: outlines still ugly, faces still grim. I shall not name the mountains and hills and rivers,

once so pernicious, now useful for human needs, on which, in those days, a blind people heaped divine honors.”

The restoration of the Divine feminine manifests in two ways among modern Pagans: The first is a preponderance of Goddess imagery, and a high station given to priestesses as spiritual guides and to women in general in the community. The second is a strong current of ecological conservationism and sustainable development models, which includes holistic approaches to mental and physical health. Two organized socio-political movements reverberate strongly among the Pagan community in America.

The first is the Eco-Feminist Movement. This is a branch of feminism that sees environmentalism as foundational to its analysis and praxis. It holds that a cosmic relationship exists between women and the Earth, and a natural correspondence between the way both are treated by patriarchal male societies. An analysis of male-female relations in a society could lead to insights into how that society treats Nature and the Earth’s natural resources.

The second is the Goddess Spirituality Movement. This marks a revival of Goddess worship in general, with its implications for theology, mythology, ethics and environmentalism. They regard Nature as a living Goddess, and state that caring for and connecting spiritually with Nature is not just a matter of sustainability but is fundamental to the development of one’s human faculties and consequently one’s spiritual progress. Therefore, it is not merely by logically adjusting inter-personal dynamics or gender dynamics within a society, but by developing an inner relationship with the Goddess that a culture of true sustainability and ecological awareness can be born.

■ Paganism and Healthcare as a Human Right

As mentioned in the section on Pagan practices, ancient Pagan priests, priestesses and disciples often learned the healing arts and served the community as doctors, nurses, midwives and counsellors. A Pagan herbalist, bone-setter or healer was equally likely to be a woman as there were men.

However, during the Dark Ages, Pagan village doctors (“witch-doctors”) were apprehended by state or church authorities and burned at the stake. This included traditional midwives, herbalists and others who were not necessarily priestesses or priests. Any practice of traditional medicine or nursing care was treated as witchcraft and persecuted. This caused a massive shortage of healthcare in the countryside for a long time, since this persecution was already high even before modern medicine could take its place. Even after the beginning of modern medical care, it was some time before it became available in the rural areas. Healthcare was monopolized by the state and church and given an explicitly Christian symbolism. Non-Christian caregivers were eradicated. It is also noteworthy that while Pagan health workers had included a high percentage of women, modern Christianized healthcare initially only allowed males to learn the science.

Pagans believe that a wide range of physical ailments have psychosomatic and spiritual roots. There is much support for this view within the medical community today. Subsequently, Pagans join the growing call for holistic approaches to public health, both, mental and physical healthcare. This includes the teaching of life-skills related to caring for one’s mind and body, meditation, diet, healthy social relationships and close-knit social ties, spending time

close to nature, alternatives to allopathic medicine for less serious conditions, and so on.

■ Provenance of ancient Western Paganism – softening ‘east-west’ polarization

In writing about themselves, a large section of Pagans take offence to being described as “neo-Pagans”, a term that implies they are a modern ersatz form of an ancient and dead tradition. Pagans emphasize the continuity of their practice with ancient tradition. This can be either a hereditary continuity that remained underground during centuries of persecution, or it can be an intellectual and spiritual continuity that sows the same seed or transplants the same tree in a different century.

There is a strong belief in Perennialism among Pagans, viz., that the overarching philosophy and meta-religious tenets of spiritual life are eternal. They do not change with time, culture, ethnicity, technological development or with any new religious dispensation. They remain an eternal abstract template for different religious instances tailored to time, place and culture. Pagan writer Margot Adler called this the Universal Old Religion. Thus, Pagan universalism contrasts itself with totalitarian truth-claims and social agenda.

Historically, the most well-known and well-read Pagan teachers in the modern West are the Greek and Roman philosophers, who were also ardent devotees of their chosen Deities. However, as in that ancient world, Paganism today also includes ancient Egypt and northern Africa, as well as West Asia in its provenance. Prominent contemporary Pagan writer, podcaster and activist, Starhawk, points to the famous “Venus” idol of Willendorf (Austria), dated 22,000 BCE as an instance of how far back

Goddess worship goes in the West. She points out the Minoan Goddess relic, dated 1600 BCE, as well as the Egyptian worship of Goddess Hathor, circa 1200 BCE.

Thus, Western Paganism's real provenance is not just Christianized Europe, but includes the Islamized Levant and West Asia and North Africa. It is to be noted that in that ancient Pagan milieu, when Greeks traveled to Egypt or the Middle East or as far as India to study at knowledge centers there and often settle down, they became Egyptian or Babylonian or Indian, as the case may be. They fully integrated into those societies without any hint of racism based on ethnicity, language and least of all skin color. The resurgence of Paganism rooted in that historical milieu will likely soften the hard 'east-west' boundary prevalent in the Western mindset since the time of the Crusades between Christendom and Islam.

■ **Suppression and Digestion of Western Paganism**

It is relevant to briefly restate the contours of the historical suppression of Western Paganism in order to understand the persecution they currently face as well as to explore their future possibilities.

■ **Annihilation**

The 4th century CE onwards saw the beginning of active suppression of Pagan culture in Europe, Egypt and West Asia under the Christian church. This included demolitions of their sacred spaces, monuments and temples, the massacres of their priesthoods and burnings of their libraries (which contained both sacred and secular literature). Wars were waged to spread God's word.

After the cities and nerve-centers of power were completely Christianized and the elites co-opted, the Old Gods were still overtly or covertly honored

in the rural areas and forests. Thus, they came to be known as Pagans, which means rustic. Later, as waves to Christianize the countryside (or Islamize it in the case of Egypt and West Asia) arose, witch-hunts and burning at the stake became a standard practice in Europe. It is estimated that 85% of witch-burnings were of women. Homosexual men were also in significant numbers.

■ **Co-opt and replace**

The Christian church also adopted several Pagan cultural norms and festivals. Modern festivals like the date on which Christmas is celebrated, Easter, Thanksgiving and Halloween all have Pagan roots that were co-opted by Christianity. This allowed a semblance of cultural continuity for those nations that had to convert.

In many cases, Pagan deities were co-opted into the church as 'saints', and then churches built on top of their shrines. Many prominent churches across Europe are built on top of old Pagan sacred spaces. Recently, the Notre Dame in Paris was in the news for being destroyed in a fire. Incidentally, this magnificent cathedral was built on the ruins of a temple to Vulcan, the Pagan God of Fire. Similarly, Pagan classical and folk music were also incorporated into Christian culture and worship.

Therefore, after much was destroyed, the church became a repository of what remained. Some of classical Pagan culture escaped being destroyed and it was the Muslim Arabs who translated and preserved it. Via contact with the Arabs, Europeans found a second introduction to their own ancient philosophy, which led to the Renaissance and Enlightenment. Both Christianity and Islam used Pagan philosophical resources to flesh out their own religious doctrines and engage in polemic.

■ Suppression in the modern age

British laws prohibiting the sale of books on subjects related to “witchcraft” were in force until the 1950’s. The American colonies and later United States saw a continuity of contemporaneous British persecution of Pagans, and was in many ways more severe because of a Puritanical strand among settlers coming from a Europe where they felt Christianity wasn’t pure enough. The Salem Witch Trials of the 1690’s was just one of many outbursts of violence against secret Pagan groups or individuals with a curiosity about gnostic philosophies and practices that stem from old Pagan culture.

It might be interesting to note that Mormonism emerged in this context. This new American Christianity has the mark of several Pagan ideas, practices and rituals, including communing with the dead, divination, sacred vestments, sacred spaces, discipleship, levels of priesthoods and progressive initiations, and so on. The same may be said of Freemasonry, which was far more widespread.

Certain Brazilian Christian cults that borrow Native American practices and ideas, including being able to communicate with animals and plants, and the controlled use of Ayahuasca, also have a strong following in the US.

As late as 1985, the US saw a “Satanic Panic”, wherein people who could be identified as Pagan practitioners were confronted in their communities and workplaces, their children sent home from schools. Paganism was identified with Satanism as a malevolent, immoral and anti-Christian fringe of potential terrorists.

■ Modern Pagan Resurgence

British laws banning Paganism-related books were repealed in the 1950’s. It was only after this

that Gerald Gardner’s book on Hereditary Pagan lineages came to light, describing several unbroken Pagan traditional lineages, passed down in secret from parent to child, across Europe. This led to a proliferation of other literature, some authentic and some new-fangled, some conflating Paganism with Satanism and other eddy currents in the Western intellectual and spiritual world. Paganism remained a fringe dilettante pursuit.

Paganism’s first debut as a religious tradition can be said to have been at the international gathering of Pagans in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1992, to commemorate the victims of the witch trials there. A memorial was built in their honor. In 1993, they were also allowed a place at the Parliament of the World’s Religions in Chicago, in which they were allowed to talk about themselves and answer questions. It did cause a flutter in the city, but it began the process of dialog.

Today there are annual Pagan events open to the public in several cities across the US. The Samhein festival in San Francisco celebrates the Pagan New Year.

Since the 1980’s, the numbers of declared Pagans has reportedly quadrupled. There are an estimated 750,000 Wiccans alone. A 1990’s estimate put the total number of Pagans at 1 million, and a 2008 Pew Survey put it at between 1 and 1.5 million. If social media is any indicator, the @thehoodwitch handle on Instagram has 434,000 followers.

1980-1995: Describing themselves

This was a period when self-described Pagans like Margaret Adler and Eugene Gallagher wrote books attempting to define Paganism and meant to dispel misconceptions held by non-Pagans. These began to bridge the gap between the outsider and

insider or emic and etic point of view on Paganism, at least in academia.

This is significant because by the standards of monocentric doctrinaire religions, Pagan religions are highly fluid in terms of belief and ritual and are hard to define ethnographically. Thus, a Pagan author has to deal with the challenge of broadening the worldview and refining the semantic structures that inform his readers' minds.

■ **1995-2005: Consolidation and community formation**

In the next phase, there was a degree of consolidation and community formation, as described by Sarah Pike. Because of the solitary nature of Pagan practice, community formation centers around the celebration of festivals, mostly traditional festivals related to nature and the seasons, but also cultural festivals such as Pagan Pride.

During that era, a common point of discussion among Pagans was how to deal with popular misconceptions and discrimination, and whether to keep their religion a secret or not.

However, it also led to the formation of pagan families and added layers to the experience of everyday life as a pagan, bringing up pagan children and so on. For example, a group SpiralScouts, a sort of Pagan boy-scouts group, emerged.

They also began to dispute the re-labeling of Paganism as New Age, neo-Paganism, etc., because they point to its ancient roots and want to be acknowledged as the root of all other formal religions. Much of this documented and studied by Zohreh Kermani.

■ **2005-Present: Tackling the legal basis of discrimination against Pagans**

Carol Barner-Barry's 2005 publication, *Contemporary Paganism, Minority Religions in*

Majoritarian America, works with the idea that larger, majoritarian communities function in a way that the creation of minorities is inevitable. There are always, both, members of a community, and those who do not qualify as a part of it.

Thus, Sufism in Islam-dominated societies and mystic sects in Christian-dominated societies are inevitable, and both always draw upon older pagan religious traditions in their local cultural and geographical areas. The monocentric majoritarian religions attempt to subsume these eddies and treat them in a Procrustean fashion, finding a place to fit them into their doctrinal framework.

This goes hand in hand with the othering, persecution and symbolic annihilation of these ancient traditions. For this reason, Carol goes into the legal basis of the discrimination against Pagan faith traditions.

■ **The example of Yoga in America**

A classic example of this is the appropriation of Yoga into Western Christian culture. In popular 19th century writings, yoga was either ridiculed or treated as a fanciful, dark and 'mystic' art. The arrival of teachers like Swami Vivekananda on American shores created an open community for the appreciation of the culture of yoga and Hindu spirituality at an intellectual level. In the first quarter of the 20th century, the arrival of preceptors like Swami Yogananda created a community of actual practitioners and disciples of the yogic tradition, rather than just an intellectual or philosophical discussion group. Literature purporting to interpret the Christian New Testament in the light of yoga were common during this phase. Later, with the arrival of traditional Hindu exponents such as Bhaktivedanta Swami, the culture of yoga came along with its own

native religious context. These waves were the result of changing perceptions and the spiritual demands of American society in a shrinking world where medieval prejudices were unprepared for the flows of information and meeting of peoples.

After being first ridiculed or treated as an interesting mystical practice from far away, attempts were made to re-label yoga and force-fit it into a limited commercial healthcare category within Western Christian society – such as the demand that the ‘lotus posture’ be called “crisscross apple sauce” rather than be associated with any aesthetic or spiritual connotation. Then yoga began to be demonized as positively satanic, and especially the pronunciation of the syllable AUM or folding the hands in a ‘namaste’ salutation was deemed to positively invite diabolical forces into one’s consciousness. Finally, yoga and meditation have been adopted and digested even within Christian seminaries as “Christian yoga”. Many Christian yoga groups across American cities use all the techniques of yoga and meditation and introduce devotion to Jesus into that practice. However, even after this stage has been crossed, the cultural and legislative battle against yoga continues unabated, as the recent Alabama law banning the teaching of yoga in schools demonstrates. While yoga is now appreciated, there is an escalation in the symbolic annihilation of the Hindu culture it comes from. Taking a leaf from 19th century British colonial race theories and Indology, some American yoga literature characterize Hinduism as an oppressive, patriarchal religion of invading ‘Aryans’, while yoga is depicted as the spiritual heritage of ‘Dravidian’ natives in ancient India.

Therefore, while prevailing Abrahamic religious traditions may appropriate certain spiritual resources

of Pagan religion, they are unwilling to give any space to those resources to co-exist in their own native traditional religious context. This will be the main challenge facing a re-emergent Paganism in the United States now and in the foreseeable future.

■ **Bi-religious Pagans**

It is worth noting that many Pagans are bi-religious. They study and practice Paganism in private as a form of self-improvement, usually under guidance from covens over the internet. However, they also go to church or synagogue and state their religion officially as Christianity or Judaism.

Part of the reason for this is that they do not feel comfortable talking about their Pagan beliefs in a society where they are likely to be judged harshly or at least have to answer a lot of questions. Another reason is that they simply prefer to keep that side very private.

A third reason, found chiefly among Native Americans, Afro-Americans and some modern Western Pagans, is Syncreto-Paganism, wherein Pagans may completely adopt the external symbols of the majoritarian conquering culture, but continue to harbor their old beliefs. This also applies to a section of Sufism in the Muslim world.

■ **Types of Pagans**

There is a wide variety of Pagans, distinguished by their root traditions, their calibration in respect to grades of civilization, their relationship with respect to different forms of Christianity that overwhelmed them, and their position on contemporary social and political issues.

In terms of root traditions, prominent among American Pagans are Wiccans. Wiccans, in turn, can be of several types depending on where the tradition is sourced from in modern times: Gardnerian,

Minoan, Shamanic, Alexandrian, Faerie, Eclectic, Dianic and Hereditary traditions.

Other root traditions are the Druids, Eco-Feminists (grafted from the feminist movement in France) and Gaians.

Paganism can be characterized as Paleo-Paganism when it is based on ancient forest and agricultural cultures. Norse Paganism and Druidism are examples of this. In contrast, Civilo-Paganism represents ancient urban cultures such as Hellenic and Roman Paganism.

Meso-Paganism refers to Pagan cultures that have been heavily influenced by the religious or ideological cultures that overwhelmed them (mainly Christian monotheism, dualism and Western nontheistic movements), but have still managed to retain a separate identity and practice. In America, this includes Native Americans, Norse Paganism, British Wicca, and New Age spirituality. Another category, sometimes subsumed under Meso-Paganism, is Syncreto-Paganism, wherein the Pagan culture has been completely conquered and have completely adopted the external symbols of their conquering ideology (Christianity or various nontheistic ideologies such as Marxism), but retain some old personal practices and beliefs.

Neo-Paganism specifically refers to non-traditional modern Paganism that picks from several ancient Pagan cultures, nature-revering paths, and is strongly aligned with the “liberal” movement in America. All Pagans do not like being referred to as neo-Pagan.

■ Modern Pagan Resources

Socially as well as in terms of literature, the number of Pagan resources has continued to proliferate. The advent of the internet and social media

has been a force-multiplier. Madison, Wisconsin is the site of long-lasting Pagan institutions that provide resources for Pagans and non-Pagan observers alike.

The Circle Guide to Pagan Groups, first started in 1979, is a good resource for information on contemporary Paganism in the US. Along with that, the Circle Network News updates readers on current festivals as well as current legal battles being fought by Pagans facing discrimination or harassment.

The Pagan Academic Network is an important medium for building social capital among a section of American society with a significant interest in and ability to appreciate Paganism from a philosophical and historical perspective. As outlined in the section below on ‘Pagan undercurrents and Culture Wars’, there is growing support among American intellectuals for Paganism as a suitable candidate for modern American civic religion.

The Lady Liberty League is an important asset to all practicing Pagans. They fight legal battles on behalf of Pagans who choose to come forward with their grievances related to discrimination, harassment and vandalism.

While there are many virtual Pagan groups on the internet, there are also a few established Pagan organizations or centers where practitioners can get trained. The Church of All Worlds was established in 1968, the Covenant of the Goddess in 1975, and the Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans in 1986. Bethel, Vermont, hosts a center which functions as an annual pilgrimage for Pagans in the New England region.

■ Contributors to Pagan resurgence

There are many motivations – spiritual, social, political - for Americans and Westerners in general to develop an interest in Paganism.

■ **Reaction to toxic consumerism and environmental destruction**

There is a growing disgust with toxic consumerism and consequent environmental destruction. To a large extent, this is also facilitated by mainstream religions such as Christianity. For example, “abundance theology” is preached in churches to consumers in America, while the natural resources and hereditary intellectual property of Amazonian indigenous religions are stolen by multinational companies after these peoples are first converted to Christianity. There is a government-corporate-church camaraderie at work in this consumerist political economy. This is causing a reaction among a section of the population, who are turning to alternative lifestyles and worldviews.

■ **Reaction to impersonal and mechanical lifestyle**

Modern American society has increased social isolation and individual ennui. People have become more insular and once close relationships in family, including extended family, neighborhood and society have broken down. Overexposure or early exposure to sense-pleasures when the mind is not mature enough has also created spiritual void in people who question the meaning of life and the pursuit of happiness. Psychiatric solutions to emotional problems have become ubiquitous and the idea that everything is merely a biological and chemical function has increased a sense of meaninglessness. In this scenario, a movement to reintroduce sacredness into a mechanical universe is attractive to many.

■ **Growth of multiculturalism and ethno-nationalism**

The immigration of people of ethnicities other than north-west European descent into the US

has created a multicultural atmosphere since the assimilation of these different ethnicities is only possible in a civic sense. Many of them have a strong linguistic and religious culture of their own. This has given rise to a multicultural ethic in parts of America, which celebrates cultural diversity as an asset. As part of this, many Americans of European origin (‘whites’) developed an interest in their own specific ethnic identity and rich Pagan historical heritage. This gives them a means to better relate to other cultures and ethnicities they now see around them.

On the flip side, multiculturalism has caused an adverse reaction among a section of ‘white’ Americans, who want to differentiate themselves from other sections of society (including non-European Christians) and seek separateness. They reject a common identity under the rubric of being American or Christian. This leads to an interest in their ethnic origins and subsequently Paganism. Therefore, a significant section of American and generally Western Pagans are ethno-nationalists. This author once visited the new Asatru temple in Iceland and interacted with several American Pagan visitors there. One of them, a gay youth, confided that the rest were ethno-nationalists and would not be very welcoming of ‘non-whites’. This appeared ironic because the Asatru temple acknowledges that it borrows several elements of sacred architecture from Hinduism, which is a culture far removed from north-western Europe.

■ **Pagan undercurrents of Culture Wars**

Steven D. Smith, professor of Law at the University of San Diego and author of *Pagans and Christians in the City: Culture Wars from the Tiber to the Potomac*, holds that old Pagan traditions of

Europe always formed the undercurrents of spiritual, cultural and intellectual churn in the West. While this is evident in the history of the Renaissance and Enlightenment in Europe, he argues that this continues into the present-day Culture Wars in America. This view is advanced by others in academia, such as former dean of Yale Law School, Anthony Kronman in his book, *Confessions of a Born-Again Pagan*.

They elucidate how the Western intellectual tradition of intellectual and aesthetic pantheism, encompassing many such as Spinoza, Nietzsche, Emerson and Walt Whitman, owes its inspiration to old Pagan philosophy and tradition. In contemporary times, they claim that intellectuals and speakers like Sam Harris, Barbara Ehrenreich and even Ronald Dworkin are channeling the same energy. Even intellectuals on the right of the political spectrum, such as Jordan Peterson, leans on Jungian thought to re-insert Christianity into his discourse.

Further, these academics suggest that since a great part of American liberal political and social thought - including egalitarianism, separation of church and state, freedom of religion, democracy and now multiculturalism - is rooted in polycentric Pagan religious culture and fundamentally compatible with it, therefore the emergence of Paganism might offer a viable alternative to Judeo-Christian religious culture which tends to be fundamentally at odds with polycentric values, producing a schizophrenic American value system internationally and, increasingly, domestically.

■ **Persecution of Pagans in contemporary America**

In America today religiously motivated hate crimes make up about one fifth of all hate crimes committed (United States Department of Justice).

These include violence, vandalism, and threats among others. Unlike hate crimes against other religious groups, the vast majority of hate crimes against Pagan Americans go unreported.

In 1985 during the “Satanic Panic,” pagans in the US were regularly confronted at work and in their communities. This included harassment, vandalism of their properties or possessions, personal attacks, and demonization as people who practice bloody, macabre rituals and wish to overturn social morality or Christianity.

Since then, pagan civil rights orgs like the Lady Liberty League (LLL) have been trying to come to the aid of pagans facing prejudice, discrimination, harassment and defamation - at least when the victims speak up.

Typical complaints are related to “child custody, business, zoning, housing and job discrimination.”

Rev. Selena Fox, executive director of LLL, says that there has been a noticeable uptick in discrimination over the past four years (2016-2020).

Example 1: Job harassment

A recent case in April of 2021, of a pagan woman filing a case against Panera Bread in a Penn Federal Court over job discrimination and harassment solely due to her pagan beliefs. Her employers denied her working hours, forcing her to work half-time so she could use the extra time to “find God”. They also approached her parents, complaining about her Pagan religion. Eventually, when she refused to renounce her faith, she was forced to quit her job.

Example 2: Persecution by Law-and-Order personnel

In the 1994 murder case of 3 children in Tennessee, West Memphis Police Department assigned the case number 93-05-0 666 to the file

because of rumors that it was the work of devil worshippers, and promptly interrogated a teenager Damien Echols known locally for being a Wiccan. While this teenager did have a history of depression and behavioral problems, his interest in Wicca was the central focus of the prosecution's case. His possession of an introductory book on Wicca was held up as evidence of wickedness – whereas the contents of that book are contrary to any form of violence, ill-will or mayhem. Clearly, the prosecution did not bother to peruse the book, or inform the jury of its actual contents, their entire presentation riding on wild prejudice. Damien's notebooks full of his thoughts on Wicca mention his mentorship coming from a "white witches group" and his belief in a Goddess rather than a God, and his attempts to work towards a divine light. Damien testified repeatedly that he "was not a Satanist," and "didn't believe in human sacrifice," Damien Echols was convicted of murdering all three children during a satanic ritual and was sentenced to death that same year at the age of 18. After many years of arbitration Echols has recently been released from prison.

■ **Cultural or symbolic annihilation of Pagans**

Cultural or symbolic annihilation is defined as the annihilation, absence or active un-representation of a cultural group, i.e., decimating a culture by disallowing the symbolic representation of that group or misrepresenting that culture within the mainstream media or consciousness.

■ **The role of popular culture in perpetuating negative stereotypes of Pagans**

Pop culture's caricature of witchcraft and paganism is a big source of the symbolic annihilation of this religious culture which mainly focuses on personal growth, non-violence and building

community. Popular culture also conflates Paganism with various other subcultures. E.g., most Americans don't know that the Gothic subculture is entirely unrelated to Paganism per se.

A popular stereotype is that pagans are just maladjusted individuals or social dropouts on the fringe. This is because some of the more visible pagans are also part of subcultures like the Goths or dress in ways that are unconventional. Similarly, some pagans are also part of ethno-nationalist groups, though this is in no way directly linked to Pagan belief or culture.

Yet, popular culture portrays them as indulging in bloody animal sacrifices, believing in human sacrifice including killing babies, racists, fascists, or at the most innocuous level, a set of superstitious chants to invoke ghostly nature spirits.

■ **The role of Abrahamic religions in demonizing Paganism**

The role of Abrahamic religions in fostering these stereotypes is significant according to surveys. Respondents said that their scriptures are valuable sources of information on Paganism, and link it directly to Satanism, and has injunctions such as "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Exodus 22:18).

Ironically, people belonging to Abrahamic religions tend to think that Pagans specialize in spells and conspiracies to harm Christians, Muslims or Jews. However, surveys of practicing Pagans show that antipathy toward these religions was non-existent or insignificant in their walk of faith. E.g., a New York nursing home aid's co-workers and bosses harassed him over his belief in Wicca, accusing it of being Satanism and a "hate crime against Christianity", resulting in his finally being fired. The

director even asked his mother if he was “a terrorist and a Satanist”. Other employees were allowed to wear their religious symbols such as the crucifix, but he was asked to cover up a pentagram pendant.

■ **Legislative progress and legal successes**

Recently the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission laid out guidelines that allow Pagan Americans to request leave for their festivals such as the solstices. This is among the few recent positive developments for a set of religious traditions that exist in an environment that is rich in discrimination and harassment.

Among other legal successes, Phyllis Currott, a Wiccan priestess and lawyer in New York won the right for Pagan clergy to perform legally binding Pagan marriages. In Los Angeles, Zsuzanna Budapest was arrested for divination (reading tarot cards), and her 9-year legal battle with the help of her community finally lead to the overturning of those laws. In Massachusetts, Laurie Cabot fought for the right to wear Pagan robes and amulets in public in the 1980’s.

However, Paganism continues to be practiced in secret by most practitioners for fear of having to deal with discrimination, harassment or social awkwardness. This in itself is an effect of prejudice and social repression.

■ **An invisible community**

While a few such cases gain publicity, there is an entire level of unreported narratives of persecution that dehumanizes the victims, undermines their place in the communities they have been a part of for years, sometimes even their own families, and physically intimidates them. This fear and anxiety cause many Pagans to keep their faith secret from their friends and co-workers, not sharing it openly.

Others who are persecuted tend to just move on with life without even reporting it.

While other groups that deal with prejudice, such as African-Americans cannot guard themselves against the conjectures of a racist, a Pagan has the ability to blend in and remain under the radar of anyone with strong prejudices against them, due to their inconspicuous racial profile. Therefore, because they are not presenting a clear, visible image of the Pagan population to the community at large, the secrecy and compartmentalization cements a feedback loop of ignorance and thus discrimination.

This is important because Katherine Ewing, a Cultural Anthropologist and Religious Studies scholar points out that only “identifying underlying patterns, semantic connections, and regularities that play a significant role in the negotiation of meaning... ignores key aspects of the interactive process.”

Based on this limited visibility alone, according to recent Pew Research Center studies on the religious landscape of the U.S., Paganism makes up 0.4% of the population. While this number does not seem like a large portion of the population, it amounts to 956,700 Pagans. The actual number is likely to be far higher.

■ **Lack of Pagan social organization and established churches**

A lack of social organization among pagan religions even among themselves is another reason they remain invisible and vulnerable to individual discrimination. Being a solitary practitioner is a popular choice nationally, as the practice of the religion easily allows small, individual ceremonies that can be done inside one’s own home. Solitary practitioners still may function as a part of the broader Pagan community, but perform most religious

rituals by themselves. This way, the practitioner is allowed to choose exactly how they want to practice and what they want to believe. Because the beliefs encompassed in Paganism vary widely, it is often more productive for each member to perform rituals on their own.

However, 40% of the Pagan population is involved in occasional group worship. Therefore, the true detriment to visibility is the lack of any established churches for such groups that do exist.

The Pluralism Project from Harvard University recorded that of nearly 400 Pagan organizations within the U.S., only about one fourth of all of the communities listed actually had a building that could be easily identified by an outsider as a place of worship (Eck). For almost one million followers, there are only around 100 estimated centers of worship listed on the website with their own buildings.

For a large majority of Pagans, their preferred setting for rituals is outside, in public parks or private land. Many others practice in groups in their leaders' homes.

However, even this number from the Pluralism Project appears to be a gross underestimate - A 2016 paper by Elizabeth Hoadley gives narrative evidence in several cities surveyed by the Pluralism Project and shows how many temples were not counted in that survey. E.g., in Pittsburgh alone - a strongly Catholic city - there are typically about 1000 attendees at the Pagan Pride festival held annually. If even half of those were genuinely associated in some way with Paganism, it is far more than estimates of their numbers there.

■ **Aspirations for community and openness**

This lack of social organization and established churches is not by choice, but rather an effect of

the discomfort they feel in expressing themselves openly. A 2016 survey of the Pagan community found that a section of them were miserable keeping their faith a secret and wished to be able to be more open about it among a community of their own as well as to the non-Pagan community at large. However, the majority of them seemed to remain comfortable with secrecy and compartmentalization and didn't want to deal with going against prevalent prejudices or even putting in the effort to address the innocent ignorance of non-Pagans.

■ **Absence of a feedback loop**

Thus, there is no feedback loop and non-Pagan Americans are either completely ignorant, or get their disinformation from popular culture, non-Pagan religions and other inauthentic sources. This ignorance and concurrent substitution, is the root of the majority of the discriminatory attitudes, and could seemingly be remedied if the Pagan community were to be more open and visible to its surrounding society.

This is also the reason why Western Paganism and natural sibling faith traditions like the Hindu, Shinto and other eastern Dharma-based religions have not formed a common community of sorts.

■ **Future Prospects**

As Paganism emerges, Pagan Americans are overwhelmingly contributing to the common good, but are yet to form an independent intellectual and political force of their own.

■ **Building bridges**

One spiritual, social and political consolidation that would set American Paganism on a firm footing would be to develop a broader sense of community and identification with academics and philosophers of pantheism and civic religion. Refer the section on 'Pagan undercurrents of Culture Wars'.

Another logical step would be to build bridges with the New Age Movement, and this is already happening.

As an extension of that, it would also be beneficial to build a common weal with innately compatible Eastern and African polycentric religious traditions such as Shintoism, Hinduism and Buddhism, and indigenous African traditions. Given that practitioners of Shintoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and new African immigrants make up a significantly educated and wealthy percentage of the American population, this would be an obvious step to take.

Lack of common cause between Western, Eastern and African polycentric religions

Western Pagan traditions experiencing a renaissance routinely piece together their traditions by examining their correspondence with living Pagan traditions such as Hinduism. The recently built Asatru Temple in Iceland takes several of its sacred architectural features from Hindu temple architecture. Yet, in the United States, this natural consilience of East and West has not happened to a great extent, other than with Buddhism.

Some of the challenges in achieving this revolve around both sides harboring negative stereotypes about one another. A second factor is a continuing stream of disinformation by bad actors or irresponsible authors.

A third factor is related to political affiliation and the prevalence of a 'cancel culture' in an extremely polarized political environment. Many Pagan intellectuals tend to align with the far Left of the political spectrum. The political Left subscribes to a narrative that Shintoism is a patriarchal, racist, fascist and imperialistic philosophy. Also, the political Left, at a global level, sees the emergence of

Hindutva (or Hindu culture as a polycentric political vehicle) as an adversary, since it typically tends to align with political Islam. Therefore, Hinduism as a religion itself is characterized as an oppressive caste system with fascist tendencies. Any attempt by Pagan activists or intellectuals to build bridges with Hindu activism or intellectual movements invites opprobrium and de-platforming.

Overcoming these challenges will be key. Paganism can craft a future for itself only by envisioning a global order based on Polycentric principles. In doing so, it cannot continue to indefinitely piggy-back on fundamentally non-Polycentric ideological vehicles such as the Left and its army of Critical Theorists. Refer to the section 'Ideology and Politics'. Rather, Paganism must build a broad platform with other polycentric religious and intellectual traditions worldwide.

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African Perspectives on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere

The Human Dignity Initiative

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(An endorsement and elaboration of the, Punta del Este Declaration on Dignity for Everyone Everywhere By the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies at its Seventh Annual Law and Religion in Africa Conference Law, Religion, and Environment in Africa Gaborone, Botswana, 19-21 May 2019)

Whereas the Seventh Annual Conference on Law and Religion in Africa of the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) was held in Gaborone, Botswana, on 19-21 May 2019, with the conference theme, Law, Religion and Environment in Africa;

Whereas the conference participants wish to add their collective voices to the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by endorsing and elaborating upon the Punta del Este Declaration on Human Dignity for Everyone Everywhere;

Whereas there are many unique and characteristic understandings of human dignity that arise from African perspectives, and it is our hope that these perspectives can enhance and enrich the global and universal appreciation of human dignity as the foundational principle of human rights;

The following statement was drafted and welcomed by delegates and participants at ACLARS' Seventh Annual Law and Religion Conference in Africa.

1. African conceptions of human dignity.

Human dignity is a foundational societal, religious, cultural and legal concept in Africa. There is no one single African concept of dignity, but rather many different and often complementary conceptions. Dignity is a concept that has widespread purchase in African cultures, religions, and languages. As with many concepts, there is in Africa an ongoing contestation or negotiation about

the meaning of human dignity. Nevertheless, there are African characteristics of the concept that are widespread and widely shared. For example, Sir Seretse Khama, the first President of the Republic of Botswana said, “Human dignity, like justice and freedom, is the common heritage of all men.” The legacy of South African president Nelson Mandela is also as a champion of human dignity and freedom. As U.S.

President Bill Clinton said upon the passing of Nelson Mandela, “History will remember Nelson Mandela as a champion for human dignity and freedom, for peace and reconciliation.” We reiterate the Punta del Este Declaration’s emphasis that human rights are interdependent, universal, indivisible and interrelated, and each one is critical for achieving human dignity.

2. Relationships and community.

Africans think of dignity not solely as an individual human characteristic or right, but as a concept that implicates our most important relationships, including family, community, tribe and nation. Human dignity is a concept that is understood as existing in relationships with others. As such dignity implicates understandings of human duties and relationships, not just individual claims against others. There is a natural reciprocal understanding of human dignity. Part of our human dignity is recognizing and respecting the dignity of others. An African perspective on dignity is outward looking, not just inward reflecting.

For example, in southern Africa, the Nguni Bantu concept of Ubuntu (in isiXhoso/botho in Setswana) and in Eastern Africa’s Kiswahili concept of Utu are closely related to human dignity, and clearly involve a relational character of human lives

existing in connection and community with others. In some African cultures such as Botswana, the concept of totems is closely related to the idea of familial ties, which extend broadly, creating connections with others. African thinking about dignity necessarily includes the idea of equality; a concern for dignity is a concern for the equal dignity of all.

The meaning of dignity is taught first of all in the home, by parents and grandparents, and should then be reinforced by primary and secondary education, and through societal institutions such as mosques and churches.

In some African countries, including Zimbabwe, the idea of dignity is closely associated with the idea of solidarity. This communal ideal of unity and sharing confirms a communal dimension to human dignity.

3. An indigenous concept.

While “human rights” is a concept that can be difficult to translate into some African languages, the concept of human dignity is much easier to integrate linguistically. Rights are claims of what someone owes us, whereas dignity is something that is inherent in the human person. For example, in the Yorùbá language rights (eto) are assertions of a claim of something owed to you, whereas dignity (iyi) lies at the foundation of rights. While the idea of rights resonates with Africans, in African languages such as Yorùbá, dignity (iyi) is a noun, a state or quality of being. Even when there is not agreement about the specific definition of human dignity, it is a concept that resonates widely and meaningfully. We believe there is much that can be learned from various African perspectives on dignity that will enrich not only African understandings of this concept, but global understandings as well.

4. Many meanings of dignity.

There are many different meanings of dignity in African contexts, including the idea of living a dignified life (which can be related to ceremony and honor), dignity as rank or status (which can be hierarchical), dignity as a moral ideal (reflected in dignified behavior, including dress), dignity as a right, dignity as a personal responsibility (the duty to behave in a dignified manner), as well as dignity as describing the inherent value and worth of the human person. In a fundamental sense, because they are human, all human beings have dignity, even if they behave in ways that are undignified. We can urge others, such as our children, to behave with dignity without questioning the inherent human dignity of all regardless of how they behave.

There are dimensions of dignity that include living a complete and virtuous human life, for example reflected in the Yorùbá people's concept of *omoluwabi*, which suggests the ideal of someone who has a good character in all dimensions of life, reflecting virtue or good character in every sphere. This idea of being completely trustworthy, courageous, hard-working, humble, and of good character, and of treating others with respect, is also an ideal that is closely related to the ideal of dignity.

Discussions of human dignity, as with discussions of human rights, should take place in a spirit of genuine dialogue, including between the northern and southern hemispheres, rather than in a spirit of instruction or direction. When we focus on one perspective of human dignity, we should not mistake it as an "African" perspective, since there will be many African perspectives. Dignity eludes definition and capture by any one group or viewpoint.

5. Dignity as a right and as a "mother" of rights.

In some countries, such as South Africa and Nigeria, human dignity is a recognized fundamental constitutional right, and there are important judgments of these nations' highest courts elaborating the meaning of human dignity and related concepts such as *Ubuntu*. Even in places where human dignity is a recognized constitutional right, there are challenges in definition, scope and implementation of the right. In other countries, human dignity is a foundational concept, but is not itself a legal right. It can be understood as the "mother" of rights, or lying at the genesis of rights. While dignity is foundational, this is not to understate the importance of rights or of the duty of states to respect and protect rights. Dignity is a common concept in African society, and in the contemporary world, human rights can be seen as a way of operationalizing human dignity. The concept of human dignity can reinforce what we know and have as human rights. Human dignity should not be used as a nebulous concept that governments can invoke to limit or deny rights to people.

6. Concrete concern for basic human needs.

African discussions of dignity are less abstract and theoretical than some other discussions of dignity, focusing on basic human needs that must be satisfied in order to be fully human and to enjoy one's basic human dignity, including food, clothing, shelter, gainful employment, and the ability to care for oneself and one's family. Social and economic rights are the cornerstone of human dignity. In many African contexts, including Mozambique, dignity is understood as relating to the basic capacity to fulfill one's human needs, and then to be able to help fulfill the needs of others, including family and extended relations. Thus, discussions of dignity need to focus on basic human needs and capacities, such

as the ability to find meaningful and remunerative work that is sufficient to provide for oneself and one's family. Discussions of human dignity will be regarded as too theoretical and abstract if they do not include an emphasis on basic economic and social rights, including not just problems of poverty, but of extreme poverty. The rising generation, including university students, will not have patience with theoretical discussions of human dignity when their education does not empower them with basic capacities to make a decent living.

An African perspective on human dignity is also to be mindful of the most serious violations of human dignity, including genocide, other atrocities, forced migrations and displacements, and extreme poverty. Hence, the saying that, "a person possesses no 'utu'" among Kiswahili speaking communities. Extreme disparities of wealth and poverty will be viewed as a violation of human dignity.

7. State obligations.

An important obligation of states is to enable its people to live lives of dignity, in light of the broad African recognition of the importance of dignity. Former presidents Julius Nyerere and Ian Khama, have respectively stressed its importance. In Julius Nyerere's farewell 1985 speech he recalled that, "The single most important task, which I set out in my inaugural address in December 1962, was that of building a united nation on the basis of human equality and dignity;" and this he reinforced in his socialist concept of ujamaa. And for Ian Khama, it formed a part of the 5 Ds Roadmap: Democracy, Discipline, Dignity, Development & Delivery.

In spite of the broad African recognition of the importance of dignity by some governments, there are places in Africa where dignity is often violated

and places where governments do not do enough to protect human dignity and ensure it is taken seriously. Occasionally governments in Africa use references to duties in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights as a pretext for not protecting human rights including human dignity.

8. Religious and theistic foundations.

African understandings of human dignity are usually based upon a belief in God, a creator who made human beings in God's image. As such, there is an element of reverence and a dimension of humility in understanding human dignity. The idea of human dignity implicates relationships beyond those in this life, including with our creator, and with our ancestors who live in an afterlife beyond the visible world. Thus dignity implicates our treatment of the dead. Dignity implicates the departed as well, recognizing that belonging and being recognized does not just involve the present.

In some parts of Africa, understandings of dignity are inextricably connected to Islam. Muslims in Africa are familiar with the Quranic verse that God honored human beings in creating Adam as God's vice-regent or steward, and that human beings reciprocate this by treating other human beings with dignity. This is evident even in architecture (that is, in the environment), where a room of the house is dedicated to providing hospitality to strangers. This has implications for how we should treat all people, including beggars. While from a Muslim perspective, human rights may seem like a foreign concept, the concept of human dignity is not foreign, but an accepted and intrinsic part of the Muslim faith.

Christian and indigenous religions also have deep and meaningful teachings about human dignity, and each of these perspectives adds depth and flavor to an African understanding of dignity.

In spite of deep reservoirs of reverence and a sense of the sacred that infuse African understandings of dignity, it is not an exclusively religious concept; it is meaningfully significant to those who have no religious beliefs but who are morally righteous and scrupulous.

9. Gender/age dimensions.

There may be gender dimensions in discussions of dignity that must be noticed. If dignity is understood primarily as a matter of status (the dignity of the King or of tribal elders), it can have a gender dimension that distorts the universal and inherent value of all human beings that is the hallmark of dignity. We also caution that dignity should not be comprehended mainly as a matter of age, where the dignity of the elder is opposed to that of the young.

Human dignity has deep implications for

relationships involving gender difference and age groups, including domestic violence, which is an affront to dignity. If, for example, a man disrespects the woman or the young girl-child acts impolitely towards an elderly person then that person is described as someone who has no utu.

10. Human dignity and our environments.

This conference has focused on the relationships between law, religion, and the environment in Africa. An important recurring theme has been the relational character of human rights and human dignity, and that it implicates and impresses upon all of our relationships, not just with other people, but with other animals and with our natural environments. Just as concepts like isiXhosa's ubuntu, Shona's unhu and Kiswahili's utu extend concern for human beings beyond rights and into relationships, they also extend



Human rights: religious freedom and the anti-racist fight in the Latin American Black Diaspora

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■ Introduction

This chapter is devoted to the discussion of religious freedom and the anti-racist fight in the Black Diaspora in Latin America, considering the historical processes that involve such discussion, including legal apparatus such as Human Rights and local legislation. Therefore, as a starting point, we take the historical conditions of the emergence of Candomblé in Brazil, that are linked to the trafficking of enslaved African peoples and their resistance to keep alive in their memories, their religious beliefs and their worldviews. Wherefore, it is a discussion in which religious freedom is not dissociated from the anti-racist struggle in the case of Brazil, where, in the 20th century, the myth of racial democracy is produced in the light of studies carried out by

Gilberto Freyre in the midst of the 1922 post-week modernist movement.

The racial question in Brazil is totally different from the way North Americans discuss it, due to historical and social differences. Between us Brazilians, the problem appears to be linked much more to religious intolerance and, to a lesser extent, linked to socioeconomic factors.¹ Perhaps because the Afro-Brazilians have historically resisted the process of neutralization and erasure of their cultures through the creation of religions such as Candomblé and Umbanda, which are not just ways of dealing with the sacred but a utopian way of recreating Africa on this side of the Atlantic. Thus, fighting for religious freedom was as important as fighting for

¹ It is evident that this is a false impression given by the discourses linked to the myth of Brazilian racial democracy.

the end of slavery, and for the right to citizenship (civil rights) in a post-slavery society, as freed from slave labor, or rather, guaranteeing the promotion of political and legal equality for Afro-Brazilians.

As for the myth of Brazilian racial democracy, it appears linked to the thesis that miscegenation or racial mixture that would be capable of pacifying conflicts of a racial order. However, there were those who pointed out the dangers of such a solution, such as Nina Rodrigues, a renowned coroner who also worked as an ethnologist. So, the issue of racial miscegenation in Brazil is associated with the anti-racist struggle and the struggle for religious freedom. Consequently, a discourse and a counter-discourse about racial mixing and religious freedom appear in this scenario. These initial considerations point out the direction this writing takes to address the theme that the title expresses. In other words, this text is divided into sections that unfold the theme as follows: In other words, this chapter is divided into sections that unfold the theme as follows: From calundu to candomblé: a trail of black resistance is the part dedicated to the historical conditions of production that led to the emergence of this most expressive form of Afro-religions. Brazilians; then, there is the theme of religious syncretism as the meeting of the beliefs of different African peoples in Brazilian lands; the third part deals with the phase following the constitution of the cult, that is, the struggle for the legal recognition of the right to worship of Afro-Brazilian religions; the fourth part is dedicated to the recognition of the right to religious freedom and racial equality by the United Nations General Assembly, with the publication of Human Rights, and, finally, it talks about the challenges of creating the status of social equality in the Brazil.

In general terms, it is a discussion that is epistemologically affiliated with the decolonial movement and the theorists who preceded this movement, that is, it is an approach that deals with religious freedom and the anti-racist struggle through decolonialism. In our present time, this theoretical way of thinking about the issue represents a powerful means of reviewing historical facts in order to translate the silence that the colonial pact imposed on the oppressed peoples by means of massacre and slavery, exiling bodies from their original lands, taking your lives, raping their women, leaving children orphans, destroying your forests and your dreams. The balance of this story cannot be accounted for in the present, as there are still many racist practices and social and economic injustices, but in the past more than 10 million souls were sacrificed by the slave trade and, over three centuries (353 years), Brazil received more than 5 million Africans enslaved by the inhumane colonial enterprise.

■ **From Calundu to Candomblé: a black trail resistance**

The city of São Salvador da Bahia is the first gateway for enslaved Africans to Brazil. In 1535, it arrives at the first shipment from Africa. But it is from the 17th century that there are reports of African cults in this Portuguese colony in South American lands. These reports only appeared in the research of Brazilian historians and anthropologists in the last decades of the 20th century. The mass of documents found among public archives and documents of the Holy Inquisition revealed the existence of the occurrence of cults conventionally called “Calundu colonial” by such researchers. It is from these studies that the names of the animators

of mystical cults of African origin, such as “the Congolese Domingos Umbata, caught in 1646 by visitors to the Inquisition in the captaincy of Ilhéus; the Angolan Branca, active in the Bahian city of Rio Real in the very first years of the 18th century; another Angola, Luzia Pinta, very successful in the parish of Sabará, in Minas Gerais, between 1720 and 1740; the courana Joseja Maria or Josefa Courá with her “dance of Tunda”, established in 1647 in the village of Paracatu, Minas Gerais; the Dahomey Sebastião, established in 1785 in the city of Cachoeira, in the Recôncavo Baiano; and finally, Joaquim Baptista, ogan (a kind of terreiro leader) of the 'cult of his god Vodun”, in Accu de Brotas, a peripheral parish in the city of Bahia, in 1829. Zacharias Wagener, artist, could be added to this list who lived in the Dutch Pernambuco from 1634 to 1641, representing a party of Africans and bringing precious visual information about the variety and disposition of actors, costumes and musical instruments.”²

Despite all the repression that these cults suffered over more than three centuries, history shows that they resisted the wiles of the colonial project undertaken in Brazil by the Portuguese metropolis, which was soon replaced by the sovereign nation project undertaken by the heirs of the former European colonizers. The strategies developed by blacks and mulattos managed to circumvent the entire structure mobilized to prevent religious practices and cults coming from Africa. The most used strategy was to get someone important to protect calundu adherents. Therefore, many “they organized their public festivals in the residence of an important person in the community, or in houses that were also used for other occupations. They

didn't have temples themselves, but they weren't simple domestic cults either, as they had a calendar of festivals, they initiated several faithful in different functions and were attended by a reasonably large number of people, including whites from different camps. Furthermore, the main priest was able to earn a good living with individual care and become financially independent by providing essential services to the population which the colonial state did not satisfactorily ensure.”³

Calundu cults were more practiced in the interior of Brazil, where representatives of the Holy See could not control all public and private spaces or could not face a certain crown authority that turned a blind eye to the issue. As the Bantu peoples were the first to arrive in Brazil, these cults were possibly introduced in Brazil by the Africans who were part of these peoples. Therefore, the calundu that gave rise to the Candomblé terreiros, in Bahia, is perhaps due to the pioneering spirit of the Bantu peoples, who assured the African peoples who arrived later, to maintain their knowledge and traditions. Over time, the efficiency of African knowledge, mobilized by calundu, became public and notorious, as in addition to offering spiritual and religious guidance, “these characters knew how to prepare herbal teas, poultices and ointments that alleviated the common ailments of the inhabitants of colony, were also capable of curing serious diseases, such as tuberculosis, smallpox and leprosy, using resources from the traditional pharmacopoeia”.⁴ They also had knowledge of how to cure those suffering from mental disorders through complex and combined treatments. That is how, since the 17th century, calundus functioned until they became Candomblé terreiros. Having a

2. Silveira, Renato. Do Calundu ao Candomblé. RHBN, n.1, dez.2005, p.16-17.

3. Idem, ibidem.

4 Ibid., p.18.

vocation to become, as in Africa, recognized public institutions, the calundus, in practice, challenged the monopoly of healing controlled by the Church and by official medicine, destined, in most cases, to the rich. But the arrival of the Yorubas would change that vocation.

Coming from the ancient empire of Oió and the kingdom of Keto, in West Africa, the Yoruba people began to be brought to Brazil throughout the 18th century. Leave Costa da Mina and head for Brazilian lands. The Nagôs or Anagôs, as they were also known, still in Africa, “had set the standard for all the religions of the neighboring peoples, with the help of the 'only national' deities of the Jeje, – that is, all blacks coming from the coast of Gulf of Guinea professed religions similar to those of the Nagô.”⁵ Thus, when they were already installed in Bahia, they “soon constituted a kind of elite and had no difficulty in imposing their religion on the slave mass, already prepared to receive it, with which it could maintain fidelity to the land of origin. , reinterpreting the official Catholic religion in its own way.”⁶ So, these facts show that there was also resistance on the African side of the Atlantic, that is, no one accepted being enslaved, let alone being removed from their own land in a peaceful way, as many believe.

Religion is the greatest expression of this resistance, as even living in the condition of enslaved peoples, the African peoples, in the Black Diaspora in the Americas, decided to give up what they had to do and to the orisha, iniquices and voduns what they were entitled to. In this way, they were able to equate the issue of being or not being, that is, in Bahian

lands, “without renouncing the gods or orisha, the black Bahian has for Catholic saints a deep devotion that leads to sacrifice and fanaticism.”⁷ Thus, in Bahian lands, you can still be Catholic and, at the same time, worship the orisha. Being Catholic and practicing Candomblé is not an ontological problem. Is it possible for there to be harmony between two worldviews of the world? It is true that there are those who do not accept this way of life and those who secretly resort to the services provided by Candomblé, but who publicly demonstrate religious intolerance. From a genealogical perspective, in Foucauldian terms, the present time offers us the opportunity to perceive how the prejudice of the past and religious intolerance worked, persisting in the present day, that is, what Nina Rodrigues observed in her time is still perceived in nowadays, mainly with the growth of Protestantism in Brazil in these decolonial or neocolonial times.

But this history of black resistance in Brazil has a component that synthesizes and, at the same time, opens paths for various discussions, which is religious syncretism. For some, it's nothing more than a shrewd survival strategy, while for others, it's a farce that needs to be undone. About him we dedicate the following discussion.

The question of religious syncretism is directly linked to the racial issue, as, at the same time, it is the ultimate expression of black resistance in Brazil and a way of fighting racism masked by the myth of Brazilian racial democracy, whose discourses lead to believe that racism does not exist. in that part of the American continent. But Brazilian racism has a subtlety that makes it different from North American racism, above all because, in Brazil, it is also linked to

5 Carneiro, Edison (1978). *Candomblés da Bahia*. – 6th edition –. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira (Retratos do Brasil, v.106), p.18-19.

6 *Ibid.*, p.19.

7 Nina Rodrigues, 1896, p.182.

religious intolerance towards cults of African origin. And it was at this point which anti-racist struggles began to take shape after the abolition of slavery in Brazil at the end of the 19th century. It seems that the transition from calundu to candomblé also occurred along this path: that of religious freedom that would ensure the right to a space in Brazilian society without having to deny black identity, that is, without having to deny that we have African components in it. what the modernists called Brazilianness. Nobody can deny that Brazil was built and constituted with the slave labor of black men and women. And that is what anti-racist struggles remind us all the time: we Afro-Brazilians are part of this country, because we help it to do so even as enslaved people. That's why we have the right to be who we are: Afro-Brazilians and Afro-Brazilians, that is, we want them to respect our black identity, our ancestry, our religion, our skin color. So, the religion has a very important role in the anti-racist struggle in Brazil, because it was from the struggle for religious freedom that black movements came together to seek racial equality.

■ **Religious syncretism: the gathering of forces in the same cult**

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, many liberals, such as the Count of Arcos, thought that it was prudent to let the black population do their “batuques”, as this was the only way to maintain disunity among blacks. that each ethnic group that came to Brazil had its own religion and, in Africa, some of these peoples were even traditional rivals, but they coexisted respectfully as the French did with their Spanish rivals and with their Austrian rivals in the 16th and 17th centuries.

For this reason, no one thought that peoples like Cacanjes, Benguelas, Grinding Wheels, Cambindas,

Muxicongos would unite with Nagos, Gges, Fantis, Axantis, Gas and Taxis, Hausa, Tapas, Gruncis around a religion called Candomblé in Brazil, ignoring that, even in Africa, all these peoples already maintained a kind of first intertribal fusion. Ultimately, “the slave trade, bringing blacks of different ethnic origins to the New World, produced the first inter-tribal syncretism, naturally with a predominance of cultural forms or more advanced or more extensive in the number of its transmitters (culture-carriers, as the English and Americans call them). And thereby Nina Rodrigues predicted that ‘in the reciprocal influence exerted over one another by the various black peoples united in America by the drug trade, the absorbing action of more generalized deities of worship over those of more cult would be felt powerfully. rewritten, which, in these cases, manifests itself as a fundamental law of religious diffusion. This is how the almost international deities of the Yorubans are developing, on the Slave and Gold Coast, at the expense of the only national deities of the Gges and even better at the expense of the simple fetishes of tribes or clans of the Tshis or Minas’”⁸.

The observation of Nina Rodrigues, made twenty years after the abolition of slavery in Brazil, seems to explain the reasons that led to the transition from calundu to candomblé, with the Nago model as a way to be followed by other nations. Although they have already found the ground almost ready to settle the new religion in Brazil; in other words, having already found the foundations erected by the Bantu, it was the Yorubás who gave candomblé the features that this religion has today, spreading and radiating the worship of their orishas. But the way in

⁸ Ramos, Artur. *A aculturação negra no Brasil*. (1942). – São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Porto Alegre: Companhia Editora Nacional.

which all these divine entities were brought together in the same temple, and the introduction of xirê as liturgical practices were totally innovative. While in Africa, each orisha was worshiped separately; in Brazil, twelve of the best known were worshiped in the same space, the Candomblé terreiro (yard). On this other side of the South Atlantic, the xirê would represent a liturgical way for each orisha to enter the “Barracão”, a place dedicated to religious festivities and the center of the Candomblé terreiro. In this model, “both the organization of the terreiro's space and the entry of the orishas into the shed on festive days follow an order that reproduces the spiraling culture through the xirê that begins with the padê of Eshu (Exu), the one who eats first, then Ogun, followed by of Oshosi, Obaluaiye, Ossaim, Oshumare, Shango, Oshun, Oya, Nana, Yemonja and Obatala (Oxalá)”⁹. Therefore, we have a new system of worshiping African deities in Brazil, a particularity that resulted from this entire historical process that arises as a result of the Black Diaspora, caused by the slave trade. These spaces destined to the cult of orishas also became the place where several leaders meet and began to draw strategies to face the repression of cults and religious and racial prejudice, something that was already happening within the Catholic brotherhoods dedicated to blacks. That was how the first Candomblé terreiro in the city of São Salvador da Bahia emerged, as per oral tradition. Known as Candomblé da Barroquinha, it was in this terreiro that “the leaders of the Yoruban Egbes in Bahia were summoned, receiving titles in the cult

9 Araújo, Alex Pereira de. (2021). Candomblé and the deconstruction of the notion of religious syncretism: Between utopias of the body and heterotopias of spaces in the Black Diaspora. *Abaritá - Revista de Ciências Humanas e Linguagens*, v.2, n.4., jul. – Dec. Universidade do Estado da Bahia, Campus XVIII.

of the main orishas. These leaders were leaders of official organizations, such as the brotherhood of Lord of Martyrdom or the female devotion of Our Lady of the Good Death (*Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte*), founded in the church of Barroquinha”¹⁰. So, from the beginning, Candomblé ceased to be just a house of worship, as it was in calundu, to become “a complex political-social-religious organization”¹¹. These official organizations were behind the purchase of the freedom letters of many black men, women and children, the letters that provided for freedom, the liberation from slave labor. But, after the decree-law that abolished slave labor in Brazil, these institutions continued to fight for racial, social and political equality between blacks and blacks in the former Portuguese colony in the Americas. So, Candomblé appears as a kind of fusion of these official organizations with the practices of calundu, updated by the Yoruban model, all mobilized by the same ideal synthesized by the word freedom. In this way, religious syncretism is interspersed with political struggles for freedom and racial equality. The Malês Revolt translates all this well, all this gathering of forces for the common cause of liberation from the servile work that the slave system imposed on black men, women and children in this part of the South Atlantic. The Malians were enslaved blacks who professed the Islamic faith in Africa. In Brazil, Catholic Christian conversion was required. The word Malé was the Yoruban way of referring to black Muslims, it was the reduction of the Imale that meant one who practiced the Islamic religion; therefore, the Revolt was an uprising that had the leadership of Muslims, but blacks of other

10 Silveira, Renato. Do Calundu ao Candomblé. *RHBN*, n.1, dez. 2005, p.24.

11 Idem, *ibid.*

faiths also joined this uprising, that is, the devotees of the orishas participated in the Revolt with the Islamized blacks, who, in Africa, shared the same space geopolitical. In Africa, they shared the same geopolitical space, as “in the mid-1830s, the capital of the largest of the Nago-Yoruba states, the Oyo Empire, was sacked by fundamentalist troops from the Sokoto Caliphate and the Ilorin Emirate.”¹²

It was precisely because of this invasion of the Oyo empire that many blacks were brought to Brazil. This invasion caused a civil war that lasted until the end of the 19th century. Prisoners of war were sold or handed over to merchants who traffic in the “tomb ships” (*tumbeiros or death ships*). As a result of this war, more than half of the enslaved population in Bahia was of Nago-Yoruba origin, because, at that time, this region had become the main supplier of enslaved Africans to the port of São Salvador da Bahia, the second largest entry of blacks into the country, second only to Rio de Janeiro. It was because of this large contingent of enslaved people from the Empire of Oyo that Bahia came to be considered by the strategists of the reorganization of that empire, leading to the belief that the Malês Revolt did not happen merely for local reasons. As for the structuring and organization of Ketu candomblés, the oral narratives of these traditions “report that people from the upper echelons of the Yoruba states came on a secret mission to organize the cults settled in Barroquinha and articulate them with the Bahian Egbes.”¹³ Supposedly, Iyá Nassô is considered one of those people who came to carry out this mission. According to oral tradition, she was the most important personality to come to

Brazil, because she belonged to the first echelon of ceremonial in the palace of Oyo.

All these facts demonstrate that religious syncretism in Brazil did not occur in a single form. It is associated with both forms of resistance and forms of acculturation. On the one hand, we have religious syncretism as a political intertribal alliance, as thought Nina Rodrigues, and on the other, as a form of submission and peaceful subjection of black populations against Catholicism. In the latter case, this way of thinking and understanding the issue is associated with the speeches that defend the existence of racial democracy in Brazil. It was through such discourses that a mythological image was created that racism does not exist in Brazilian lands. This image was disseminated throughout the world, but it does not correspond to the Brazilian reality. But, as an intertribal alliance, religious syncretism became the way in which different African peoples decided to unite against the mechanisms of submission and erasure of their memories in Brazil. These two ways of thinking about the issue correspond to different political rationales that, at times, can be perceived as a single way, increasing the subject's complexity. In a way, such complexity is expressed in the multiplication of representations that the orisha Exu gained in Brazil. As a result of all this religious syncretism, in this part of the South Atlantic, this Yoruban entity came to be seen, in addition to the original way it was in Africa, in other ways.¹⁴ Among Christians, Eshu ended up taking on the features of the devil, the opposite side of the good. Among Umbanda practitioners, Exu multiplied into various archetypes: Eshu Caveira, Eshu Tranca rua, Eshu

12 Idem, *ibid.*, p.23.

13 *Ibid.*

14 Araújo, Alex Pereira de (2021). *Exu: the language as a crossroad in Black Diasporic Culture(s)*. Academia Letters, San Francisco, CA.

Tiriri, Eshu Marabô, Eshu Lalu, Eshu do Lodo. Still in Umbanda, the Bantu Nkisi equivalent to Exu, Pombajira: became a widespread female archetype in Brazil. Lebara is also the female form of Eshu for many Candomblé followers. Using an expression of Nina Rodrigues, this multiplication of Exu in Brazilian society also highlights the religious-emotional side of syncretism. In other words, the religious syncretism in this part of the South Atlantic also became the most complete harmony of religious sentiments, because “in Brazil, miscegenation is not only physical and intellectual, it is also affective or feelings, therefore equally religious.”¹⁵

■ **Xangô's obás between fights and conquests: a legacy of the Malês Revolt**

In Brazil, Bahia's Candomblé is, without a doubt, the expression that aroused the most interest among anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists of religions and philosophers, perhaps because, in this federative unit of the country, blacks have managed to mobilize several fronts of struggle and defending their ancestral belief, by recruiting young revolutionaries who identified with their causes as ways of combating oppression and social injustice.

It is in Bahia that there is the largest black population in Brazil, and the city of São Salvador da Bahia is the one that has the largest black population in the world outside the African continent. This reality persists from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century. As early as 1808, a sense made of the city of Salvador and thirteen rural parishes belonging to the region of Bahia, not counting Cachoeira, Santo Amaro and the South of the then captaincy, indicated the following result:

“50 451 whites, 1463 Indians, 104 285 blacks and free or manumitted mulattos, and 93 115 black and mulatto slaves. There were then 156,199 free people (62%) and 93,115 slaves (37.3%), in a total population of 249,314.”¹⁶ However, if the aforementioned locations, densely populated by the massive number of enslaved blacks, were included, “it would certainly result in a greater proportion of slaves, in addition to increasing the total population. Whites would appear in the center as 20.2%, and the majority of the inhabitants, free and manumitted blacks and mestizos represented 41.8%.”¹⁷

Due to the prosperity that took over the Recôncavo Baiano at that time, the importation of enslaved Africans intensified to meet the new demands of economic growth that made cities and sugarcane plantations accelerate their expansion. Coincidentally, there were many conflicts in the region of the Empire of Oyo, during that same period, as mentioned before. Therefore, most black Muslims were prisoners of war, who were sold into the slave trade. These black men had lived through the experiences of a recent war, had knowledge of strategies and knew how to read and write in the sacred language of Islam, the Arabic language. As they were brought to the same place, it was not difficult to articulate against the mistreatment committed by the white lords and against the entire system. Furthermore, the country was going through a crisis that had caused the abdication of the Emperor D. Pedro I, which was aggravated even more in the regency governments, as his heir son was only five years old in 1831. Several revolts ravaged Brazil and the Malês revolt was the biggest revolt of enslaved

15 Nina Rodrigues, Raimundo. 2006. *O animismo fetichista dos negros baianos*. Rio de Janeiro, Editora da UFRJ, p.116.

16 Reis, João José. (2012). *Rebelião escrava no Brasil: a história do levante dos malês em 1835*. Edição revista e ampliada – 3ª edição. – São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

17 Idem, *ibid*.

blacks that the American continent has witnessed. Its repercussion reached Europe, the USA and other countries on the continent, in addition to reverberating in Africa to where some of those considered insurgents were sent. As the Bahian historian, João José Reis points out, the enslaved always chose the festive days of the holy holidays of the Christian calendar to rebel, as it was when they had time off from forced labor. In the case of the Malês Revolt, the day chosen was the dawn of January 25, 1835, which, at that time, held the day of Nossa Senhora da Guia (Our Lady of Guides), a traditional event in the liturgical calendar of the local Catholic church that was part of the Bonfim festival cycle, “a still rural neighborhood, full of gardens, vegetable gardens, farms and sugar mills, about eight kilometers from the urban center of Salvador.”¹⁸ Thus, freed from the fierce surveillance of the normal days, the rebels planned to take over the entire city at a time when all attention was turned to the festivities of Nossa Senhora da Guia (Our Lady of Guides), with the center of the city of Salvador practically empty and unprotected. The church's religious celebrations were public and involved the social participation of all, because the official religion of Brazil was Catholicism, as stated in article V of the Constitution, granted by Emperor D. Pedro I, in 1824. This type of social event involved an unholy part of the religious celebration, so it attracted a lot of people. Thus, “the very fact that African slaves and freed slaves professed Islam constituted a split, a radical departure from the slave-owning ideological machine and, therefore, a rebellion.”¹⁹ Although there is a tension between the Malês and Bahian society, mainly because they professed a religion, in this historical

18. Idem, *ibid.*, p.125

19. Idem, *ibid.*, p.247.

context in which the official white religion was on one side and, on the other, religious manifestations of African origin; there was something that united them with other enslaved and freed blacks: the yearning for social respect, including equal rights and the liberation of the enslaved black population. Blacks who had won their freedom did not enjoy civil rights because they were not considered citizens, that is, they continued to be discriminated both socially and in relation to civil rights. They had certain privileges, but continued to live on the margins of society. So, freedmen needed to fight for a broader freedom that would guarantee social and legal recognition by the State.

The presence of the Malês in Bahia represented, therefore, the resumption of the dream of freedom for the enslaved black population, because these adherents of the Islamic religion managed to introduce ideological and cultural changes in the black population of Salvador. The pride of being a Muslim expressed this well. The Malês became part of “the power game of relations in the black-Bahian world, even provoking animosity between the Malês and other Africans.”²⁰ That's how they began to articulate the revolt, still counting on the protection of their amulets, dressed in their *abadás*²¹ and on the words of their religious masters. Likewise, “the Malians went to fight with enormous hope of success.”²² But the uprising was only able to resist for more than three hours, facing soldiers and armed civilians, as a black couple who feared the seizure of power by Muslim slaves had denounced the uprising, which made possible a reaction by the local

20. Idem, *ibid.*, p.249.

21. Term used by the Yoruba to designate the clothes worn by the Malês.

22. Idem, *ibid.*, p. 265.

authorities. Although the uprising was contained, the rebels managed to spread fear and “also revived debates about slavery and the slave trade in Africa, now seen with more critical eyes.”²³ After being surprised by the rebels, the rulers began to control more slaves, tightening more rules.

Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Malês Revolt hovered in the air as a grandiose achievement for many blacks and a threat to whites. The strategy used by the Malians showed that it was possible to rebel and go further. However, it lacked the pride and animosity of the Malês. Even with the end of the African slave trade and the abolition of slavery in Brazil, blacks continued to be treated as foreigners, that is, as if they were not part of Brazilian society, without having the civil rights that should be guaranteed by the State. The police continued to pursue those who gathered to worship the orishas, invading the precincts, destroying sacred objects or confiscating them. The press also continued with the same prejudiced speeches.

100 years after the Malês Revolt and nearly five decades after the abolition of slavery in Brazil, the Nagô Candomblés assumed the leadership for religious freedom in Bahia and in the country. The head of the Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá terreiro, Eugênia Ana dos Santos, better known as Mãe Aninha, had the idea of creating an honorific title that would correspond to the former ministers of Xangô (Shango) in the lands of the Yorubas in Africa, whose function was to worship their deified Alaafin²⁴ and protect the yard (Terreiro). To create these titles, Mãe Aninha would

23. Idem, *ibid.*, pp.9-10.

24. This term in Oyo is equivalent to Obá, which can be understood as minister or king.

have had the help of Martiniano Eliseu do Bonfim,²⁵ friend and adviser, who was a babalao who had a deep knowledge of Jeje-Nagô religious traditions, and “spoken Yoruba fluently - a language he had learned with his parents and perfected during his visits to Costa.”²⁶ The creation of these titles not only instituted a new defense front for the terreiro, but also served to spread Brazilian diasporic black culture around the world, since among those awarded with this title are personalities such as writer Jorge Amado and plastic artist Carybé. Mother Aninha's gesture made many young communist party activists sympathize with the cause of the struggle for religious freedom directly linked to the cause of racial equality, as well as artists and intellectuals who appreciated and respected the black diasporic culture in Bahia. The terreiros were places of welcome and refuge for many, as was the case with what “the documents of investigation referred to as 'society of Malê’”.²⁷ In other words, the Malês tradition of welcoming to teach reading and writing Arabic, to pray and to celebrate the Islamic calendar had now been re-signified by another tradition, that of the Terreiros of Candomblés. Édison Carneiro was one of those young Communist Party militants that this house dedicated to axé sheltered during the period in which Brazil passed through the Estado Novo, a fact that the writer himself would publicly confess years later. So, Candomblé assumed a place in politics as a kind of counter-power that claimed full freedom

25. Between 1935 and 1940, Martiniano would leave, in the form of interviews given, coincidentally, to three American researchers (Donald Pierson, Ruth Landes, E. Franklin Frazier), long testimonies about his life and the history of his people. (Lima, 2004, p.205).

26. Lima, Vivaldo da Costa. Os Obás de Xangô. Afro-Ásia, [S. l.], n. 2-3, 1966. DOI: 10.9771/aa.v0i2-3.20246. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.ufba.br/index.php/afroasia/article/view/20246>. Acesso em: 23 dez. 2021.

27. Reis (2012, p.215).

for Afro-Brazilians that the abolition of slavery had not ensured to freed slaves. The republic had arrived and the practices of oppression of blacks continued, but the focus now was on being accused of practices of black magic, witchcraft, vagrancy, among others. It was already common among practitioners of the religion to hide religious objects in holes made in the ground so that the police could not find them. The persecutions were not far from over, to the point that Mãe Aninha went to the capital of Brazil to ask the President of the Republic, Getúlio Vargas, to stop persecuting the Candomblé people. The writer Jorge Amado, one of the Obás de Xangô, in addition to dealing with these persecutions in two of his books: *Jubiabá* and *Tenda dos Milagres*, also presented a bill during the period in which he served as constituent deputy. The project became part of the 1946 Constitution. But as happened with the imperial decree that abolished slavery in Brazil, the Brazilian State did not develop provisions to monitor the abusive practices committed against Afro-descendants, which included religious persecution, racial prejudice and social discrimination. Thus, the advent of this conquest had its importance, but the fight was far from over, because breaking with the entire state and social structure that sustained racism in Brazil for centuries would be a long-term task. So, the fight was just starting over. Now, it would be necessary to develop other strategies to deal with this new scenario that placed the fight within the courts of law, as the persecuted and wronged began to have legal means to denounce the persecutors who could be criminalized for their abusive practices. In short, like what happened in the US, with the 14th constitutional amendment, which guaranteed equality under the law, in Brazil, the institutions that

represent the democratic rule of law continued to represent the interests of white elites.

Despite this, the world seemed to be changing after becoming aware of the horrors caused by the Nazi-fascist experience that led to the holocaust. In addition to the Jews, the concentration and extermination camps received other types considered dangerous to the supremacy of the German race and the regime of the Third Reich. In this way, the physically and mentally handicapped, homosexuals, gypsies, blacks, Pentecostals and communists were also subjected to the horrors of the Nazi machine of extermination, torture and scientific experiments with humans. Such were the atrocities committed by Nazism that the world decided to react to them with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Previously, the USSR had already recognized in its Constitution, promulgated in 1939, racism as a crime. On the other hand, it is necessary to remember that before the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime in its camps of contraction and exterminations against Jews, European colonialism had already promoted death, torture and rape against black people. The Black Diaspora took place through the horrors practiced by the European colonial enterprise that for centuries subjected the black people to inhuman conditions. In other words, the European colonial experience that preceded Nazism was as disastrous and horrendous as that practiced by the III Reich. The difference is that, instead of blacks, it was the European Jews, the subjugated, but the cruelty used was the same, because Auschwitz had already been repeated other times in Africa, the Americas, Asia, even before it happened in Europe. The poet of Negritude, Aimé Césaire, commented on this, criticizing the hypocrisy of the European bourgeoisie as follows: “what does

not forgive Hitler is not the crime itself, the crime against man, it is not the humiliation of man itself, it is the crime against the white man, the humiliation of the white man and having applied colonialist processes to Europe to that until now only the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India and the blacks of Africa were subordinate.”²⁸

■ **Religious freedom and the racial question as human rights**

This whole story about black resistance in Brazil reveals that religious freedom and the racial issue are inseparable, because religiosity has a very important role in black life and bodies. In other words, religious freedom has always been at the heart of the concerns of the enslaved, as the freedom of slave labor could be achieved through a practice called *peculium*, which was a kind of agreement made between the master and the enslaved to ensure that this he could keep a share of the profits so he could buy his release.

The *peculium* occurred more with the so-called slaves for gain, those who lived in urban areas, offering various services. Although it did not appear in the repertoire of official laws, this practice was customary and figured as a legal tradition in the colony, maintained after its independence. In short, this was a way to make the enslaved produce more.

Religious freedom was more difficult to be allowed because there was a whole structure set up to repress cults other than those of the Catholic Church. At that time, birth, marriage and death certificates were registered in each parish, as the Church was linked to the State. Fighting for this freedom was crucial so that the memories of the body and the cosmovision brought from Africa by the enslaved were not erased.

28. Césaire, Aimé (1978). *Discurso sobre o colonialismo*. Tradução Noémia Sousa. Lisboa: Livraria Sá da Costa.p.19

The Terreiros of Candomblés as spaces of memory and resistance had to act for a long time in hiding or use strategies that could throw the police out of sight of any element that would lead to the arrest of the faithful and repression of worship. One of the strategies used by the people of Candomblé was what is conventionally called religious syncretism.

In Brazilian culture, religious syncretism was for a long time celebrated as the most evident expression that there were no racial problems in Brazil. But for many followers of Candomblé, the word syncretism expressed a way of getting rid of oppression, a way of camouflaging the cult of the Orishas. They were a strategic way to resist attempts to erase ancestral memory and the cosmology that this memory represented. In the latter case, the word syncretism can be synonymous with religious resistance. There are still those who consider syncretism as an expression of the imposition of the Catholic religion on enslaved blacks, a harsh, inhuman imposition with penalties and punishments that were responsible for many martyrdoms of the Candomblé people. So, the term syncretism carries in itself this semantic charge that results from this entire historical process caused by the Black Diaspora in the Americas, mainly. In short, it is a term that is part of the historical struggle that the enslaved had to wage against the colonial slave system that sustained European economies for centuries. Many of the abuses committed were justified as a means of giving the colonized the benefits that the so-called civilized world offered them. In this case, Césaire reminds us that: “from colonization to civilization, the distance is infinite; that, from all the accumulated colonial expeditions, from all the elaborated colonial statutes, from all the ministerial circulars issued, it is impossible to result

in a single human value.”²⁹ And this fact makes Europe indefensible! The inhuman conditions that European colonization undertook is the great proof that crimes against humanity were committed in the name of a humanism in which Hitler was already present even before he was conceived. Ultimately, Christianity was also responsible for the genocides of blacks and indigenous peoples. For centuries, he killed himself in the name of God.

European colonization was, therefore, a great act of barbarism. Centuries later, many bodies and many minds still suffer and feel its harmful effects. But the resistance continues even though the bodies of young black people are slaughtered by the police every day in Brazil. The root of this killing, of this genocide of Afro-Brazilian populations, began with European colonization. Blacks, browns, creoles and mulattos are killed as was done in Colonial Brazil. There are still people who say that there is no racism in Brazil, and this is another effect of the European colonization process and part of its humanism.

The death of these young blacks and browns in the peripheral circuit of large and medium-sized cities in the country has been a concern for black and human rights organizations in Brazil for a long time. The growth of religious intolerance is also worrying these entities. These facts have shown that the struggle for religious freedom and the anti-racist struggle have still not managed to overcome once and for all the inhumanity that we inherited from the European colonial system. On the other hand, they are also proof that to combat racism that still permeates Brazilian institutions and religious intolerance, which is minimized, it will be necessary to create more effective strategies, which can

29. Idem, *ibid.*, p.15-16, emphasis added.

ensure the applicability of legal provisions and the dissemination of educational practices.

The data reveal that the colonial machine is still operating in full force in the democratic rule of law, and that all this killing of black youth in Brazil is part of the whitening project of Brazilian society. In other words, the killing discriminated by public security agents is in charge of the eugenic necropolitics that believe that Brazil will still be a nation of whites. This was the thesis defended by many Brazilian intellectuals from the end of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century.

The European immigration that took place in the second reign was part of the eugenic policy of his imperial majesty, Pedro II, since at that time blacks and mestizos already constituted the majority of the Brazilian population, as revealed by data from a census that was shown earlier when he spoke of the Malês Revolt, which took place in 1835.

The immigrants, who were mostly from the Italian Peninsula, ended up substituting slave labor for salaried work. While the former enslaved were “without a threshing floor and without a brink”, the immigrants received seeds and land to cultivate from the government.

Brazilian favelas emerged from the neglect of Brazilian authorities towards the black population who had finally conquered their freedom from slave labor, but continued to live on the margins of Brazilian society, without the right to housing, education and public health.

The myth of racial democracy in Brazil appears as a way to cover up all this inhumane injustice that took place in Brazilian lands, a legacy, without a doubt, of European colonialism, as we have shown here, throughout this chapter. In other words, the

creation of this myth spread worldwide cynically tried to produce narratives that led to the belief that there was no racism in the country, that Brazil was a model to be followed by countries like the US, where racist practices are still explicit and allowed that the Ku Klux Klan act deliberately in the great nation of freedom and opportunity.

Brazilian-style racism still acts in a subtle way and the myth of racial democracy in Brazil contributed a lot with this subtlety to the point that many Brazilians believe this great lie. And the lie is another legacy of the colonial pact, because its foundations were built on great lies, above all, the one that still considers colonization as a great act of benevolence because this would have been the way in which Europe gave the world the civility necessary to progress. In this way, the heirs of the colonizers in the power of the new nations resorted to hypocrisy "both more odious and liable to deceive." (CÉSAIRE, 1978, p.13). And here it is necessary to remember everything that colonization is not, using again the words and Aimé Césaire, to see how we were deceived, how this lie is unmasked when we see that colonization was never "neither evangelization, nor philanthropic enterprise, nor willingness to to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, tyranny, neither the propagation of God nor Law" (1978, p.14).

Thus, it is the myth of racial democracy in Brazil: a great lie that sought to inculcate and deceive everyone about the non-existence of racism in this part of the continent. In his book, *Re-discussing mestizaje in Brazil*, Kabengele Munanga shows the subtlety of the Brazilian model in relation to the North American in an excerpt from a conversation that President Theodore Roosevelt had with a

member of the Brazilian elite. In this conversation it is said that:

Their opinion, so different from ours, can be better translated by what theirs – pure white blood – told me: Naturally, the presence of blacks is the real problem, and a serious problem, both in your country and in mine [...]. But as the problem remains... the need remains to find another solution [outside of slavery].

You in the United States keep blacks as an entirely separate element, and you treat them in a way that influences their respect for themselves. They remained a threat to their civilization, a permanent and perhaps, after a while, growing threat. Among us, the question tends to disappear because blacks themselves tend to disappear and be absorbed... Pure blacks are constantly decreasing in number. It may disappear in two or three generations, as far as physical, moral and mental traits are concerned. When it has disappeared, its blood will be, as an appreciable but by no means dominant element, in about a third of our people; the remaining two-thirds will be pure white. Assuming that the presence of a black racial element represents a slight weakening of one third of the population, the other two thirds will, on the contrary, have full force. And the black problem will be gone. In your country, it was the entire white population that kept the racial strength of origin, but the black ones remained, and increased in number, with the increasingly bitter and more alive feeling of their isolation, so that the threat they represent will be more serious in the future. I don't think our solution is perfect, but I think it is better than yours. You and us face different alternatives, each with its own disadvantages. I think ours, in the long run and from a national point of view, is

less harmful and dangerous than the one that you in the United States have chosen. (Roosevelt, apud Skidmore, p.92-93, apud Munanga, 2008, p.105).

Here, we are faced with what Aimé Césaire denounces in his *Discourse on Colonialism*: hypocrisy and the tricks used to inculcate our minds. The excerpts from this conversation show what is behind the myth of Brazilian racial democracy, that is, what its “good” intentions are. Here is a little bit of all the squalor of the Brazilian elite and the proof by which means have always been sought to definitively whiten the entire Brazilian population. There, too, is the realization of the cursed heritage that the Brazilian elite inherited from European civilization, mainly, its inability to solve the problems that its functioning raises. And the conclusion of this is sad, because "a civilization that cheats on its principles is a dying civilization." (CÉSAIRE, 1978, p.13). In other words, it is necessary to translate European colonization as an act of objectifying human beings, whose equation is: “colonization = objectification”! How was this result achieved? The answer is: “colonizers and colonized, force, brutality, cruelty, sadism, shock, and, parodying cultural formation, the hasty fabrication of a few thousand subordinate officials, 'boys', artisans, commercial employees and interpreters necessary for the good business running.” (CÉSAIRE, 1978, p.24-25).

There are even more elements to add to this equation: "societies emptied of themselves, cultures trampled on, institutions mined, land confiscated, religions murdered, artistic magnificences annihilated, extraordinary possibilities suppressed." (CÉSAIRE, 1978, p.25). If there was a profit in this story, it is evident that it was not from the colonized part, but from those who undertook the colonization

in the name of God, of law, of security and of culture, in short, of the supposed civility. Even today, we count the dead of this tragedy manufactured by the colonial company. Many blacks are still killed today and those who survive this great civilizing barbarity are condemned to misery and neglect by the State that gave them false citizenship.

So, when talking about the struggle for religious freedom and the anti-racist struggle in Brazil, we have to take into account this entire historical process and all this colonial machinery used against the black population to de-Africanize their memories, their feeling of affiliation to the African cultures that were transplanted to this part of the planet as a result of the slave trade, another great cog of European colonialism. Although one might think that the anti-racist, anti-black struggle in Brazil has less relevance than the struggle against religious intolerance, what actually happens is that each of these struggles is part of the movement for equal rights. These are struggles that preceded the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but their claims were recognized as rights in this United Nations document, because in addition to being fair, the demands of these struggles serve all peoples and ethnic groups on the planet. However, there is still a need to create ways to demand compliance by the signatories of the document, such as Brazil.

The recognition of these struggles by the United Nations is, without a doubt, something that must always be celebrated, even if it represents a partial victory, because of such need, a very urgent demand. For this reason, both the struggle for religious freedom and the struggle for racial equality always remain on the alert. The creation of the Racial Equality Statute in Brazil is one of the ways to show commitment to

these struggles, which are essential for the country to respect cultural plurality and, in turn, the democratic rule of law, given that “while there is racism there will be no democracy”. But what is the Racial Equality Statute? Under what circumstances was it created? What is its applicability? And why is it just now created? We will address these issues later.

■ **The Racial Equality Statute in Brazil**

Created at a very important moment in the history of Brazil, the Racial Equality Statute is the result of this entire historical process mentioned here throughout the discussion. Therefore, it was born from the longings of the black movement, from black political militancy, from the struggle against religious intolerance that still persists in the country and from the Brazilian-style racism that still dominates Brazil's social and political institutions. This historical achievement that became Law 12,288/2010, which begins like this:

Article 1 – This Law institutes the Racial Equality Statute, designed to guarantee the black population the realization of equal opportunities, the defense of individual, collective and diffuse ethnic rights and the fight against discrimination and other forms of ethnic intolerance.

Presented with this definition, this statute is in charge of promoting racial equality in Brazil. It is a law that appears to try to repair the social abyss resulting from the lack of a social inclusion policy at the time when the abolition law was proclaimed by the then Princess Regent, Isabel de Orleans e Bragança. This imperial decree contained only two articles, which were presented as follows:

Art. 1 - Slavery in Brazil is declared extinct from the date of this law.

Art. 2 - The contrary provisions are revoked.

With a delay of more than a century, the Racial Equality Statute was harshly criticized by conservative sectors of Brazilian society. A large part of the country's media reproduced discourses based on the myth of Brazilian racial democracy. For this reason, many considered this legal instrument as a way to make Brazilian society become racist. In the hands of the Brazilian elite, the country's media dealt with the issue with great disregard, but what was really at stake was the distribution of power with Afro-Brazilians, historically excluded from the political process in Brazil, despite being the majority of the population.

This politically and historically diminished majority, borrowing the expression used by Abdias do Nascimento, continues to be subjugated by the heirs of the European colonizers. Mobility rates among this large portion of the Brazilian population only evolved considerably in the period in which ways were sought to put this statute, which completed a decade in 2020, into practice.

Despite the resistance of the Brazilian elite, the Statute of Racial Equality was approved by the National Congress and sanctioned, without any veto, by President Luiz Inácio da Silva, who created the Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality even before the law was approved.

But the history of this statute goes back to the end of the 20th century, precisely in 1989, when a group of newly elected parliamentarians decided to go to South Africa to ask for the release of black leader Nelson Mandela. In addition to deputy Benedita da Silva and deputy Domingos Leonelli, João Herrmann Neto; the author of Law 7716 of January 5, 1989, Carlos Alberto Caó de Oliveira. Na ocasião, esta comissão que viajara em nome da Constituinte, foi

recebida por Winnie Mandela, então esposa do líder negro, que apresentou ao grupo a Carta da Liberdade, um documento popular consagrado à defesa da igualdade de direitos para todos os cidadãos sul-africanos, que teve a participação de Mandela, tendo sido elaborado em meados dos anos de 1950. O agora senador Paulo Paim conta que foi, nessa viagem, que começou o debate sobre o estatuto.

However, the struggle for racial equality in Brazil gained more strength with the emergence of the Black Panther movement in the US. This movement echoed across the continent, awakening the Black Diaspora in the Americas. It is as if Zumbi, the great leader of the Quilombo do Palmares who challenge the colonial necropolitics, had resurfaced to fight again for the freedom of his people, or as if the black leaders of the revolution that made Haiti a free nation, crossed space-time to reinvigorate the struggles of the past that still remain in the present time. In the midst of the military dictatorship, Afro-Brazilians began to reorganize the country's black movements. It was this reorganization that made the approval of Law 12,288/2010 possible. It continues to be fought by the heirs of colonialism that make up the predominantly white Brazilian elite, but the anti-racist and anti-religious intolerance movements continue to watch out for the attempts that have been made to render the Statute of Racial Equality inoperative.

It can be said that the Soweto Freedom Charter was the great inspirer of Law 12,288/2010. Like the South African document, the Brazilian statute has a democratic dimension, as, in addition to issues related to the anti-racist struggle, it includes the fight against other forms of discrimination, such as social gender and prejudice against people with special

needs. Article 2 of the Preliminary Dispositions already demonstrates a little of this breadth when it says:

Art. 2 – It is the duty of the State and society to guarantee equal opportunities, recognizing every Brazilian citizen, regardless of ethnicity or skin color, the right to participate in the community, especially in political, economic, business, educational activities, cultural and sporting activities, defending their dignity and their religious and cultural values.

This article and the previous one show that, finally, the Brazilian State recognizes its historic debt to Afro-Brazilians and, at the same time, lays the foundations for the country to become a multiracial democracy. This is a great challenge that Brazilian society needs to overcome, little by little, because racial inequality reflects a lot on the social issue. In other words, “there is no racial problem isolated from the social context”, as the writer Jorge Amado once said (1982, p.10). Rightly, the Racial Equality Statute gave the due relevance to the social demands that need to be met so that Brazilian society can be more egalitarian.

Barriers remain as long as Hitler lives among us. Those who fear democracy and racial and social equality continue to boycott this policy of promoting racial equality. The squalor, inhumanity and desire for power are the ingredients of this persecution and boycott of democracy and black people. But there is a lot of effort to prevent the backlash.

The Racial Equality Statute is a reality, as it is proof that there is a lot to be done for its functioning to be full and effective. During the period in which it was approved, Brazil was experiencing the most important moment in the history of its still young and immature democracy. The fund to maintain policies

to promote racial equality, as the statute fosters, does not yet exist; which has hindered its application and maintenance of what has already been undertaken in the social field, such as the programs: Brasil Quilombola, Luz para Todos, etc.

The existence of its own fund, to embody the actions of policies to promote racial equality, was already provided for in the statute, but it had to be removed from the agenda for the law to be approved. The Quotas Law (Law 12,711/2012) also had to be removed from the statute because there was an opposing action pending in the country's Supreme Court of Justice.

The results achieved in these ten years of existence of the Statute of Racial Equality and the Law of Quotas demonstrate that many black and brown people have benefited, judging by the numbers of these people in Brazilian universities. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) revealed, in November 2019, that, for the first time in the country's history, 50.3% of black and brown students are the majority in Brazilian public universities, those that enjoy the most prestige in the country. parents; but in private universities, the numbers are close to 50%, that is, black and brown students represented, in 2018, 46.6%. The institute also showed that, from 2010 to 2019, the increase in the number of blacks and browns in higher education was almost 400%. So, it can be said that there was a significant reduction in inequality in higher education with the implementation of policies to promote racial equality in Brazil.

However, racial discrimination continues, as shown by the data obtained in the surveys carried out. Blacks and browns are still a minority in leadership positions in the country and 59% of the

targets of religious intolerance are against Afro-Brazilian religions. Changing the population's mentality is something more difficult to achieve. These affirmative policies, which complete 10 years of existence, also took exactly 10 years of processing in the National Congress.

With the arrival of the extreme right to power, not only did the rates of social inequality in the country increase, but also religious intolerance, racist practices and even slave labor. Attempts to dismantle what was previously achieved became central government policy. Corruption rates in the country have also grown frighteningly and Brazil is once again part of the hunger map. This other side of the situation reveals that democracy is yet to come, mainly because of institutional racism.

But the Racial Equality Statute is still a great instrument to come. The Quota Law and all programs linked to policies to promote racial equality are also a means of strengthening democracy. The Brazilian experience can serve as a model for several countries around the world, whether on the positive side or because of the challenges encountered along the way. Finally, the great lesson we can learn from this experience is that modern democracies cannot overlook the fact that “the more people are themselves, the better it will be for democracy”. In other words, it is necessary to guarantee that everyone has the same rights, that there is respect for both individuals and the collective.

In short, Brazil has managed to produce these legal provisions that do not only work as a means of making society more egalitarian and therefore more democratic, by combating racism and religious intolerance through social policies that have been denied to Afro-Brazilians since the first days of the

abolition of slave labor. At the same time, these laws contribute to the observance of human rights that, in a way, are present in the Brazilian Constitution, reinforcing the commitment established with the international community. The construction of the Statute of Racial Equality in Brazil is the result of more than a century of struggles by the black movement and an important chapter in the struggle against racism and religious intolerance in the Black Diaspora in this part of the Americas., it is also inscribed in history as struggle for democracy and as a chapter for the struggle for human rights. Therefore, the international community must also celebrate this achievement, as an important milestone in the history of humanity and must also ensure its maintenance, protecting it against the diseases of power, against the presence of Hitler that still haunts the world.

This document, which contains 65 articles, distributed in 4 titles with thematic divisions and subdivisions, managed to concisely and forcefully deal with how the Brazilian State and society can act in important sectors such as: education, culture, sport, leisure, health, means of communication, land, work and housing, in addition to contemplating the right to freedom of conscience and belief. This last point has to do with people's right to be themselves, to worship their ancestral memories and all the heritage that comes from them. As Foucault recalls in his text *The Subject and Power*, "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are."³⁰ And the refusal to certain identities in the contemporary world has to do with the crisis of the old nationalist model that the European bourgeoisie revived for two centuries

30. Foucault, Michel. *The Subject and Power*. In: *Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, edited by H. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, 208-226. The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

to maintain its domination in the world in the forms of Eurocentrism and colonialism. In this way, while in the colonial metropolises the French, English, Spanish and Portuguese citizenship were worshiped for their humanist and civilizing values; in the colonies, the subject peoples had to recognize that they were inferior and, therefore, should be grateful to be civilized by one of these European nations. In Brazil, this feeling of inferiority of the local nationality is known as the mongrel syndrome.³¹ In practice, there is an overvaluation of what comes from Europe and the USA. So, "We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries."³² The contemporary world can no longer sustain the old nationalism that neo-Nazi movements and the far right have been trying to revive from their almost comatose state. The Eurocentrism of the past no longer fits this scenario either. Today, old Europe increasingly needs immigrants to keep its economies in a position to compete with the USA and China. Despite this, Poland is in the process of building a wall on the border with Belarus to keep out immigrants from the Middle East! Soon Poland, which was invaded by Hitler's troops, was still the scene of the biggest and most horrendous Nazi concentration camps. The European Union, of which Poland is a member, has silenced this nonsense, becoming an accomplice. And here it is worth remembering again the words of Aimé Césaire about Nazism: "before being his victims, they were his accomplices; who tolerated it, that same Nazism, before suffering it, absorbed it, closed their eyes, legitimized it because until then it had only been applied to non-European peoples,

31. In Portuguese: Síndrome de vira-lata.

32. Idem, *ibid*.

who cultivated it, are responsible for it, and that it it sprouts, breaks, drips, before submerging in the reddish waters of all the fissures of Western and Christian civilization.”³³ Likewise, it happened with the slave trade, which was "responsible for the deaths of approximately 10 to 11 million black lives by colonial necropolitics." (ARAÚJO, 2021b, p.). The survivors had to keep within themselves what they were forced to stop being: Africans to become barbarians! In this case, Césaire reminds us that “the idea of the barbarian black is a European invention.”³⁴

These contradictions of the contemporary world occur because we still have to deal with dishonest equations like: Christianity = civilization and paganism = savagery. The reason they continue to exist, perhaps, is because the world that is still Eurocentered and whitened is "incapable of solving two problems that their existence gave rise to: the proletarian problem and the colonial problem.”³⁵ Well, both one problem and the other are not solved because people are prevented from being themselves, that is, the working class cannot have its own opinions, those who were colonized cannot have a religion other than the Christian one, languages places should not be taught at school etc. In short, all this because it does not yet know how to deal with differences, with the different, with the dominant diversity that exists in the cosmos and in human societies.

The Racial Equality Statute is in charge of dealing with these issues and the contradictions of contemporaneity that are remnants of the recent past in human history. Its function is to remove the bonds that the colonization process placed on each

of us black men and women, helping to remove from our bodies what was inculcated in us during the colonial and post-colonial historical process. So, we have a decolonial document. But what merits this statute is the opening to dialogue and other forms of subjectivities, with the resumption of negated identities. And, as said before, it is a democratic instrument par excellence. It still has the possibility of becoming a means of conciliation. Therefore, it needs to be protected not only by the country's democratic institutions, but also by the international community, as it serves part of the Black Diaspora and part of the original peoples of the Americas.

The freedom of conscience and belief, which the statute contemplates, represents the entire historical struggle waged by Afro-Brazilians against racism and against religious intolerance in Brazil. At the same time, it reveals, as mentioned before, the commitment to the Declaration of Human Rights and other international provisions that are added to these evils inherited by European colonialism by colonized peoples. So, the fight for religious freedom and the anti-racist fight were not in vain. Having the second largest black population in the world, second only to Nigeria, Brazil begins the path of historic reparation against the cursed inheritance of colonization, which was able to deceive us through the collective hypocrisy that was “skillful in misrepresenting the problems to better legitimize the solutions” applied, as Aimé Césaire pointed out in his Discourse on colonialism. For a long time, this was a strategic way to maintain its domination over the colonized, inculcating lies with its dishonest equations. But today it is public knowledge that: “the bourgeoisie, as a class, is doomed, whether it likes it or not, to be responsible for all the barbarism of history, the

33. Césaire, Aimé. Op.cit., p.18.

34. Idem, *ibid.*, p.37.

35. Idem, *ibid.*, p.13.

tortures of the Middle Ages and the Inquisition, the reason of state and warfare, racism and slavery, in in short, everything against which it protested in unforgettable terms, at the time when class to attack embodied human progress.”³⁶

Well, just as it is necessary to remember that Nazism existed to not allow it to happen again, it is also necessary to remember all the colonial barbarism that lasted for centuries and that its effects are still felt in the bodies of the descendants of enslaved blacks. Law 12,288/2010 brings with it the memory of this barbarity, as its existence is justified by the harmful effects of this great barbarism that goes by the name of European colonialism. Indirectly, the Law reminds us of how inhuman the agents of European colonization were in relation to the colonized. Therefore, it also reminds us that we must keep this memory alive to prevent it from happening again and that Brazilian society needs to work to be in fact a racial democracy, showing the world its ability to solve the problems left by European colonialism with regard to Afro-Brazilians and native peoples. Contrary to what its opponents preach, the Statute of Racial Equality, approved and in operation in Brazil, does not and will never have the vocation to create racial ghettos, but to make possible the ghettos that the colonial heritage left behind, where several young black people are all exterminated. the days in the country where it is still said that there is no racism among us Brazilians. Therefore, the Brazilian authorities must hurry to approve the Constitutional Amendment Proposal number 33,016 that creates the fund for the policies to promote racial equality in the country. At long last, this is a fight for everyone, it is a fight for humanity, for diasporic peoples, for democracy.

36. Idem, *ibid.*, p.56.

The positive results achieved a decade after the statute's approval also show that the country's economy has only to gain, because when people can be themselves, having the same opportunities, they are healthier because they are happier and, consequently, they are more productive. This fact only demonstrates that the arguments of those who are against policies to promote racial equality, when they say that the country has no right to social policies, are wrong. Deep down, it is the fear of losing their privileges as heirs of the European colonizers that makes them deny the benefits of such investments. In short, this is the current picture of the struggles for these human rights in Brazil and this is the situation in the country after the approval of the Racial Equality Statute and the Quota Law. Here, we have proof that European colonization left a negative balance much greater than its probable benefits, because he always used “hateful solutions”. Its psychological effects are responsible for the rates of violence, delinquency, alcoholism, child prostitution, illiteracy, hunger, poverty, lack of housing, basic sanitation, problems that affect not only the economy, but the life of society as a whole. The destruction of the environment is also part of the progress we inherited from European colonialism. Its psychological and psychologizing effects are responsible for the rates of violence, delinquency, alcoholism, child prostitution, illiteracy, hunger, poverty, lack of housing, basic sanitation, problems that affect not only the economy, but the life of society as a whole. The destruction of the environment is also part of the progress we inherited from European colonialism. And as Fanon would say: “There is no doubt that this splitting is a direct consequence of the colonial adventure... And nobody thinks to

dispute that it feeds its main vein in the heart of the diverse theories that made the black midway in the development of the ape to the man. These are objective evidences that account for reality.”³⁷

■ Final considerations

This chapter was dedicated to dealing with how the struggles for racial equality and religious freedom were formed in Brazil, that is, it was about dealing with the historical process that led blacks and browns to fight for rights that became part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1948. As the country with the largest black population outside the African continent, Brazil presents a very particular historical process, as the anti-racist struggle is not dissociated from the struggle for religious freedom. In this part of the American continent, the fight for racial equality starts from the desire to worship African religious entities that for centuries had their cults banned on this other side of the South Atlantic. Therefore, in Brazil, religiosity and the fight for racial equality are sides of the same coin. Religious resistance gave rise to the Candomblés, these spaces that ended up being transformed into political-social-religious places.

The historical perspective adopted here had as its main objective to show how the anti-racist struggle was built throughout the history of the Black Diaspora in the Americas, especially in Latin America, where the Plantation system was adopted, and where Candomblé emerged “as a result of resistance and memory of black peoples brought from Africa to serve as slaves in the plantation system adopted by the European colonizer in Brazil, and also as a result of the relationships that developed

37. Fanon, Franz. *Pele negra, máscaras brancas*; tradução de Renato da Silveira. - Salvador: EDUFBA, 2008, p.33.

between indigenous peoples with Africans and with Europeans, leading to both syncretism. cultural and religious”³⁸ It was for this reason that we gave special importance to the struggle for religious freedom, as it was in the Terreiros of Candomblé that resistance gained momentum. It was in these religious spaces that many black men, women and children found comfort and support to keep alive the African ancestry and a little of the way of being what they were denied throughout their existence within the slavery regime that lasted in Brazil until 13 May 1888.

But abolition only freed captive blacks from slave labor, because they continued to live on the margins of Brazilian society. In other words, with slavery abolished, they were thrown into the streets without any social policies that ensured conditions for everyone to build a life without going through the privations of misery and the exploitation of poorly paid work. Despite the persecution that Candomblé followers suffered in these first years of freedom from slave labor, they managed to mobilize themselves to help each other. The neglect of the Brazilian authorities lasted, therefore, for more than a century.

In the 1930s, the justification for the lack of policies to promote racial equality was because it was said that racism did not exist in Brazil. This fallacy became known as the myth of Brazilian racial democracy. It lasts until today, as a kind of Hitler that inhabits every Brazilian, a heritage of European civility. Many blame the sociologist and anthropologist Gilberto Freyre for creating this myth that prevents Brazilian democracy from taking place in a more forceful way. But Kabengele Munanga

38. Araújo, Alex Pereira de. *O Candomblé e a desconstrução da noção de sincretismo religioso: Entre utopias do corpo e heterotopias dos espaços na Diáspora Negra*. *Abatirá - Revista De Ciências Humanas E Linguagens*, 2(4), 2021b, p. 358. Recuperado de <https://www.revistas.uneb.br/index.php/abatira/article/view/13036>

assures that “Freyre's great contribution is having shown that blacks, Indians and mestizos had positive contributions to Brazilian culture: they profoundly influenced the lifestyle of the noble class in terms of food, clothing and sex. Miscegenation, which in the minds of Nina and others caused irreparable damage to Brazil, was seen by him as an immense advantage. In other words, by transforming *mestizaje* into a positive and not a negative value under the aspect of degeneration, the author of *Casa Grande e Senzala* allowed him to definitively complete the contours of an identity that had been designed for a long time. Freyre consolidates the original myth of Brazilian society configured in a triangle whose vertices are the black, white and indigenous races. That's how the mixtures came about.”³⁹ Now, Freyre's work goes against the idea that miscegenation is a great enemy. Therefore, the author of *Casa Grande e Senzala* cannot be held responsible for the anti-black racism that is a consequence of the promotion of slavery that sustained European colonial enterprise and its colonialism for centuries, transforming free people into enslaved human beings. Finally, throughout this chapter, we try to show a path of resistance, which begins with *calundu*, passing through *candomblé*, the *Malês* revolt, the *obás* of *Xangô*, until reaching the implementation of the Racial Equality Statute. And throughout this trajectory, the dream of freedom has always been latent among the enslaved Africans brought to Brazil. This story cannot be forgotten, as it is a saga of hope and desire to make the world a place of dialogue, tolerance, cooperativism and fraternity among its peoples. On the other hand, the colonial barbarism that still persists among us, leads us to ask Ailton Krenak: “are we really a humanity?”⁴⁰

39. Munanga, Kabengele. *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade nacional versus identidade negra*. 3ª edição – Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2008.

40. Krenak, Ailton. *Ideias para adiar o fim do mundo*. – São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019, p.12.

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Indigenous People And Human Rights : United Nations View United Nations View Who Will Talk About Religious Free- dom Of Indigenous People ?

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■ Abstract

This chapter discusses the United Nations stand on Indigenous people and their Human rights. United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations is at the helm of the United Nations human rights system—its mechanisms, laws and policies—have been at the heart of these developments with bodies. This has played a groundbreaking role. It is further continued by the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, in cooperation with other key actors, including the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. United Nations has provided a very serious attention to the rights of Indigenous people in recent decades possibly due to pressure from all the corners. But the United Nations has not recognized the religious freedom of the Indigenous

people nor recognized their traditions and cultures as independent religions.

■ Introduction

Over last few decades, the rights of indigenous peoples have, are becoming an important component of international law and policy, as a result of a movement driven by indigenous peoples, civil society, international mechanisms and States at the domestic, regional and international levels and nonprofit organizations working for the rights of Indigenous people around the Globe in many countries. . United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations is at the helm of the United Nations human rights system—its mechanisms, laws and policies—have been at the heart of these developments with bodies. This has played a groundbreaking role, It is further

continued by the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, in cooperation with other key actors, including the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. United Nations has provided a very serious attention to the rights of Indigenous people in recent decades possibly due to pressure from all the corners.

■ **Achievements of United Nations:**

One of its main achievements was the General Assembly's adoption in 2007 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which, by 2010, was supported by the vast majority of United Nations Member States and which was an Unanimous decision with no opposition from any country.

It was the result of decades of negotiation between States and indigenous peoples, coming together in a spirit of partnership to endorse the Indigenous Declaration in a one voice. It encompasses human rights to indigenous peoples and their specific situations, thereby helping to reverse their historical exclusion from the international legal system.

Unfortunately, United Nations did not recognize these cultures as independent religions and hence nothing has been done till now for their religious freedom and revival of their traditional religions or cultures. The horizons of these policies were widened due to International activity on indigenous peoples' issues expanding also in regional human rights bodies, such as the African and inter-American human rights systems, and into international law and policy areas as diverse as the environment (including climate change), intellectual property and trade and so on.

This Fact Sheet provides a reader-friendly overview of the United Nations human rights system

and the rights of indigenous peoples. The document which was published by UN in 2013 was designed to give readers:

- A summary of indigenous peoples' rights;
- An overview of the international human rights bodies and mechanisms in relation to indigenous peoples;
- A description of the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) related to indigenous peoples;
- A brief summary of relevant regional human rights systems as they engage with indigenous peoples and protect their human rights; and
- A summary of some United Nations agencies, beyond the human rights framework, engaged in indigenous peoples' issues.
- This document defines some of the specifics related to Indigenous traditions and cultures as follows:

■ **Who are indigenous peoples?**

United Nations recognized that Indigenous peoples live on all continents, from the Arctic to the Pacific, via Asia, Africa and the Americas. There is no singularly authoritative definition of indigenous peoples under international law and policy, and the Indigenous Declaration does not set out any definition as the cultures are so diverse and expresses the inability of any definitions to cover all the diversity existing in these cultures.

In fact, its articles 9 and 33 state that indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, (they did not mention that they belong to particular religious groups, need to recognize the traditions as independent religions or way of life) in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community

or nation concerned, and that they have the right to determine their own identity.

The International Labor Organization's (ILO) Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (No. 169) distinguishes between tribal and indigenous peoples as follows, highlighting also the importance of self-identification:

1. (a) Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;

(b) Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

2. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply.

Despite the lack of an authoritative definition, there are criteria that help to define indigenous peoples. The main one is the criterion of self-identification and those proposed by José Martínez Cobo in his "Study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations", which include:

- Historical continuity with pre-invasion and or pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories;

- Distinctiveness;
- Non-dominance; and
- A determination to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and identity as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

Interestingly, after 30 years only 23 countries have ratified these ILO resolutions 169 (Table 1). IN 1989, the thirtieth anniversary of Convention 169 is the product of years of advocacy work that Indigenous Peoples have done to attain this mechanism for dialogue at the international level. ILO 169 is not just a roadmap for countries to follow to thoroughly protect the rights and cultures of Indigenous Peoples that live there, but it is also a legal opportunity for Indigenous Peoples to hold governments accountable. Les Malezer (Gubbi Gubbi/Butchulla), a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Member, stated, "I am emphasizing the fact the ILO Convention No. 169 was adopted 30 years ago but only 23 countries have ratified it. Also the ILO is celebrating its existence now for 100 years, so it should already be reminding States to ratify this treaty regarding rights of Indigenous Peoples."

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples has stressed, in addition to the above:

- A strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;
- Distinct social, economic or political systems; and
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs.

Again, the United nations did not recognize the distinct way of life or religion the indigenous cultures and traditions have practiced for thousands

of year with well-defined distinct philosophy of life not only for human beings but also incorporated the whole creation including animals , rivers, seas and so on.

There is an absolute urgent to declare all the indigenous cultures as independent religions or way of life.

Many indigenous peoples populated areas before the arrival of others and often retain distinct cultural, political and philosophical (mostly oral traditions as like all the other traditions and religions) characteristics, including autonomous political and legal structures, as well as a common experience of domination by others, especially non-indigenous groups, and a strong historical and ongoing connection to their lands, territories and resources, including when they practice their lifestyles. While the legal status of indigenous peoples is distinct from that of minorities, they are often, though not always, in the minority in the States in which they reside. Minorities and indigenous peoples have some similar rights under international law, although the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is arguably more comprehensive than international legal instruments associated with minorities. The legal status of indigenous needs to be restored based on their population numbers before the arrival of invaders and crusaders who mercilessly killed millions of these indigenous cultures and many have extinct due to violent aggression on their land and cultures.

I. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Indigenous peoples' rights under international law have evolved from existing international law, including human rights treaties, to address the specific circumstances facing indigenous peoples as

well as their priorities, such as rights to their lands, territories and resources, and self-determination. Even though these laws have been proclaimed the reality is far from the right given through such laws. They face utter discrimination at every step in their life.

Unfortunately, many indigenous peoples continue to face a range of human rights issues. In fact, the implementation of their rights is far from perfect. Some of the most difficult human rights challenges for indigenous peoples stem from pressures on their lands, territories and resources as a result of activities associated with development and the extraction of resources. Their cultures continue to be threatened, and the protection and promotion of their rights resisted. Conversions have destroyed their culture, language and way of life. It was part of the aggressive invaders deal.

Indigenous peoples have had unprecedented access to, and participated fully in, human rights legal and policy processes at the international level, reflecting their influence on international decisions affecting them but in reality a different picture is seen. This is discussed in more detail below.

A. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007 with 144 votes in favor, 11 abstentions and four States against (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America). Since then, a number of States have changed their position, including the four which voted against but have now endorsed the Declaration.

The Declaration is the most comprehensive instrument detailing the rights of indigenous peoples

in international law and policy, containing minimum standards for the recognition, protection and promotion of these rights. While not uniformly or consistently implemented, the Declaration regularly guides States and indigenous peoples in developing law and policy that have an impact on indigenous peoples, including in devising means to best address the claims made by indigenous peoples. Some of the most important substantive rights contained in the Declaration and under international law and policy more broadly are outlined below.

■ Self-determination

The United Nations General Assembly has, through the adoption of the Declaration, affirmed that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination and, hence, the right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Article 3 of the Declaration mirrors common article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Indigenous peoples see self-determination as a central right recognized at the international level. The implementation of the right to self-determination also complements the implementation of other rights.

All rights in the Declaration are indivisible and interrelated, and the right to self-determination is no exception. It colors all other rights, which should be read in the light of indigenous peoples' self-determination, such as the right to culture, which can include indigenous peoples' autonomy over cultural matters.

In relation to indigenous peoples' right to autonomy or self-government, article 4 states: "indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-

determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions." Related to their right to autonomy, indigenous peoples have the right, under article 34 of the Declaration, to "promote, develop and maintain their institutional structures and their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditions, procedures, practices and, in the cases where they exist, juridical systems or customs ..."

The right to self-determination is closely related to indigenous peoples' political rights. No one talks about their religious rights to practice their own traditions, and way of life. These include their right to participate in decision-making in matters that would affect their rights and States' duties to consult and cooperate with them to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them. In both cases, and consistent with their right to self-determination, indigenous peoples have the right to participate through their own representative institutions.

The United Nations Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples undertook a detailed study of indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making from 2009 to 2011 and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples has focused on indigenous peoples' participation rights in reports on both thematic issues and country issues. The work of the Expert Mechanism and the Special Rapporteur reinforces the growing jurisprudence on the topic by, for example, the Human Rights Committee and the Inter-American Court and Commission on Human Rights. Consistent themes in this evolving understanding of indigenous peoples'

participation rights are that their consent must be sought for activities that have a significant impact on them and their lands, territories and resources.

■ **Rights to lands, territories and resources**

The Declaration recognizes indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories and resources, including to those traditionally held by them but now controlled by others as a matter of fact and also of law. For many indigenous peoples, their relationship to their lands, territories and resources is a defining feature. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has stressed:

The close ties of indigenous people with the land must be recognized and understood as the fundamental basis of their cultures, their spiritual life, their integrity, and their economic survival. For indigenous communities, relations to the land are not merely a matter of possession and production but a material and spiritual element which they must fully enjoy, even to preserve their cultural legacy and transmit it to future generations. It is said about the African traditions (more than 1000 different groups and Native Americans (more than 500 nations) that all these people were closely linked with the land and environment around. Same thing with Maoris of the New Zealand and Australian Aboriginals. Once they were uprooted and transported to other lands they lost the touch with the land and later their culture and traditions. What a tragedy imposed on the indigenous people around the world in the name of aggression, invasion and religion.

Supported by developing and authoritative interpretations of existing human rights law by United Nations human rights treaty bodies and regional human rights mechanisms, article 26 (1) of the Declaration acknowledges, in general terms,

indigenous peoples' right to the lands, territories and resources they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used and article 26 (2) refers to the lands, territories and resources that they possess under indigenous customary conceptions of "ownership". Article 26 (3) requires States to give legal recognition and protection to these lands, territories and resources. Article 27 requires States to establish and implement processes recognizing and adjudicating indigenous peoples' rights in relation to their lands, territories and resources.

■ **Economic, social and cultural rights**

The provisions of the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169 are consistent with interpretations of economic, social and cultural rights by the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169 affirm indigenous peoples' rights to health, education, employment, housing, sanitation, social security and an adequate standard of living. The Declaration's article 3 is of particular importance, articulating their right to freely determine their economic, social and cultural development.

To the outside world, and oftentimes also within indigenous communities, indigenous peoples' cultural distinctiveness is considered to be one of their defining features. Giving expression to the right to cultural equality, the Declaration contains numerous provisions to protect against discriminatory and adverse treatment on cultural grounds as well as positive measures to support indigenous peoples' cultures.

These include their right not to be subjected to assimilation or destruction of their culture;

the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs, to teach their cultural mores, and to the repatriation of human remains; and the right to “maintain, control, protect and develop” their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions. Given the centrality of culture to many indigenous peoples’ identity, the Declaration also recognizes the right of indigenous individuals to belong to an indigenous community or nation in accordance with their community or nation’s traditions and customs.

■ **Collective rights**

Indigenous people’s rights are, by definition, collective rights. In other words, they are vested in indigenous individuals that organize themselves as peoples.

While also including rights of individuals, the extent of recognition of collective rights in the Declaration is groundbreaking. Prior to the Declaration, the international human rights system had been slow to endorse the concept of rights vested in groups, with the exception of the right to self-determination. It had been generally perceived that individuals’ rights would be sufficient to ensure adequate protection and promotion of rights with a collective dimension, such as the right to culture. However, with the adoption of the Declaration, the international community clearly affirms that indigenous peoples require recognition of their collective rights as peoples to enable them to enjoy human rights.

■ **Equality and non-discrimination**

Equality and non-discrimination are significant objectives of, and underpin, both the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Indeed, the Declaration’s articles 1

and 2 articulate the right of indigenous peoples, as a collective or as individuals, to all human rights. Indigenous peoples and individuals are:

Free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

The recognition of their rights overall is fully justified from an equality and non-discrimination perspective, taking into account the discrimination they have experienced historically as peoples and individuals. An equality and non-discrimination approach also supports the recognition of their collective rights to their lands, territories and resources as being equivalent to the rights of non-indigenous individuals to their property, as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has found.

Rights in relation to treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements between indigenous peoples and States (especially applicable to Indigenous and State agreements around the world)

The Declaration also uniquely provides for indigenous peoples’ right to “the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and to have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.” This reference reflects the growing international focus on such documents.

■ **The status of the Declaration under international law**

While the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a declaration, is not a formally binding treaty, it contains rights and freedoms, such as self-determination and non-

discrimination, set out in binding international human rights treaty law, of which some may be considered customary international law. It reflects a global consensus on indigenous peoples' rights. Moreover, according to the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, "a 'declaration' is a solemn instrument resorted to only in very rare cases relating to matters of major and lasting importance where maximum compliance is expected". The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is such a declaration deserving of the utmost respect. This is confirmed by the words used in its first preambular paragraph, according to which the General Assembly, in adopting it, was "guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and good faith in the fulfilment of the obligations assumed by States in accordance with the Charter" (emphasis added). Moreover, on the International Day of the World's Indigenous People in 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General stated:

The Declaration is a visionary step towards addressing the human rights of indigenous peoples. It sets out a framework on which States can build or re-build their relationships with indigenous peoples. The result of more than two decades of negotiations, it provides a momentous opportunity for States and indigenous peoples to strengthen their relationships, promote reconciliation, and ensure that the past is not repeated.

B. ILO Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, 1989 (No. 169)

ILO Convention No. 169 and its predecessor, ILO Convention concerning the Protection and Integration of Indigenous and Other Tribal and Semi-Tribal

Populations in Independent Countries, 1957 (No. 107), are the only conventions specifically dealing with indigenous peoples rights. Convention No. 169 is fundamentally concerned with non-discrimination. While ultimately not as comprehensive as the Declaration, it covers indigenous peoples' rights to development, customary laws, lands, territories and resources, employment, education and health. Moreover, it signaled, at the time of its adoption in 1989, a greater international responsiveness to indigenous peoples' demands for greater control over their way of life and institutions. At the time of writing, ILO Convention No. 169 had been ratified by 22 countries, mainly in Latin America.

C. Regional and domestic application of the rights of indigenous peoples

Over the past decade, legal developments at regional level have contributed much to the evolution of international jurisprudence as it relates to indigenous peoples. The above-mentioned decisions of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the decision of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in the Endorois case confirm that indigenous peoples' rights to their lands, territories and resources, as well as the principle of their free, prior and informed consent, are part of the corpus of binding human rights law.

The rights of indigenous peoples are also increasingly being formally incorporated into domestic legal systems. Courts, too, have been instrumental in the application of the rights of indigenous peoples articulated at the international level in domestic cases. More broadly, and oftentimes with the involvement of national human rights institutions, governmental policy affecting indigenous peoples increasingly takes into account

their rights under international human rights law.

■ **Conclusion:**

The United Nations have done every efforts to understand and recognize the human rights of Indigenous people around the world. Due to the diversity within these traditions and cultures it is hard to define who are indigenous. The indigenous is normally referred to the people who were existing in the country before the invaders engaged in to aggression in that country. For example, before the Columbus arrived in the Americas there were declared 500 nations of Native Americans who were later called by mistake and ignorance of the invaders as Indians and later Amerindians. These people were indigenous to Americas. Similarly before the Europeans engages in aggression in Australians, people who were there were indigenous and the aggressive group called them Australian Aboriginals. Same case happened around the world. All these people were named as indigenous. Even though these people were the rulers and they had their own cultures, religions and traditions. There is a need for revisiting the terms used in such dialogues and I will recommend the indigenous people to be renamed as Ancient traditions and cultures of the world. Because all of these cultures were indigenous in their countries and invaders destroyed them for their benefit with significant cruelty. Even though the United Nations has recognized and ILO has provided a platform, it should not remain as a lip service and world should join hands to build these traditions and cultures once again and let them revive their languages and cultures and also contribute towards the cultural diversity of the world. Ultimately cultural diversity is the soul of Humanity. Let us all work to protect the cultural diversity of the world as human beings,

Table 1: Countries which have ratified ILO 169:

Argentina	03 Jul 2000	In Force
Bolivia, Plurinational State of	11 Dec 1991	In Force
Brazil	25 Jul 2002	In Force
Central African Republic	30 Aug 2010	In Force
Chile	15 Sep 2008	In Force
Colombia	07 Aug 1991	In Force
Costa Rica	02 Apr 1993	In Force
Denmark	22 Feb 1996	In Force
Dominica	25 Jun 2002	In Force
Ecuador	15 May 1998	In Force
Fiji	03 Mar 1998	In Force
Guatemala	05 Jun 1996	In Force
Honduras	28 Mar 1995	In Force
Luxembourg	05 Jun 2018	In Force
Mexico	05 Sep 1990	In Force
Nepal	14 Sep 2007	In Force
Netherlands	02 Feb 1998	In Force
Nicaragua	25 Aug 2010	In Force
Norway	19 Jun 1990	In Force
Paraguay	10 Aug 1993	In Force
Peru	02 Feb 1994	In Force
Spain	15 Feb 2007	In Force
Venezuela, (Bolivarian Republic of)	22 May 2002	In Force

rather destroying let us let everyone flourish and contribute to the world positively.

This article is based on several articles and documents published by United Nations and ILO and some commentaries on these documents. References provides the links I had used to put together the article.

Appendix 1: Selected Articles United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY U.N. DOC. A/RES/61/295 (2 October 2007)

The General Assembly, Affirming that indigenous peoples are equal to all other peoples, while recognizing the right of all peoples to be different, to consider themselves different, and to be respected as such,

Affirming also that all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind, Concerned that indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests,

Recognizing that respect for indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment,

Emphasizing the contribution of the demilitarization of the lands and territories of indigenous peoples to peace, economic and social progress and development, understanding and friendly relations among nations and peoples of the world,

Recognizing in particular the right of

indigenous families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education and well-being of their children, consistent with the rights of the child,

Acknowledging that the Charter of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, affirm the fundamental importance of the right to self-determination of all peoples, by virtue of which they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development,

Recognizing and reaffirming that indigenous individuals are entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized in international law, and that indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples, Solemnly proclaims the following United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a standard of achievement to be pursued in a spirit of partnership and mutual respect:

Article 1

Indigenous peoples have the right to the full enjoyment, as a collective or as individuals, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms as recognized in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law.

Article 4

Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

Article 5

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions, while retaining their right to participate fully, if they so choose, in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 8

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.

2. States shall provide effective mechanisms for prevention of, and redress for: (a) Any action which has the aim or effect of depriving them of their integrity as distinct peoples, or of their cultural values or ethnic identities; (b) Any action which has the aim or effect of dispossessing them of their lands, territories or resources; (c) Any form of forced population transfer which has the aim or effect of violating or undermining any of their rights; (d) Any form of forced assimilation or integration; (e) Any form of propaganda designed to promote or incite racial or ethnic discrimination directed against them.

Article 10

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories. No relocation shall take place without the free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples concerned and after agreement on just and fair compensation and, where possible, with the option of return.

Article 12

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the

right to the repatriation of their human remains.

Article 14

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.

Article 17

1. Indigenous individuals and peoples have the right to enjoy fully all rights established under applicable international and domestic labor law.

Article 22

1. Particular attention shall be paid to the rights and special needs of indigenous elders, women, youth, children and persons with disabilities in the implementation of this Declaration.

Article 26

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

2. Indigenous peoples have the right to own, use, develop and control the lands, territories and resources that they possess by reason of traditional ownership or other traditional occupation or use, as well as those which they have otherwise acquired. .

Article 28

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to redress, by means that can include restitution or, when this is not possible, just, fair and equitable compensation, for the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.

2. Unless otherwise freely agreed upon by the peoples concerned, compensation shall take the form of lands, territories and resources equal in quality, size and legal status or of monetary compensation or other appropriate redress.

Article 29

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the conservation and protection of the environment and the productive capacity of their lands or territories and resources. States shall establish and implement assistance programs for indigenous peoples for such conservation and protection, without discrimination.

2. States shall take effective measures to ensure that no storage or disposal of hazardous materials shall take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples without their free, prior and informed consent.

Article 30

1. Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless justified by a relevant public interest or otherwise freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.

Article 36

1. Indigenous peoples, in particular those divided by international borders, have the right to maintain and develop contacts, relations and cooperation, including activities for spiritual, cultural, political, economic and social purposes, with their own members as well as other peoples across borders.

Article 37

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to the recognition, observance and enforcement of treaties,

agreements and other constructive arrangements concluded with States or their successors and to have States honour and respect such treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements.

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Making Sense Of Animist Philosophies: Enhancing Spirituality And Religious Freedom Through The Practice Of Prayer Mountain Visit

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■ Abstract

Religious practices of all sorts permeate everyday lives of a human being. This idea is not limited to human beings in Africa. It is appropriate to say spirituality and religion constitute the essential parts of what makes us humans. Religious practices propel humans to engage spirituality in their pursuit of making meanings as to their existence and finding explanations for all things through gods identified with all manners of animals/creatures. Though spirituality presumably is pursued individually given life's experiences and personal self-reflections, religious practices are attributed to membership of organized religions. In reality, these assumptions

challenge the question of human rights an individual self enjoys as a member of a state/nation-state and religious sect. This chapter reflects upon the contemporary practice of prayer mountain visit (also known as Ori-Oke among the Yoruba) as a way of connecting and enhancing spiritualism in everyday life in southwest Nigeria. It opines the practice of prayer-mountain visit as a site of interconnectedness of spirituality and religion embodies animism. It therefore represents a space where issues of human rights and religious freedom are resolved.

■ Introduction

Religious practices of all sorts permeate everyday lives of a human being. This idea is not

limited to human beings in Africa. In fact, it is not out of context to say spirituality and religion constitute the essential parts of what makes us humans. Religious practices propel humans to engage spirituality in their pursuit of making meanings about their existence and finding explanations for all things through gods identified with all manners of animals/creatures. For instance, prayer mountain visit is a common practice among the occupants of the southwest Nigeria, largely Yoruba. People visit many of such mountains for reasons related to spirituality and religious activities. This practice is accompanied with the assumption that many of such mountains are believed to possess metaphysical power and are sacred including all kinds of embedded features such as rocks, caves, flora, and springs therewith (Hamilton and McMillan 2004; see also, Aina 2006).

In other words, Prayer Mountains are sources of spiritual power and symbols of sacredness. This understanding is in line with animist philosophies; the attribution of “life” or “soul” to all things, animate and inanimate. As Edward Tylor put it in his *Primitive Culture*, “every land, mountain, rock, river, brook, spring, tree, or whatsoever it may be, has a spirit for an inhabitant; the spirits of the trees and stones, of the lakes and brooks, hear with pleasure... [hu]man’s pious prayers and accepts offerings” (Tylor 1958, p. 16; see also, Wallace 2019). In his critique of religion against the backdrop of rapid climate change and species extinction Wallace (2019) argues religion, for example, Christianity creates “humankind’s exploitative attitudes toward nature through otherworldly theologies that divorce human beings and their spiritual yearnings from their natural origin.” For reasons of salvation of human souls, religion like Christianity has lost touch with

the verdant world of animals and plants, land and water, rocks and mountains in actualization of human well-being (p. 2). More importantly, the world has recorded significant amounts of casualties and loss of lives due to insurgency/terrorism by religious extremists. For instance, in 2017, an estimated 26,445 people died from terrorism globally.¹

The questions remain what is the right/wrong way of actualizing human well-being? What roles do spirituality and religion play in achieving it? How are humans’ efforts to achieve well-being bother their human rights and religious freedom? In the context of differences in religious practices and the question of what is considered good/bad/sinful in the sight of God based upon humans’ interpretation of God, the question of human rights remains relevant as far as humanity is concerned. In this essay, therefore, I reflect on prayer mountain visit as an activity that encompasses all and sundry among the inhabitants of southwest Nigeria in their pursuit of spiritual enhancement.

First, my claim here is that the idea of prayer mountain visit resonates with animist philosophies. Second is that it plays a mediative role between two contending scholarly positions; 1). Effectively averting terrorism may require governments to limit freedom such as religious liberty in the name of national security. 2). Restrictions on religious liberty have the effect of exacerbating religious extremism, while respect for religious rights can undermine extremist propensities and religiously motivated violence (see Henne et al., 2012; also, Saiya and Scime, 2015, p. 487-88). In everyday

1. Terrorism by Hannah Ritchie, Joe Hasell, Cameron Appel and Max Roser. Article was first published in July 2013. It was last revised in November 2019. <https://ourworldindata.org/terrorism>

life practice, attendance in prayer mountain visit downplays religious affiliations, rather it is driven by individuals' motivations in search of solutions to supposed personal issues.

■ **Animist Philosophies and the practice of prayer mountain visit**

An important deduction from Wallace's (2019) position that "the full realization of Christianity's historical self-definition as a scriptural, incarnational, and Trinitarian belief system is animotheism--the belief that all beings including nonhuman animals [objects, places, and creatures] possess a distinct spiritual essence. Potentially, animism perceives all things—animals, plants, rocks, rivers, weather systems, human handiwork, and perhaps even words—as animated and alive (pp. 2-3). The logic in this definition reinforces the possibility of relationality of animism with/in all religious communities (be it indigenous/non-Western, Christianity, and Islam) that God/Spirit embodies itself within everything that grows, walks, flies, swims in and over the great gift of creation. Here is why making connection to the practice of prayer mountain visit remains relevant in making claim that animist philosophy embodies human spirituality. Mountains are often associated with "sacred" part of nature cross culturally. For instance, Jeffrey Irish (1996) captures the experience of sacredness and spirituality in the practice of prayer mountain visit:

No bathing for eight days. No brushing teeth. No shaving, for it would be a symbolic severing of the ritual. We will fast for the first two days; we may drink from the temple spring, and green tea, a source of vitamin C, is acceptable. I know I will smell bad, but then, so will the others. I recall reading in a book on Shugendo that means. (p. 182)

In *Introducing Anthropology of Religion* Jack Eller (2007) points out some pertinent mountain asceticism that fasting stimulates the world of the hungry ghosts and the sacrifice of cleanliness takes one into the world of the animals. I wonder what themes such as diversity between religions; diversity within religions (implying that religion is not a single homogenous set of beliefs and practices); strong integration of religion with its surrounding culture (implying all of the parts of a culture are interconnected and mutually influencing); "modularity" of religion (i.e., religion is modulated via politics, economics, gender, technology, popular culture etc.); relativity of language; and finally, the local and practiced nature of religion. Given the context of these thematic analysis it is argued that the focus of anthropology lies in how humans conceive and use their religious resources---beliefs, objects, texts, rituals, and specialists---in specific social contexts for specific social and personal reasons (p. xiv). My focus here is not on the doctrine of religion, instead I pick interest in the lived practices and experiences that motivate people to embark upon prayer mountain visit as a way of enhancing their spirituality. In my reflection, in a multi religious context like Nigeria the practice of prayer mountain visit downplays obvious tensions resulting from the entrenched diversity between religions and incessant needs to appropriate space by the different religious affiliations like Christianity, Islam, and African Traditional Religion.

There have been arguments that in search for security from sickness and diseases, death and evil spirits, as well as various types of misfortune human beings in Africa continually tend to search for God (Ndiokwere 2001; Niemelä 2015). One of the major

ways of seeking the face of God for divine interventions is through the practice of prayer mountain visit; popularly refer to as 'Ori-Oke'. Nwosu et al. (2017) argue high concentration of people on prayer mountains for quenching their spiritual thirst and hunger account for the growth of Ori-Oke phenomenon in Nigeria. It is assumed that "people's longings and hopes are realized after an encounter with God on these prayer mountains" (p. 349). More importantly, their claim that "Ori-Oke spirituality highlights the vision of the Yoruba indigenous tradition" is compelling (p. 350). However, what remains obscure is to what extent is the practice of prayer mountain visit guarantees religious freedom and reenactment of human rights.

On the question of religious freedom and human rights it is instructive to draw on the participatory spirituality framework of Jorge Ferrer (2002, 2011), a claim that "human spirituality emerges from our cocreative participation in a dynamic and undetermined mystery or generative power of life, the cosmos, and/or the spirit" (2011, p. 2). Ferrer's analysis goes further:

More specifically, I argue that spiritual participatory events can engage the entire range of human epistemic faculties (e.g., rational, imaginal, somatic, vital, aesthetic, etc.) with the creative unfolding of reality or the mystery in the enactment- or "bringing forth"-of ontologically rich religious worlds. In other words, the participatory approach presents an enactive understanding of the sacred that conceives spiritual phenomena, experiences, and insights as cocreated events. (p. 2)

The participatory spirituality framework provides a link as to the cocreative engagements of nature (in this case mountains) and individuals whose ultimate goal is to seek divine powers/

solutions to their various problems. Mountains as a space of sacredness provide an encounter with God which often manifests in experience of psychological and emotional relief an individual derives. The idea of cocreative events as experienced in the context of prayer mountain visit reinforces animist philosophies.

There are two levels of interpretation involved in my reflection and analysis: 1). I consider the rationale and motivation for seclusion of oneself from vagaries of everyday life, which allows an individual to embark on prayer mountain visit, as a cocreative engagement involving animism i.e., all things are animated and alive. 2). Individuals sharing physical and social space for prayers, fasting, singing, and other rituals in realization of their spirituality and in turn solving their problems.

■ Human Rights and the Question of Spirituality and Religion

The major pertinent issue discussed in this section bothers on the question as to whether or not the current dispensation of religious practices and expression of spirituality challenge human rights. My focus here is to not dwell on the descriptions of the concept of a 'human rights culture' which could mean different things to different people. For instance, it could mean assurance of treatment of individual persons with respect, dignity and self-worth. Also, it implies government apparatuses like judges, the police, and the immigration are made to protect the interests of individuals who might be considered terrorists, criminals and so on while ensuring the security of the entire population and proper functioning of a democratic society (Clapham 2007). Instead, my discussion flows with the assumption that all citizens are supposedly free

to express their freedom of religion and affiliation to religious associations (as in Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights).²

In the context of prayer mountain visit as a practice among people of the southwestern Nigeria spirituality takes precedence over religious identities and affiliations. Emphasis is placed on individuals (who have decided to seclude themselves for the purpose of spiritual enhancement) rather than their religious affiliations. I maintain a position that intent towards solving personal problems make individuals to be less conscious of their religious affiliation/identity when co-existing with others on the mountains. The point is that people relate on the basis of mission to seek the face of God for personal and specific interventions in matters unsolvable by them.

More importantly, the kind of pressure and intolerance witnessed in everyday life from obvious and passive competitions among individuals of diverse religious affiliations and doctrines are less likely in prayer mountains. This observation is suggestive of the possibility of sustaining mutual coexistence and enhancement of human rights in a multi-religious society like Nigeria.

■ **Conclusion: Possibility of enhancement of religious freedom**

The French phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty's claim that animism is a basic human trait common to both Indigenous and modern sensibilities is sufficient

2. United Nations. 1948. Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

to agree “all humans are animists” (Cajete 2004; also see, Wallace 2019, p. 11). Pragmatically, the kind of belief people attribute to mountains (visit) as sacred site and abode of serenity where God answers their prayers justifies relevance of animism even in the contemporary world. Studies show that people are mostly drawn by naturalness and serenity of mountain as a physical place where they receive extra attention from their creator, the Almighty God (Ndiokwere 2001; Niemelä 2015; Nwosu et al. 2017).

People's endearment to serenity of mountains as a prayer site attests to relevance of animism in spite of foreign religions' position which emphasizes separation of between human beings and their natural origin in pursuit of “salvation”. At this juncture, I think Wallace's (2019) argument that “for reasons of salvation of human souls, religion like Christianity has lost touch with the verdant world of animals and plants, land and water, rocks and mountains in actualization of human well-being” (p. 2) remains valid. Now, on the question of peaceful coexistence and religious tolerance among people of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, I submit the practice of prayer mountain visit provides a context for Nigerian state and policy makers to think about in sustaining mutual coexistence and harmony among of the people. And of course, I recommend that researchers and experts in peace and conflict, religious studies, criminology, cultural anthropology and other relevant disciplines commit to more empirical study in this area.

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Human Rights And Fundamental Freedoms: A South African Hindu Perspective

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■ Abstract

Human Rights, Democracy and religious freedom was at the core of South Africa's Freedom Struggle. The Liberation movements, civil society as well religious communities individually and collectively became a powerful force in dismantling the Apartheid regime and its policies of racial, cultural and religious superiority. Progressive leaders from the respective faith communities were actively involved in the freedom struggle. Each articulated their response to the unjust and dehumanizing policies of apartheid from within their respective theological standpoints. The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa in 1893 served as a catalyst in organizing the Indian community, including the Hindus into a cohesive force in the fight against colonialism and racism. This article seeks to provide the Hindu response to Colonialism and Apartheid

and its violations of fundamental freedoms, human rights and democracy. It also seeks to articulate the position of Hinduism in shaping a democratic free and secular South Africa.

■ Introduction

The abolition of slavery in most British colonies in 1834 resulted in a new form of cheap, bonded labor which replaced the slave trade. Following so soon after the abolition of slavery the indentured labor system sought to fill the vacuum by providing the British Empire with cheap labor. This informed a new form of slavery and exploitation of the indentured workers, drawn from the Indian sub-continent and shipped to the far-flung colonies of the Empire in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Southeast Asia to work mainly in the sugar plantations. (Saunders, 1984)

The history of the Indian community of South

Africa traces its origins to the indentured system. Over a period of approximately 50 years between 1860-1910 some 150 000 Indians arrived in South Africa. The majority of the indentured laborers were drawn from four provinces in India, namely, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh (UP), Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. Over 85% of the indentured laborers were of the Hindu faith with Muslims and Christians being in the minority. In addition to the indentured Indians there was another smaller stream of immigrant's termed passenger Indians mainly comprising traders and some professionals. They paid for their own passage and were from Gujarat. From the early days of their arrival in South Africa the Indians who were assigned to the sugar plantations in the British colony of Natal faced racial discrimination and several repressive laws which treated them as second class citizens under the Union of South Africa.

Thus the beginnings of Hinduism and the advent of the Hindu community in South Africa is rooted in a history of discrimination, exploitation and repressive legislation which impacted both the individual and the community's evolution. It can be safely asserted that Hinduism in South Africa from its onset was located in an environment of subjugation, struggle and exploitation. It also heralded the fight for the fundamental rights, dignity, respect and sanctity of the individual and the community.

The indentured Indian migrants in South Africa was confronted with an alien environment on many fronts. It was their first exposure to Africa and their interaction with the majority indigenous African community. In addition to the hostile and repressive employment conditions the Girmitya's (indentured) also confronted the challenges of racial segregation, religious, cultural and linguistic isolation. This was

more pronounced among the Hindu migrants. The majority of South Africans were of the Christian faith and Islam was already part of the South African religious landscape. During the 17th and early 18th centuries the Dutch controlled the East Indies and exiled many Muslim liberation fighters from the Dutch East Indies to the Cape of Good Hope. One of these political exiles was Sheikh Yusuf of Banten, Indonesia who arrived in the Cape in June 1694. Sheikh Yusuf is credited with organising the first cohesive Muslim community in South Africa (Mahida, 2022).

The Hindu migrants in South Africa took solace in their religious and cultural identities and practices as a means to escape the daily persecution they faced. This soon found expression in both individual and community religious practices. As early as 1869, the first Hindu temple in Natal was constructed. This was followed by the establishment of a number of Sanghas and community organisations.

■ The Gandhi Influence

With the enactment of a number of discriminatory laws that began to be passed in the 1890's, the roots of the Apartheid era began taking shape in South Africa. It was this environment of a racially segregated and toxic social landscape that greeted Mahatma Gandhi as a young lawyer, upon his arrival in South Africa in May 1893. Gandhi travelled to South Africa to represent a local Indian merchant in a legal dispute. The harsh South African landscape characterised by racial discrimination, religious and cultural stereotyping and human rights abuse was to have a profound impact on Gandhi.

This catapulted him into the political arena in South Africa. It was in South Africa that Gandhi's worldview underwent a major metamorphosis based

on both his personal experience of racial subjugation and abuse as well as the unjust and discriminatory treatment of the Indian and African communities.

The beginnings of a Hindu response to Human Rights violations and the agitation for the civil rights and liberties as well as social reforms of the indentured community is to be found in Gandhi's philosophy of Ahimsa and Satyagraha. Both these liberating and revolutionary concepts were developed and articulated by Gandhi during his stay in South Africa. According to Gandhi, it was the Bhagavad Gita that was instrumental in shaping his philosophy of nonviolence and activism against injustice and human subjugation.

The two Settlements (ashrams) that Gandhi established in South Africa, namely the Phoenix settlement in Durban and Tolstoy farm in Johannesburg had both overlapping political and spiritual goals. One of the unintended consequences of Gandhi's sojourn to South Africa was his catharsis into both a political activist and a spiritual philosopher. The decadent and inhumane environment of a racially repressive South African government underpinned by 'white' superiority and the oppression and subjugation of the black majority population served as Gandhi's laboratory in his 'Experiments with Truth.' Gandhi drew strength and inspiration from his own religious and cultural background in framing a response to the de-humansing treatment of both the Indian and African community by the Government. Gandhi's outspoken views against these discriminatory laws and practices soon thrust him into the limelight as a public figure where he urged the people not to be docile and accept racial inequality and discrimination, but instead organize themselves and work assiduously in inculcating a

sense of community. On the political front, Gandhi's fight for human dignity culminated in the formation of the first organized liberation movement in South Africa, the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) in May 1894.

In tandem with his political activism, Gandhi was also planting the seeds of political Hinduism in South Africa. In fact, the roots of Hindu liberation philosophy in South Africa can be traced to Gandhi's philosophy of Ahimsa and Satyagraha.

In the first instance Gandhi sought moral guidance in the Bhagavad Gita which inspired him to view his work amongst the people as a higher form of Self fulfilment. Gandhi in his activism put into practice teachings from the Bhagavad Gita in his own moral and political actions. For Gandhi Shri Krishna's advice to Arjuna emphasized the superiority of duty over choice in defining action. He based moral and political action on duty (Dharma), not as something generic but specific to each person given their circumstances (Swadharma). Doing one's duty therefore meant focusing not on the end so much as the means of moral and political action (Nishkarma) (Devji, 2019). Gandhi translated and interpreted the Gita as the gospel of Selfless Service. As he stated 'while acting remember that action leads to bondage unless it is performed in a spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice means exerting one's self for the benefit of others, in a word it means service.' He further notes that 'when Brahma created the Universe, He created sacrifice along with it, as it were and said to humankind, go forth into the world serve one another and prosper. Look upon all creatures as God, serve them as God' (Gandhi, 2009). It is this vision of the unity of all existence that was the catalyst in launching the civil disobedience movement in South Africa against the

unjust Asiatic Registration Act in July 1907 which was designed to humiliate, harass and eventually expel the Indian community from the province of Transvaal. While some viewed Gandhi's passive resistance campaign as a sign of weakness he made it clear that the resistance was out of moral strength rather than any weakness and coined the term Satyagraha (firmness in truth) in November 1907.

Passive resistance or Satyagraha was to become a major weapon of the oppressed masses in South Africa in the fight against the Apartheid regime for a just and democratic South Africa underlining the legacy and influence of Gandhi in the fight for Human Dignity and freedom of the oppressed majority in South Africa. Gandhi's transformation into a political activist in South Africa was to have a profound impact in invigorating India's freedom struggle. However, Gandhi's political philosophy was to also influence the fight against colonialism, oppression, racism and the violation of human rights in several parts of the world. Martin Luther King Jr. on several occasions acknowledged the impact of Gandhi on his life as well as the American Civil Rights movement (Little, 2022).

Although Gandhi left South Africa and returned to India in 1914 after 21 years his influence was to be profoundly felt throughout the duration of South Africa's freedom struggle. Gandhi also served as a source of political inspiration to Nelson Mandela who was deeply inspired by Gandhi's philosophy of Satya and Ahimsa. At the inaugural ceremony of the Gandhi Memorial in South Africa in 1993 Mandela stated 'Gandhi is most revered for his commitment to non-violence and the Congress movement (African National Congress) was strongly influenced by this Gandhian philosophy. The Mahatma is an integral

part of our history because it is here that he first experimented with truth: here that he demonstrated his characteristic firmness in pursuit of justice: here that he developed Satyagraha as a philosophy and method of struggle.' Both Gandhi and Mandela identified with the oppressed irrespective of race, ethnicity, religion or nationality. They both believed that the inhumane, unjust and discriminatory treatment of humanity must be firmly opposed and the oppressors overthrown (The Quint, 2017).

■ **The Apartheid Era: A Hindu Response**

The institutionalization of Apartheid and its policies of racial segregation and white supremacy when the National Party assumed power in 1948 further condemned the majority of the population who were termed 'nonwhite' to a life of discrimination, suffering and abuse.'

The Freedom Struggle in South Africa since the beginning of the 20th Century took on a new urgency in bringing to the fore popular resistance led in the main by the major liberation movements as well as civil society structures including the religious communities.

The inhumane treatment and discriminatory laws that the Black community were subjected to demanded that the Faith Communities pronounce on these repressive laws and the dehumanizing treatment of South Africans. It also called them to act in opposing the Apartheid regime and to urge their adherence to stand up against the oppressive regime and defy the unjust laws. Within the Hindu community a number of individuals joined the ranks of the banned African National Congress, while others campaigned against the government, mainly through the Natal Indian Congress (NIC),

the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) and the United Democratic Front (UDF).

A number of Hindus were incarcerated by the Apartheid regime, some being imprisoned on Robben Island alongside Nelson Mandela. At the community level while several Hindu Organisations actively spoke out and opposed the Apartheid regime, many chose to remain apolitical. However, one cannot detract from the fact, as noted earlier, that the foundation of political Hinduism in South Africa as well as Hindu liberation theology was firmly laid by Gandhi who both inspired and influenced Hindu activism against the immorality of Apartheid.

Several leaders from within the Hindu Community attempted to articulate a Hindu response to Apartheid. There was the recognition that for religion to be relevant and meaningful it must address the suffering of the people and be actively engaged in the struggle for Freedom and democracy.

As Swami Vivekananda notes ‘ a hundred thousand men and woman fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the lord, and nerved to lions courage by the sympathy for the poor, the fallen and the downtrodden, should go over the length and breath of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social rising up, the gospel of equality’ Vivekananda 1947. Swami Vivekananda preached the gospel of social equality (Vivekananda, 1947). And of the upliftment and emancipation of the masses as a historical necessity. This is at the core of his Neo Vedanta philosophy echoing the teachings of the Upanishads. The very unjust laws of Apartheid were the antithesis of the oneness of all existence,’ as one of the central tenets of Hinduism. As the opening verse of the Isha Upanishad notes ‘ all this whatsoever moves in this

universe, and those that move not, is covered or pervaded by the lord’ (Kaulacharya, 2013).

The repressive laws coupled with the undue and disproportionate use of force employed by the Apartheid police against individuals and Organisations opposing apartheid violated the fundamental purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees fundamental freedoms and Human Rights. It is therefore not surprising that the United Nations declared Apartheid as a crime against humanity. The arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals, house arrests, banning orders and lengthy periods of imprisonment as in the case of Nelson Mandela who spent 27 years in prison coupled with the frequent use of torture and executions as instruments employed by the Apartheid regime to not only silence but obliterate all opposition voices. This was in complete violation of the fundamental principles and precepts of Hinduism which affirms the spiritual worth and dignity of all life. Hinduism does not sanction discrimination on the basis of race as enshrined in Apartheid since racism is inconsistent with the Hindu understanding of the nature of the human being. Also racism blatantly denies the fundamental view of the unity and equality of all life. In Hinduism violence inflicted on the human person or any life form is violence against the Supreme Being since the Individual Self (Atman) is but an expression of the Supreme Reality (Brahman). This is clearly enunciated by Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita ‘ he who sees the Self abiding in all beings and all Beings in the Self sees equally. He who sees Me everywhere and sees all in me, I am not lost to him, nor is he lost to me’ (Bhagavad Gita Verse 6, 29-30) (Bhaktivedanta, 1988).

The central idea of the unity and oneness of all existence as espoused in Hinduism is in direct conflict with the divisive and inhumane practice of Apartheid. The Hindu worldview therefore made it a moral obligation on all to oppose and overthrow such an unjust regime. Again Shri Krishna provides clear directive in this regard ‘whenever Dharma deteriorates and Adharma rises, I shall appear. To protect the good destroy the evil (Adharma) and restore Dharma I shall come time and again (Bhagavad Gita Verse 4, 7-8) (Bhaktivedanta, 1988).

The Apartheid regime was a manifestation of Adharma and as a Hindu in South Africa there was a religious and moral obligation to rise against such an unjust regime and ensure the establishment of a just, inclusive, equal and democratic society wherein the fundamental worth dignity, respect and freedom of all was guaranteed through the establishment of a Dharmic society.

■ Conclusion

The Apartheid regime was finally defeated through the concerted action of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) as well as the support of the International Community. This heralded the establishment of a free democratic, nonracial and nonsexist South Africa in April 1994 with the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as President. The Bill of Rights as contained in the Constitution of South Africa is the cornerstone of Democracy and sets out the fundamental rights of all South Africans. It affirms the democratic values of Human Dignity, Equality and Freedom including religious freedom. From a Hindu perspective the journey from colonialism, racism and Apartheid to a free democratic South Africa finds resonance in the Mahabharata war. In South Africa the unjust inhumane and repressive

regime of the Apartheid Government was overthrown and defeated to establish the rule of righteousness (Dharma) morality and a just, free, inclusive and democratic society.

The Preamble of South Africa’s Constitution captures the journey from the injustice of the past to the creation of a democratic order wherein recognition is given to the religious bases of our society as the phrase, ‘may God protect our people,’ recognizes the divine worth of all South Africans. Furthermore, the phrase ‘God bless South Africa’ accords due respect and primacy of place to the divine in the new South Africa.

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Religion Used As Political Tool To Embed Colonialism And Apartheid

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■ Introduction

This article uses three aspects of South African history to illustrate how religion was used as a political tool to embed colonial rule, maintain Apartheid and even condone gross human rights violations. The three aspects include how the Dutch and British who colonised South Africa, strategically converted the indigenous persons in South Africa as a well-considered strategy to embed and maintain their colonial rule. In so doing they denied the religious and cultural identity of the people and imposed Christianity on them. The second aspect discusses how the promoters of Apartheid used the bible and Christianity as a justification to implement apartheid, inequality and gross human rights violations. This once again expands the theme of religion being used as a tool to promote political self-serving gain by

one group of people against the majority. The third aspect is the bringing of the indentured labourers from India to South Africa, treating them like slaves and luring them to convert to Christianity as a strategy to remove their identity so that their worker/ slave status remained.

■ The colonial weapon of religious indoctrination

The Dutch came to South Africa around 1652 with a view of expanding their colonial footprint. During these times there was war in Europe, disease and a quest to find new land. The Dutch immediately saw that South Africa and the Cape had fertile agricultural land. They had found a golden lucrative land and had to do whatever was necessary to make it theirs. A key aspect of this was to ensure that the local people presented no risk to them. They knew that they had to

colonise the minds and bodies of the local people if they wanted to rule the land and take its riches.

The indigenous people of South Africa practised many traditional religions based on their ethnicity. This included the worship of the ancestors, nature and spirit guides. Indigenous persons belonged to different tribes. Each tribe had their own dialect, cultural practices, forms of worship and they lived in a demarcated piece of land as a community. Each tribe also had their own leader or chief who was the custodian of the land. The Dutch first encountered The Khoi San people in the Cape. The value system of Koi San was evolved. They lived in synchronicity with nature. They used sophisticated paintings as a means of communication and preservation of their identities and history. Their value system was non-confrontational. The missionaries (those that were brought by the colonialists to convert the people to Christianity) and the colonialists knew that if they were to thrive and eliminate the indigenous persons as a risk, they had to learn their value systems. In addition, a known strategy of the colonialists was to dilute the nature and culture of the local people. This they felt would weaken their identity and a weak identity will serve to enhance the rule of the colonialists. They then brought slaves from Malaysia into the Cape. Inter relationships between the Koi San people and the Malaysian people ensued, which saw the evolution of the Muslim religion in the region.

The colonialists also saw that the tribal system was a threat to their goal of taking over the country and ruling over it. They then knew that they needed to psychologically infiltrate the belief system and the structure of the tribes. They knew that if they replaced the belief system of the tribes with another

one, this will erode the tribal system. A breakdown of the tribal system will give greater power to the colonial rule and acceptance of their dominance. The Dutch brought with them the Christian faith and through the years the English and Dutch as part of their system of colonisation through structured interventions infiltrated the African communities and tribes and converted them to the Christian faith. This was further entrenched by the British colonisation of South Africa.

The British established South Africa as a colony around 1806. The British initially wanted to secure the Cape as part of the route to the East, but then quickly identified how lucrative an asset South Africa could be to the queen and the British Empire. They knew that they would have to fight the Dutch for the land but they were prepared to do that as the reward of such a rich land was worth it. They found a fertile country rich in agriculture potential and minerals. The British history entrenched the principle of state and church being one. They saw loyalty to queen as being synonymous to loyalty to the church. The British also brought missionaries to convert the local South African people to Christianity to also entrench their dominance. These missionaries referred to the local people as heathens or non-believers. This mass conversion was a form of psychological warfare because the intent was to eradicate the faiths and cultures of the local people and replace this with a system owned by the colonialists where the god too was white. This they believed would then strengthen the notion in the psyche of the local people that the white race is superior and the god is white and should be followed and worshiped. This also served to undermine and eradicate any other forms of worship. The colonialists through the church

embedded themselves into the lives of the local Africans through providing schools in communities which were run by monks and provided medical care facilities run by monks etc. The locals then started believing that they needed their children to learn the languages of the colonial master and to be educated by their masters to prevent themselves from being illuminated. This became a survival instinct. The schools taught that Jesus and the Christian faith was the only way and criticised any other form of traditional worship. They also made the culture and identity of the local people feel as if it was inferior and they had to emulate the master's lifestyle. The schools replaced indigenous languages with English and Afrikaans (a language adapted from Dutch). The provision of basic medical care by the church was also very strategic. If the church provided lifesaving medical care to the sick, then this has the potential of embedding the notion that the Christian system is the powerful saviour of human life and this also embedded the notion that the worship of the god of the colonialists was a necessary lifesaving intervention.

The entrenchment of the Dutch and later the British rule in South Africa saw the majority of persons being used as slaves or forced labour. This naturally contributed to them not being able to live freely and follow their cultures and forms of worship according to their original native means.

Battles and wars were also fought between the English and the Dutch over the years. The indigenous people were also used as soldiers and slaves in these wars and battles which lead to the further dilution of their traditional lifestyle and forms of worship.

We thus see that religion was used as a strategic tool by the colonialists to gain control and power

of the land and the people that they discovered and wished to control.

■ Scriptural justification for Apartheid

The progressive world looks with pride and reverence at South Africa and its journey from Apartheid to freedom. Apartheid refers to the governments system and design through laws and practices used to separate people based on race. The rationale for this separation is that the white race is a superior race and other races are inferior to the white race. In so doing white people experienced privilege and non-white people were discriminated against and suffered severe human rights violations by the white people. The private sector also discriminated against non-white people as the white people owned and dominated the private sector. What is often hidden and not spoken freely is that the Apartheid Government and those that supported it justified this discrimination using a scriptural justification. The promoters of Apartheid cited the Christian bible as the source that provided that the white race was superior and should be preserved. To preserve white persons meant that other non-white persons should be given a lower status and be made to live in inferior conditions to white persons. They then felt that they needed to implement this scriptural instruction. This then gave rise to the separatist laws, discriminatory laws and harsh measures that lead to the discrimination and inequality against non-white persons by white persons including the government of the day. Examples of such laws included not allowing non white persons to vote or be placed in any government positions, placing non whites to live in areas far from the cities in poor conditions, arresting and brutally punishing non whites if they could not provide prescribed identification of who

they are, not providing basic medical care or schools to non-whites, promoting non whites to work in slave like conditions , arresting and punishing non whites who broke any laws or entered areas like beaches or areas designated for white persons, prohibition of marriages or social interaction between white and non-white persons and persons or groupings who planned or protested against any of these human right violations were punished brutally even through death and having separate inferior schools, hospitals and residential areas designated for non-white people. There was a small minority in the Church that aligned with groupings that protested against these human right violations and the system of prejudice and inequality. Many black persons accepted Christianity after most persons were converted. It was felt that the black persons emotionally identified with Christianity as they could relate to a suffering Jesus Christ who suffered and died for his followers. Most black persons were suffering discrimination, poverty, inequality and other forms of hardship. They needed a saviour who could save them from their brutal lives. The irony again is that the colonialists gave Christianity to the black persons and marketed it as a religion which would save them from suffering yet most of the suffering was caused by the white persons themselves. The black persons however did see that there was some conflict in rejecting discrimination and Apartheid and accepting Christianity as it was. Black persons during the years of Apartheid were converted to Christianity but they were also not allowed in the Churches of their colonial masters. South Africa then saw the birth of a different, adapted version of Christianity which was termed the black liberation theology. The Black Liberation Theology took Christianity and re defined

it using African roots norms and value systems.

Ironically after the birth of Democracy in South Africa the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up in 1995 with the aim of helping persons come to terms with the past and to ensure that there was reconciliation. The TRC gave effect to its mandate through three committees. These included the Amnesty Committee, The Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee and the Human Rights Violations Committee. Members of the public were given a chance to express their regret at failing to prevent human rights violations and to demonstrate their commitment to reconciliation. The central purpose of the commission was to foster reconciliation and forgiveness among perpetrators and victims of Apartheid. The Commission was chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a first black African Anglican Bishop and theologian who was known for his anti-apartheid and pro human rights work. It thus can be seen that the Commission is based on the Christian ethos of forgiveness and reconciliation. As described above, the irony is that the Christian premise which was a justification for Apartheid was also used a basis to heal or address the evils of Apartheid. A further development was that perpetrators of Apartheid and gross human right violations at the Commission testified at the TRC commission that Apartheid, and the inequality and discrimination was an instruction of God as contained in the bible. They felt that they had to implement this scriptural instruction and this justification made them feel no remorse or guilt to carry out such human right violations and human sufferings.

The mandate of the Human Rights Committee of the TRC was to investigate human right abuses that occurred between 1960 to 1994 based on statements

made to the TRC, Identity of victims, the nature and extent of the harm they suffered and whether the harm was the effect of deliberate planning by the state, any organisation or individual was established. Victims of gross human rights violations were referred to the Reparation Committee.

Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee was mandated to provide victim support to ensure that the TRC process restores victims' dignity, and to formulate policy proposals and recommendations on healing of survivors and communities

The Amnesty committee was tasked to consider applications for Amnesty for any act, omission or offence associated with a political objective between March 1960 to May 1994. If a perpetrator was granted amnesty, then the perpetrator would be free from criminal prosecution of that act. After the death of Apartheid the South African Constitution was adopted in 1996. There was a conscious need to enshrine in law that all races are equal and there should be no discrimination including discrimination based on religion.

■ **The Indian Diaspora in South Africa**

Sufferings in various parts of India including famine, disease and other hardships resulted in persons leaving their birth places to look for places to survive. Some documented history reveal that the suffering was caused by the British where they intentionally caused famine and brought disease so that this could initiate and promote migration. Other recent reports also allege that some of the Indians brought from India were political prisoners who had protested against the British colonial rule in India. The British then lured the people that were suffering to move to work as slaves in British colonies like Mauritius, Fiji and South Africa. The sufferings in the

land of India served to benefit the colonialists again. The master plan worked. Most of these persons who came from India endured great hardship included physical and sexual abuse on ships and worked under very difficult conditions. The intent of the British colonialists was to remove the identity of the Indians who came to work so that they would remain slaves with no identity and could be controlled. Later some more women and children came to South Africa. What is important is that the persons mostly upheld their Hindu religion and cultural practises despite the hardships that they faced. They built community halls and temples where they practised their religion. There were attempts by the colonial church to convert the Hindus to Christianity through similar means that were used to convert the African indigenous persons. This included the provision of schools and medical care by the church. Indians who had converted to Christianity were rewarded handsomely by getting land, gold and better treatment from their colonial masters. There was a small number of Hindus who converted to Christianity but most persons remained steadfast in their faith. We also saw that many Hindus saw Apartheid as an injustice and evil against the people. This again shows that religion was used as a political tool to control the Indian slaves/indentured labourers. Over the years even today the church still tries to lure Hindus who are financially needy to convert to Christianity by promising them with material goods. Another key strategy used by British was to create division among people and to use this division to entrench their dominance. The colonial masters created division among the Hindi and Tamil speaking Indian labourers/slaves and used this division strategically by not regarding them collectively as Hindus which is their common

religion. Again, any unity would serve as a threat to the British rule of torture and divisions created smaller groups as opposed to one big group. Many Hindus and even Muslims in their individual and organisational capacities joined against the fight against discrimination, oppression and Apartheid. Many Indians over the years lost their lives, were imprisoned and had to even leave the country as punishment for fighting against Apartheid. Hindu organisations also advocated that all religious rights should be protected in the Constitution and no one religion should have dominance and priority over another. This victory was achieved when the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides that there should be no discrimination based on religion and people should feel free to practice the religion of their choice.

■ **Conclusion**

So, we see that the Christian religion was promoted and used as a political tool to embed the British and white colonial and separatist rule to the indigenous people of South Africa and the Indians. We also see that the indigenous culture and forms of worship of the local people and Hindus were not recognised and was completely denied. This denial also served to give no regard to these people and was a strategy to also embed the colonialist and Apartheid rule.

■ **Disclaimer**

The observations and opinions in this article are that of the writer Raksha Singh Semnarayan, obtained through personal involvement and experiences working in South African non-governmental

organisations, South African Communities, and other varied experience sought in her career as an activist during and post-Apartheid.

■ **Biography of the writer**

Raksha Singh Semnarayan is an admitted attorney of the High Court of South Africa and is currently based in South Africa. She has a Bachelor of Social Science, Bachelor of Laws, Masters of Laws and Masters of Business Administration degrees. She is an independent Executive Consultant currently specialising in the area of financial regulatory law, telecommunications and corporate governance. She held the position of Head of Regulatory at the Central Bank and Chief Legal Officer of corporates. She was part of the drafting and formulating of international financial and telecommunications policy and laws, representing South Africa at international forums and various organisations in Parliament. Raksha works with non-government bodies in the field of social justice. She contributed to the drafting of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa representing Hindu organisations, women and youth advocacy movements.

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How integrated conceptions of earth rights and human rights in indigenous traditions can teach the global north about true sustainability

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■ Abstract

The deeply spiritual and practical relationship between Indigenous cultures and the earth is one founded on a holistic worldview where everything and everyone is interconnected. This is a conceptual framework that industrialized society has long pilloried, but is now being forced to confront as it grapples with supply chain issues, increasing levels of homelessness, inward migration and a cost-of-living crisis resulting from complex intersections relating to conflict, climate change and the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 response measures.

Conceptions of earth right and human rights can both be found in indigenous societies, but are seamlessly integrated in support of each other. This stands in contrast to conceptions of earth rights and

human rights in international and domestic legal systems where these frameworks can clash, for example either through denying Nature Rights, or through a forest guard system which views nature as a distinct entity to be protected from humans, and denies many indigenous rights as a result.

As we are forced headlong into a world of complex global emergencies as a result of the abuse and negligence of the West, indigenous ways of being have much to teach industrialized society, and indeed may provide the only option for sustainable ecosystems that are still welcoming of humans. There is a sense that many of us need to decolonize ourselves of deeply rooted, but false ways of being with the world, in order to achieve this.

1.1 Human rights frameworks Core human rights instruments

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the UN General Assembly after World War II in 1948. Together, the UDHR and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are known as the International Bill of Human Rights .

In addition to the Bill of Rights are core human rights treaties such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) 1969; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1981; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) 1987; Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1990; and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006 .

The principles contained in these treaties can also be found in, and are complemented by, regional treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) ; as well as thematic treaties such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions on child labour .

UN human rights instruments are legally binding treaties. This means that states which ratify the treaty are legally bound by it, while states that do not are neither bound by the treaty obligations or entitled to invoke those obligations against other States Parties .

■ Criticisms of the UN system

While there are now 193 United Nations member states (and an original 51 members in 1945) , the majority are the result of colonial empires or colonial demarcations which are relatively young (Ethiopia for example, is the only country in sub-

Saharan Africa that was never colonized). This compares to indigenous nations which have existed for thousands of years, but which are subsumed by the dominant worldview and international legislative frameworks determined by United Nations (UN) member states.

The UDHR - as a declaration rather than convention or covenant which States choose to ratify - is not legally binding on States. However, as the founding instrument of the body of international human rights law, the UDHR has huge influence, but is not without controversy. It has been criticized for being based on Western political philosophy which provides only one particular interpretation of human rights .

Likewise, the Paris Climate Agreement - adopted in 2015 to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius (°C), preferably to 1.5°C, compared to pre-industrial levels - is viewed by indigenous activists as a trade agreement that does nothing but privatize, commodify and sell carbon offsets for ocean, forest and agricultural lands, allowing those who are the most responsible for greenhouse emissions to not only buy their way out of compliance, but also make a profit from it . The Agreement omits any mention of the rights of Indigenous peoples, and does not address the demand for payments for reparations and restoration of loss of and damage to indigenous lands, territories and livelihoods .

The commodification of the earth is found in other agreements such as the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea which states (article 82) that “The coastal State shall make payments or contributions in kind in respect of the exploitation of the non-living resources of the continental shelf” . Exploitation is

acceptable if money changes hands.

The international human rights system does however, explicitly acknowledge the relationship between environmental degradation and human rights. For example, a draft UN General Assembly resolution on human rights and climate change 2021 recognizes that climate change, biodiversity loss and other types of environmental degradation, impact the right to adequate food, and exacerbate disease emergence and increase the impact of pandemics. And in October 2021, the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva passed a resolution recognizing access to a healthy and sustainable environment as a universal right, heralded as a victory for environmental activists. Although Human Rights Council resolutions are not legally binding, they act as a catalyst for governments to amend their constitutions, thus paving the way for formal recognition of the respective right .

The right to a sustainable environment finds echoes in Māori culture, with the concept of “Ko ahau te taiao, ko te taiao, ko ahau” – the ecosystem defines my quality of life (also translated as I am the environment and the environment is me).

There are severe short-comings of a human rights-based approach to environmental protection, as it may ignore important aspects of the environment that are not reducible to human needs and interests. It is therefore necessary to consider the limits of looking to human rights for environmental standards.

1.2 The rights of indigenous peoples

“Indigenous peoples have lived sustainably in this land for thousands of years. I am absolutely sure that our societies could live without yours, but I’m not so sure that your society can continue to live without ours”, Winona Laduke, Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe) member of the White Earth Nation

■ Who are indigenous peoples?

Indigenous peoples have retained social, cultural, linguistic, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live, sometimes for thousands of years . Indigenous peoples make up 6.2 percent of the global population and comprise over 476 million individuals. Their cultural heritage and landscapes are diverse, representing 5,000 different cultures (nations) and speaking more than 4,000 languages in 90 countries.

Nearly 70 million indigenous people depend on forests for their livelihoods, and many more are farmers, hunter gatherers or pastoralists . Due to their close relationship with the land, indigenous communities thrive by living in harmony with their surroundings. This involves a deeply held respect for the balance of life, and not taking more than they need in order to allow an ecosystem to flourish; that ecosystem including their own flourishing.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

“The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is the most comprehensive statement of the rights of Indigenous peoples ever developed, giving prominence to collective rights to a degree unprecedented in international human rights law”, Cree Nation Government 2015

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (note this is a declaration and not a legally binding covenant) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 after over 20 years of complex and contentious negotiations . Tellingly four (colonial) states voted against the declaration: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America (USA).

Since then, these four countries have now endorsed the Declaration .

The declaration guides States in developing law and policy that have an impact on indigenous peoples, in the areas of the right to self-determination; the rights to lands, territories and resources; economic, social and cultural rights; equality and non-discrimination; and collective rights. Some of these areas contain rights and freedoms (such as self-determination and non-discrimination) which are set out in the binding international human rights treaties outlined above .

UNDRIP recognizes collective as well as individual rights in a move heralded as groundbreaking, as prior to that, the international human rights system had been slow to endorse the concept of group rights, with the exception of the right to self-determination. The Declaration states that “indigenous peoples possess collective rights which are indispensable for their existence, well-being and integral development as peoples”.

■ **Obstacles to enforcement of indigenous rights include:**

- The fact that countries such as Canada and the USA have yet to develop national action plans to codify the rights in UNDRIP into their domestic legal systems, thus undermining the spirit of their support for the declaration;

- Even where there are favourable court rulings, these may not be implemented, such as in Norway, where a supreme court decision in favour of the Sami people has yet to be enforced, and in Kenya, where the government has failed to execute recommendations from the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights to return ancestral lands to the Endorois people who were evicted to create a wildlife reserve ;

- The need to give enhanced participation status to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) so that it can participate in the UN General Assembly process on an equal footing with UN member states .

Violations of the rights of indigenous peoples relating to the environment

Indigenous peoples from around the world share common threats to the protection of their rights. Key among them is access to land, which is a cross-cutting issue that impacts directly on the enjoyment of a number of human rights including access to livelihoods, and social and cultural rights. Growing food insecurity, climate change and rapid urbanization have also refocused attention on how land is being (mis)used, controlled and managed by States and private actors .

Forced eviction for millions of people result in their living in extreme poverty and destitution, which has knock on effects to other rights including the right to health, education and to be free from violence and discrimination. Some of these evictions are done in the name of (colonial) conservation (see below).

“Co-violations” of rights occur when governments, industries, or both violate both nature’s rights and human rights with the same action, and are expanding worldwide. Thirty percent of the cases examined by the Earth Law Centre, involved harm to indigenous peoples’ rights and 28 percent of human rights violations examined involved at least one murder . These multiple stressors can have cumulative and compounded effects on Indigenous peoples, their culture and resilience.

Examples of indigenous rights violations according to UNDRIP articles are as follows:

States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned to obtain their free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) (Articles 10, 18, 19, 29 of UNDRIP): State and corporate actors often do not recognize or respect the right to FPIC. Instead, the dissent of indigenous peoples is used to legitimize their stigmatization and criminalization, and violence, killings, and impunity . Indigenous lands are at times declared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to be World Heritage sites without consultation with the indigenous peoples affected. In Asia, indigenous lands continue to be declared protected areas without prior consultation with the affected indigenous communities and without measures to ensure their involvement in managing conservation . In Venezuela, the declaration of the Caura National Park in 2017 was given without FPIC involving the Ye'kwana and Sanëma peoples who have been demanding the recognition of their territories for over 15 years.

The right to practice and revitalize cultural traditions and customs (Article 11): The close connection to place, to their land, of indigenous peoples is inextricably linked to cultural practices. The northern island of the Ainu in Japan was annexed by the Government in 1868 with their language banned, and their culture forbidden in an attempt to make them extinct through assimilation. Today, more than a fifth of the Amazon is severely degraded and the entire ecosystem is facing collapse. The impacts of this destruction fall hardest on the indigenous peoples who have lived in and protected the region for generations, with their culture woven around their sense of place.

Protection against all forms of violence (Articles

7 and 22): Indigenous peoples are the earth's frontline defenders, as they struggle to preserve their spiritual and practical relationship with their land, their cultural identity, and right to self-determination. Between 2015 and the first half of 2019, 232 leaders of indigenous communities were assassinated in the Amazonia region . The three most targeted categories of human rights defenders in the Americas were: land, environmental, and indigenous peoples' rights (40%).

Indigenous peoples shall not be forcibly removed from their lands or territories (Article 10):

Land grabbing for resource extraction has led to mass forced evictions of indigenous peoples and other gross human rights violations. Article 10 requires FPIC and agreement of just and fair compensation and, where possible, the option of return. However, this is little evidenced. By 1920, 99 percent of original White Earth Reservation lands was in non-indigenous hands. Three generations were forced into poverty, and were internally displaced.

The protection of traditional knowledge and intellectual property: In some countries, 80 percent of the population depend on traditional medicine, including for primary healthcare . Intellectual property violations such as unauthorized use by third parties of traditional medicinal plant knowledge are not adequately addressed by UNDRIP or the existing international intellectual property system. Many indigenous communities and governments have called for an international legal instrument providing such protection, one example of which is currently in draft form . FPIC also concerns violations relating to intellectual property rights, to combat unlawful and offensive appropriation of traditional knowledge, especially its spiritual, sacred and secret dimensions.

FPIC should be applied in the context of accessing such knowledge and sharing of the profits generated.

■ 1.3 Conceptions of earth rights

Many of the laws in our world serve property - they are based on ownership. But imagine a law that has a higher moral authority... a law that puts people and planet first. Imagine a law that starts from first do no harm, that stops this dangerous game and takes us to a place of safety”, Polly Higgins, 2015 Nature as a rights-bearing partner

Respect for earth rights or the rights of nature is the only foundation for truly sustainable living , as indigenous communities have understood for thousands of years. At its heart is the acknowledgement of nature as a rights-bearing partner with which humanity has co-evolved , which is very much akin to the indigenous worldview of humanity’s symbiosis with nature, and where decisions and values are based on what is good for the whole – where whole means the whole ecosystem, and not a utilitarian human perspective.

In contrast, legal systems around the world treat land and nature as property with no legal standing: The interests of human beings take precedence over the natural world, and the interests of property-owning humans over the landless. Recognizing that humans are not the only beings with rights is key to reducing the damage to the planet that this exploitative and extractive human-centric view perpetrates, and to addressing this blind spot in the legal system.

Rights of nature acknowledges that nature in all its life forms has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles. The ecosystem itself can be named as the injured party, with its own legal standing rights, in cases alleging rights

violations . Earth rights laws stop development and use of property that interferes with the functioning of ecosystems and natural communities, overruling the property owner in that regard .

Arguments against Nature Rights include viewing it as a religious creed, the promotion of which would impinge upon freedoms such as freedom of conscience. However, even if that were the case, indigenous peoples have the right to uphold it as a cultural value, and to promote its status in domestic or international law.

■ Earth rights in international law

“Civilization cannot wage a relentless war on life without losing the right to be called civilized. The idea of Rights of Nature or Rights of Mother Earth can address our dire need to truly become “civilized” in the highest sense of this word—meaning to live civilly with each other and our Earth, respecting both natural laws and the Earth’s ecosystems”, Osprey Orielle Lake, founder/president of the Women’s Earth and Climate Caucus

A proposed law on ecocide recognizes the intrinsic value of the natural world. The Stop Ecocide campaign was founded in 2017 to support the establishment of ecocide as an international crime, in order to forbid and prevent further devastation to life on Earth. Governments including Belgium, Chile, France, Mexico, Spain and West Papua have advocated for an ecocide law .

Part of this accountability to nature is a “true cost” economic model. This looks at all the costs associated with protecting the integrity of ecosystems for the entire cycle of production and transportation. Rather than polluting and destroying nature being incentivized by quick profits (and required by Executive Board accountability), this

approach makes it totally cost-prohibitive (as well as prohibited) to pollute and harm Nature.

Earth rights in domestic legislation

At least 30 countries have proposed or enacted laws which recognize the Rights of Nature. Examples include:

- **Bolivia's Mother Earth Law 2012:** The Mother Earth Law respects the balance between human life and the natural environment, and prioritizes the rights and knowledge of the country's majority indigenous population. The law came about after Bolivia hosted the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in April 2010, which also produced the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.

- **Ecuador's 2008 Constitution:** The constitution made Ecuador one of the first countries in the world to consider the Rights of Nature. This has supported favourable legal decisions upholding the rights of nature and of indigenous peoples against extractive industries.

- **India gives rights to Nature:** In 2022, the Madras High Court declared Mother Nature as a Living Being with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person. This follows a declaration of the glaciers including Gangotri and Yamunotri rivers as legal entities to preserve and conserve them.

- **Uganda's National Environment Act 2019:** This states that "Nature has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles, structure, functions and its processes in evolution. A person has a right to bring an action before a competent court for any infringement of rights of nature under this Act."

- **New Zealand Te Urewera Act 2013:** The Act

gives the Te Urewera National Park "all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person." There is no longer a requirement to demonstrate personal injury in order to protect the land; lawsuits "can be brought on behalf of the land itself." The aim of the Act is to establish and preserve in perpetuity a legal identity and protected status for Te Urewera for its intrinsic worth, its distinctive natural and cultural values, the integrity of those values, and for its national importance.

- **Sweden constitutional amendment:** A constitutional amendment has been proposed to create the right of nature to "exist, flourish, regenerate and evolve".

- **USA local ordinances:** In 2016, the Wisconsin Nation of Ho-Chunk became the first US tribe to adopt the rights of nature and in 2017 the Ponac Nation became the second. Over 24 communities in the United States have passed local ordinances, which recognize Rights of Nature to protect their ecosystems.

- **Minnesota USA rights of wild rice:** In 2018, the White Earth Band of Ojibwe and the 1855 Treaty Authority adopted Rights of Manoomin for on and off reservation protection of wild rice and the clean, fresh water resources and habitats in which it thrives. This right includes the right to a healthy climate system and a natural environment free from human-caused global warming impacts and emissions.

Further, more than 155 States have recognized some form of a right to a healthy environment in international agreements or their national constitutions, legislation or policies. Nations with constitutional protections for the right to a healthy environment have stronger environmental laws, enhanced enforcement, and greater government

accountability. As a result, they also have smaller ecological footprints, rank higher on comprehensive indices of environmental performance, and have reduced pollution faster .

2. Indigenous conceptions of earth and human rights

2.1 Indigenous approaches to earth rights and human rights

“There is no separation between the rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of Mother Earth”, Alliance of Guardians and Children of Mother Earth

■ A systems approach

Indigenous worldviews adopt a systems perspective which recognizes the complexity and interrelationship of all of life on this planet; something the West is seemingly only just beginning to grasp as a result of COVID-19 and climate breakdown, among other emergencies. Human beings are members of a community of life – not dominant monopolizes of it - and have distinct responsibilities to other members of that community – plant, animal, waters and otherwise.

In Māori culture, all living things are connected through mauri - a unifying life force that exists in all living and non-living things - so that the health or well-being of one member, affects the health and well-being of all other members . In Nepal, water, plants, trees, and animals are considered holy, and even given the status of gods and goddesses. Protecting jal (jungle) and jameen (water, forest, and land) is an age-old practice of Indigenous communities there, with a dharmic duty to have an abundant and flourishing planet .

The natural laws of mother earth and the connectedness and dependency of every being, mean that indigenous knowledge and culture inherently

support the flourishing of the ecosystem in which “nature” and “humans” are interconnected entities. Thus, the rights of nature are inherent in human rights and vica versa, and it is inconceivable to indigenous peoples that nature would not be a rights-bearer, just as humans are.

Chief Seattle, a Suquamish Tribe and Dkhw'Duw'Absh (Duwamish) chief sums this idea up well: “Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons and daughters of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves. We did not weave the web of life; We are merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves” .

Climate change is not seen as a simplistic environmental issue, but the result of an unjust economic system, built on inequality and the pursuit of endless growth, and over-exploiting Nature to the point of collapse. While ancient, these understandings are consistent with contemporary scientific understandings regarding the interrelated nature of the cosmos and the functioning of natural systems.

■ Human beings as part of an earth family

“Imagine this: The CEO who ordered the mining operation, the government official who sanctioned it, has the water balance in their own body destroyed, so they are always thirsty. Their head throbbing unrelentingly, unable to live without pain until they rectify their decision. Then and only then, is the balance in their own body and the earth’s balance restored. For when the earth is cut, so are we”, Elizabeth Harrop, When the Earth is Cut

Human beings are seen as part of a wider earth “family”. The Mapuche people see themselves as sons and daughters (buds) of the Earth: Mapu means Earth, while che means people. They believe that people, land and nature constitute a single entity.

The Māori word for land - whenua – is the same as for placenta, linking the earth with the human. All life is seen as being born from the womb of Papatūānuku, under the sea. The placentas from her womb float, forming islands of land. Traditionally, the whenua (placenta) and pito (umbilical cord) of newborns are buried in the earth, to reinforce the relationship between the newborn child and the land of their birth .

As women are also bearers of life, they are intrinsically linked together in Anishinaabekwe culture with the earth and its waters. An act against the waters through exploitation, is to commit an act of violence against women. Women are seen as guardians and stewards of ancestral lands and can often be found wearing garments made from their environment to represent how they are linked .

Bob Randall, a Yankunytjatjara elder and traditional owner of Uluru (Ayer's Rock) says of nature as family: “You feel you are living with family when you include everything that is alive in that space, and you grow up knowing these are all your family. You can never feel lonely in that situation. How can you when all around you are family members from this ground up to all the trees around you to the clouds, the birds flying, the animals and reptiles that are hidden in the shrub. It is a beautiful way of being. And the completeness of being who you are where you are is a really good feeling”. This worldview is in complete contrast to a consumerist view of individualized lack, and a hunger for material possessions to fill the void.

2.2 Natural law and customary law and practices

Respect for natural law

“You can’t negotiate with a beetle. You are now dealing with natural law. And if you don’t

understand natural law, you will soon”, Oren Lyons, Chief of the Onondaga Nation Council of Chiefs of the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, the Haudenosaunee

The worldviews, traditional knowledge and customary laws and practices of indigenous peoples are derived from the laws of the Earth, i.e. from natural law.

A word in the language of the Anishinaabekwe - minobimaatisiwin - describes the practice of living in harmony with natural law, in relationship with other individuals, with the land and all the things which are animate on the land. Minobimaatisiwin is an expression of cultural values which allow practices to be kept in in order and in check to create sustainable communities at one with the land . Winona LaDuke of the White Earth Nation sums up some of the principles of indigenous respect for natural law :

- Cyclical nature: Much in nature is cyclical: the movements of moons, the tides, the seasons, the human body. Time itself, in most indigenous worldviews, is cyclical.
- Balance in nature: The essential nature of human beings is to live in balance with nature: Most indigenous ceremonies are about the restoration of balance. Nature itself continually tries to balance, to equalize.
- Animate world: most of the world is animate which is reflected in language, such that most nouns are animate. Naming the aliveness of things (corn, tree, rice, stone) allows these things to have spirit and standing on their own.
- Reciprocity: When you take, you always give. This is about balance and equity, respect for the earth. There is a mutual respect for nature, as

nature supplies the resources needed to survive and the people caretaker nature.

- Take only what you need: When you take, you must take only what you need and leave the rest. If you take more than you need, you have brought about imbalance. This is a very big disgrace, a violation of natural law, and it leaves no guarantee of continued harvesting.

- Conspicuous distribution (not consumption): Events for sharing and giveaways carry much more honour than accumulation. The more you give away, the greater your honour.

These principles are embodied in many indigenous cultures. The Buryat people of the Lake Baikal region in Siberia say “To live a life of honour is to live with tegsh,” meaning to live in appreciation and balance with all of life. The Andean concept of Pachamama, is symbiosis between humankind and nature. Pachamama – the fertile and productive Mother Earth - has her own laws and rights. It is through compliance that one becomes a qamiri, one who is educated in the ways of life and who lives a full life in harmony with nature.

These concepts are embedded in the deeply held value systems of indigenous culture which have historically provided a rock-solid foundation for ‘doing the right thing’ in terms of nature conservation. Land is also seen as a cultural expression in and of itself. This is one of many reasons why colonialism was so disastrous, as peoples were removed from their intimately known landscapes which disconnected them from language (which intimately described that relationship and landscape) and their cultural heritage.

Māori leadership draws on Tikanga Māori (cultural authenticity) and a commitment to “the

Māori way of doing things”, despite the globalized world we live in and the immense pressure indigenous nations face to homogenize themselves.

■ Customary law and practices

Recognition of the rights of Nature is embedded in customary laws, in contrast to modern environmental laws which are anthropocentric in nature. The customary laws, customary practices and customary justice regulations of indigenous peoples – be they oral or in writing – thereby play an important role in respect for earth rights and human rights, and their inter-relationship. This includes the accumulation and use of unique spheres of indigenous knowledge over generations.

In Timor-Leste, tara bandu are local regulations and moral codes of conduct – “hanging prohibitions” as some of these rules were traditionally signalled by placing items in trees. Examples of tara bandu include prohibiting and penalizing the cutting and burning of forests and restricting hunting and fishing in specific locations during certain periods. These have expanded mangrove forests to protect the coastline and created remarkable gains for the coral reef ecosystem.

The strength of tara bandu is two-fold: firstly, through providing an effective, participatory and community-driven approach to forest and marine conservation by regulating the use of natural resources to ensure their sustainability; and secondly through strengthening traditional practices and community cohesion. In this way, cultural diversity is integral to biological diversity for maintaining sustainable societies, a premise reflected in other indigenous cultures.

An important part of customary practices with regard to community decision making is the

absence of the West's top-down approach to policy making or even of voting. Instead, matters may be resolved by consensus, which means everybody, or almost everybody, must agree. Oren Lyons of the Onondaga Nation comments: "The leadership has to know everybody or just about. You don't let your nation get beyond the point where that is possible. If it does, then you break off and you begin another one". Further, by addressing potential causes of conflict at a pre-emptive early stage, customary justice contributes to conflict prevention, unlike the reactive and perpetrator-focused approach of formal justice systems.

The Bhil of India have the long-standing tradition of Halma. This is the process of gathering to discuss problems facing the community. In 2016, 10,000 gathered from over 300 villages to agree to the building of over 100 contour trenches to conserve water, something of increasing importance as droughts have plagued the area. Previous to this meeting, it is estimated that around 11,000 trees had been planted along with three large ponds being constructed. Overall, around 20,000 Bhil have engaged with the idea of rebuilding the forest and adapting to climate change .

During the past decade, there has been growing recognition of the customary laws of indigenous peoples in constitutional and international law, and so the lines between customary and statutory legal systems have started to blur to positive effect. Three court rulings in the Americas provide evidence of indigenous narratives being recognized for the first time in statutory legal systems :

- On 7 November 2019, a verdict by the Constitutional Court of Guatemala recognized the spiritual and cultural relationship between indigenous people and water as a living entity, which therefore

could not be killed by contamination.

- On 6 February 2020, a decision by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights recognized the right to ancestral land in northern Salta Province, Argentina. With its verdict, the Inter-American Court set a precedent on the right to water, food, a healthy environment and cultural identity.

- On 1 April 2020, another unprecedented court settlement guaranteed reparations for crimes committed almost 40 years ago against the Ashaninka people in the Brazilian Amazon, whose lands were deforested in the 1980s to supply the European furniture industry.

■ Concepts of land ownership

"The whole issue of absentee land ownership needs to be addressed – particularly in America, where the idea of private property is so sacred, where somehow it is ethical to hold land that you never see", Winona Laduke

Due to consumer culture, very little value is placed on anything which is owned. If it is owned, it is disposable, can be taken for granted, abused, ignored. The property-based legal system and nonrecognition of the inherent rights of nature has contributed to distancing people culturally and personally from their connection to the earth, and living planet . The idea that humans have dominion over nature through owning and exploiting living creatures, land, sea and other territories, is a serious failure of non-indigenous thought and rights, with echoes of owner and chattel relationships towards women, and slaves.

Land registration and the concept of private property is alien to most indigenous peoples. With colonialism, the concept of 'land as property' was introduced to indigenous cultures around the world, which facilitated land-grabbing.

Customary practices that govern collective ownership and management of land date back long before colonization. For example, in Timor-Leste, pre-Portuguese traditions identified boundaries to lands through customary practices, without codification. In the Congo, collective ownership of land and resources has proved crucial to improve the sustainability of livelihoods over generations.

There is a deep sense that the people belong to the land and not the other way around. Bob Randall, a Yankunytjatjara elder comments: “My people see land ownership as being totally different to the English way of ownership. The land owns us. Everything that has been with life in the flesh has gone. But the land is still here“. Similarly in New Zealand, when Māori describe themselves as tangata whenua (people of the land), they are invoking a familial attachment to land, a bond not unlike that of mother (earth) and her children . Similarly, the Anishinaabe indigenous group in the United States and Canada sees itself, not as an owner of wild rice but a symbiotic partner and “a parallel entity from the Creator” .

Many indigenous cultures embrace varying degrees of a nomadic existence depending on their environment – again something little accepted by industrialized culture which insists on continuity of residence in a fixed individually owned or rented home, and is suspicious of travelling communities. Winona LaDuke explains that “In our society a person harvested rice in one place, trapped in another place, got medicines in a third place, and picked berries in a fourth. These locations depended on the ecosystem; they were not necessarily contiguous”. Traditional forms of land use and ownership are thus akin to a community land trust, where land is collectively owned and managed, and each family has traditional

areas where it fishes and hunts .

The Inuit, who have lived in the Canadian Arctic and Greenland for thousands of years, have traditional practices of hunting and seasonal migration. In the summer months, the Inuit would often use skin tents framed from whale bones for structure. These tents were easy to construct and allowed groups to follow their food source. The modern Inuit are now beginning to set up home in more permanent, prefabricated houses. Opting to still leave in the Spring where often whole communities return to traditional hunting practices .

Due to this way of being with the land, territory may be wrongly perceived by non-indigenous populations as being “unoccupied” and subject to designation as forest reserves, national parks or conservation areas or for commercial exploitation. This is because the colonial Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius (a Latin term signifying land without human habitation) held that European countries who ‘discovered’ lands inhabited by Indigenous peoples could claim them as their own.

Box 1 Indigenous people’s relationship with the earth Indigenous people’s relationship with the earth Indigenous peoples the world over have a special relationship with the earth, with the land they are associated with, and all living things in it; acknowledging its nature as a complex system. This is typified by characteristics such as:

- Nature is the “source” of all life not a “resource”.
- The Earth Community comprises human communities together with ecosystem communities of river, forest, desert, ocean, mountain, and all that those imply.
- The earth is not something that can be owned and exploited. The earth is part of the human being

and vice versa. In the Māori worldview “I am the River and the River is me.”

- The earth is a living being (Mother Earth) who procreates and nourishes. Mother Earth is *uywiri*, the one who rears.

- The earth and nature may contain the presence of the creator or spirit, and is the subject of special relations of a spiritual nature grounded in reverence, humility and reciprocity.

- Connection with their territories is a bond of livelihood, energy and health. It is a source of identity and culture, autonomy and freedom. It is the connecting tie among generations. It is the ground on which communities learn, identify values and develop self-rule. It is a connection between visible and invisible realities, material and spiritual wealth. With territory and nature go life, dignity and self-determination as peoples .

- A respectful relationship, where the land will sustain you if you care for it .

- “We cultivated our land, but in a way different from the white man. We endeavour to live with the land; they seemed to live off it.” Tom Dystra, Aboriginal elder .

- The relationship to land extends to the sea and sky. In Māori culture for example, the earth mother and sky father are central to beliefs; ‘mother ocean’ is celebrated by groups in the North Pacific such as Haida or Sgaan Kinghlas; and the sea is central to Inuit culture.

2.3 The role of indigenous peoples in nature conservation

Guardians of the land for future generations

“If we are indeed responsible for seven generations to come, then we need to act that way, but the current fixation on market-driven decisions

for everything leaves no room for that. If you’re going to make your decisions on the basis of profit and loss, then the loss is certainly going to be to your grandchildren”, Oren Lyons

Inherent to the concept of community lands in indigenous culture is the collective obligation to protect and preserve them. In Timor-Leste, customary practices revolved around the concept of intergenerational responsibility to protect lands and resources to sustain the present and future generations. This is reflected in the value, “*ema iha oan, rai la bele iha oan*” (people can have children, land cannot), which also seeks to ensure equal access for all to lands and sufficient resources to sustain the population .

The concept of guardianship of the land for future generations – a responsibility often bestowed by ancestors – is common to many indigenous cultures. A key value of Māori leadership is the concept of *kaitiakitanga* which acknowledges the need for sustainable guardianship and protection – not as a goal – but as a practice over a lifetime .

Many Aboriginal groups within Australia, such as the Wiradjuri people and Torres strait islander group, stress the importance of guardianship and stewardship over their lands, as their ancestors once did and continue to do today. To continue these traditions of guardianship, they must pass down their beliefs through generations to protect the land . “Granny Law” gives responsibility to new generations to continue to care for their mother (earth). “To be responsible in caring in every single way, we call *Kanyini*; caring with unconditional love and responsibility” says Bob Randall . *Kanyini* provides clear guidelines for how to make Love active and concrete by caring deeply and equally

for all beings, within humanity and with the Natural World.

This sense of loving responsibility means that indigenous peoples give back what they take from nature, or you only take what is needed, leaving no waste, so that future generations will not be put in peril. A stark contrast to the view of the western world, where commercialism is ruining the environment through a) extracting more than is needed and then b) dispensing of vast amounts of waste which then pollute the land.

The Plateau First Nations people originate in the West Coast of Canada, mainly around Vancouver, and incorporate the Yakama peoples. This group has a long-standing myth known as the Legend of the Lost Salmon. This story, passed down through generations, can be likened to a fable criticizing overconsumption and waste. Its main premise is that when the people took too much salmon from the river and let it go to waste, the Salmon no longer returned. To recover the lost Salmon, the old 'grandfather' placed his spirit inside the Salmon for it to return. This has led to the Yakama people to place high value on the salmon they hunt, believing that every salmon caught retains some spirit of the old grandfather .

The Ainu used plant fibres and animal or even fish skins to fashion clothes which were treasured and kept. The robes made from plants include those made from the bast fibre of elm (sometimes linden) tree bark or vegetable fibre made from nettle grass. This stands in strong contrast to fast fashion which sees 1 in 2 people throwing little-worn clothes straight in the waste bin, resulting in 64 percent of the 32 billion garments produced each year ending up in landfill.

Box 2 Indigenous peoples in Suriname, South

America, protect land for generations to come
Indigenous peoples in Suriname, South America, protect land for generations to come

Despite the region's isolation, the Trio and Wayana indigenous communities have seen increased pressure on the forests from logging and mining activities. In 2015, the Communities presented a declaration of cooperation to the National Assembly of Suriname to create a conservation corridor spanning 72,000 square kilometres (almost half of the total area of Suriname) .

Like other indigenous peoples, the Suriname people's conception of earth rights has necessarily evolved, due to the extraction and exploitation of the land by industrial actors. Whereas the symbiosis of man and nature has always been viewed as an interdependency, this now includes indigenous peoples having to act as defenders of Earth, their own culture and livelihoods.

"As people we need earth's resources to live, the forest provides this. If we think and care about our future generations, now is the time to act and work together to preserve our nature." Captain Shedde of the Trio village of Alalapadu

"The indigenous people believe they borrow the lands from their grandchildren and we as a country, ought to be doing the same." John Goedschalk, Director of CI's Suriname office

■ Custodians of the Earth

"For Aboriginal peoples, country is much more than a place. Rock, tree, river, hill, animal, human – all were formed of the same substance by the Ancestors who continue to live in land, water, sky. Country is loved, needed, and cared for, and country loves, needs, and cares for her peoples in turn. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self,"

Ambelin Kwaymullina, Palyku community

Indigenous Peoples are often called the custodians or stewards of the Earth . Their common respect for and harmonious living within their environment, means that indigenous peoples have become synonymous with conservation. Traditional indigenous territories encompass around 22 percent of the world's land surface, and coincide with areas that hold 80 percent of the planet's biodiversity . Thus, Indigenous peoples and local communities play a vastly expanded role in the governance, conservation and sustainable use of the world's biodiversity and nature, and as such are providing the basis for clean water and air, healthy food and livelihoods for people far beyond their boundaries .

Indigenous territories – also known as Indigenous and community conserved areas (ICCAs) - are lands that have generally been ancestrally occupied by indigenous peoples in a balance with nature that enables ecosystems to thrive in states closely corresponding to their natural evolution. . The ability to do this comes from a deeply held understanding and reverence for nature and its cycles, the local landscape with its flora and fauna, indigenous food systems, and traditional knowledge which is passed down through the generations. ICCAs are as diverse as the peoples and communities who shape and sustain them through their unique cultures, governance systems and practices .

Around the world, Indigenous Peoples protect and care for their collective lands and waters as integral to their own survival, health and wellbeing. For example, indigenous peoples have a deep understanding of wildlife behavioural patterns and life cycles that enables them to hunt in a sustainable manner while supporting the thriving of wild animals.

Centred around the valley of Ziro in Northern India, the Apanti have used sustainable methods of farming for generations and are one of the only groups within this region of Asia to grow paddy crops while cultivating fish . Their use of bamboo to allow natural irrigation from streams in the surrounding forests means they both sustain the forest while also using every inch of their agricultural lands to minimize environmental impacts. They have even been able to create natural tapyo (salt) from specific plant ashes, making the community less susceptible to goitre compared to other groups in their area .

Evidence supports the correlation between secure indigenous tenure and positive conservation outcomes, compared to adjacent and/or State-managed protected areas (from which indigenous peoples may sometimes be excluded) . For example, in Amazonia 87.5 percent of deforestation took place outside protected natural areas and indigenous territories, highlighting the vital role these areas play in protecting forests .

■ Indigenous knowledge

“I witnessed my father's health care practices. He was a professor of social work and social sciences but also gave medicine for snake bites. It was made out of leaves, roots and filled with Indigenous knowledge. I had seen a lot of people coming to my home for treatment and getting well. He did not have the formal education for giving medicine for snake bites, but it had been passed onto him by his uncles”, Archana Soreng, Kharia tribe in Odisha, eastern India The rich web of local and indigenous knowledge systems, passed down through generations offers unrivalled insights into sustainability practices. Indigenous knowledge is part of a complex cultural collective which includes language, classification

systems, resource use practices, social norms, ritual and spirituality.

Indigenous knowledge is derived from experiences and observations, specific to a locality, both from current and past generations. This knowledge base is transcribed and understood through actions, such as production methods, verbally through sayings and myths, or by cultural events.

Indigenous knowledge has historically been ignored and denigrated by one-size-fits-all often-technological fixes to environmental and social problems, and the West has been slow to catch on. Things are changing, albeit slowly. A recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report for example notes that Indigenous knowledge can be a unique source for techniques for climate change adaptation and may be favoured over externally generated knowledge .

There is an urgent need to complement mainstream education with the intergenerational transmission of indigenous knowledge, and ensure that teachers using national languages do not replace parents and elders as the holders of knowledge and authority in vernacular languages . Further, there is a need to ensure that indigenous knowledge is not exploited, with the evolution of legal frameworks to support this.

■ **Box 3 Indigenous knowledge in practice**

Indigenous knowledge in practice

- Observation of the sun and the stars merges with study of nature and the behaviour of animals, permitting the forecast of phenomena such as drought, frosts and the rainy seasons.

- The Haida on the Northwest coast make totem poles and plank houses, and can take a plank

off a tree and still leave the tree standing.

- For Aboriginals in Australia, the extreme conditions of their environment mean they understand what to, and how much, to harvest in each season to allow continued growth and sustainability of their communities. They have long used controlled fires at the perfect time of year to allow fresh growth such as Kangaroo grass to produce seed .

- Indigenous knowledge has been effective in developing measures to cope with climate hazards and has contributed to increased food security. Examples include the Inuit knowledge of climate variability when hunting, the Inca traditions of crop diversification and knowledge of genetic diversity and, in the Sahel, the use of water-harvesting strategies and weather forecasting

- Calls remain for indigenous knowledge to be recognized in areas such as Disaster Risk Management, for example indigenous women in Tanzania observing the behaviours of birds, insects and plants to predict the weather .

- The Anishinaabekwe use careful management and observation such as a “tallyman”, who makes sure there are enough animals for each family in a given area. If a family can’t sustain itself, the tallyman moves them to a new place where animals are more plentiful .

- When a member of the Anishinaabekwe intends to trap beavers, he reaches his hand into a beaver house and counts how many beavers there are to know how many he can take. He only has to count if he hasn’t already been observing that beaver house for a long time - a kind of thorough observation which can come only with residency and attachment to place.

Impact of industrialization and climate change on indigenous peoples

Communities dependent on natural resources, particularly in the developing world, suffer disproportionate impacts from climate change and are especially vulnerable to any changes to the ecosystem which may impact on their way of life and survival .

In the Congo for example, seasonal changes are less pronounced which is deeply affecting indigenous peoples' hunting and gathering practices, as changes in the weather can no longer be used to accurately predict the arrival of different kinds of wild food. In addition, abnormal periods of dry spells and out-of-season rainfall are disrupting foraging and fishing opportunities, negatively affecting livelihoods and food security.

Traditional Inuit elders have also felt an impact in how they can predict the weather for travelling and hunting, due to changing wind and cloud patterns. This has also made it hard to pass on this tradition to younger generations. A decrease in traditional food sources has created a reliance on more store-bought food, and an increase in diabetes within Inuit communities .

In Asia, climate change has a range of serious impacts in indigenous communities. These include droughts in mountain areas; the escalation of wildfires; rising sea levels affecting coastal areas; floods; landslides; overall changes in seasonal patterns; and an increase in tropical insects and vector-borne diseases .

As biodiversity and fertile lands erode, land grabbing has intensified, pollution is increasing as more fertilizers and chemicals are being used, and crops are failing. Climate-induced displacement is taking place as indigenous peoples, especially youth,

are forced to migrate to urban areas due to shortages in resources and food. As young people leave, so traditions begin to die out within the community.

For first nations peoples, pollution and contamination and disruption of wildlife habitats have reduced the supply and purity of traditional foods and herbal medicines . This impacts the health and culture of indigenous peoples and forces them towards pharmaceuticals, and out of their cherished harmony with nature and her healing properties.

Role of indigenous people in combatting climate change “The success of Native peoples to heal and strengthen our communities remains invisible to mainstream American society. Native grassroots groups remain on the front lines of environmental protection in America – mitigating climate change, restoring biodiversity and bringing back local food economies – but this work remains unseen and either unfunded or under-funded.” Honour The Earth Indigenous peoples can contribute to numerous potential climate change adaptation activities informed by their traditional knowledge. Examples of such activities include documentation of indigenous knowledge; climate monitoring and reporting; traditional fire management; disaster preparedness and response and early warning systems; rainwater harvesting; traditional agriculture techniques; coastal marine management; alternative energy development; the development of sustainable livelihoods; and stopping deforestation through local governance, land titling, forest management and conservation.

In countries such as Timor Leste and New Zealand, the knowledge and resource management practices of indigenous peoples in keeping territories resilient to climate change are valued and promoted by Government. However this is far from usual.

Indigenous peoples are doubly disadvantaged by mainstream society in that they are suffering the consequences of industrialization and consumerism in the form of climate change impacts, for which they are not responsible; and the traditional knowledge they hold which can help enrich scientific knowledge and adaptation activities is largely ignored.

This is because international climate change law and policy has an emphasis on monetary, knowledge and technology transfer from developed to developing countries and fails to recognize indigenous peoples' own coping and adaptive strategies and a reverse emphasis on indigenous knowledge transfer to "developed" countries.

Indigenous peoples have been demanding greater protection of their human rights and increased participation in international discussions on climate change for over two decades. While the management capacity of indigenous peoples is recognized by organizations such as International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as late as 2016, such governance only existed in less than 5 percent of all protected areas. The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples noted in late 2020 that the valuable contributions of indigenous peoples towards protecting the environment from climate change continue to be denied.

When will we listen? And when will we learn?

3. Decolonizing ourselves and our broken relationship with the land

3.1 Colonial conservation

"Colonial Conservation in Africa is exclusive, right-wing, militarized, violent and racist." Mordecai Ogada, Conservation Solutions Afrika, Kenya

Fortress approach to nature conservation

In our attempt to rally around the earth, mainstream conservation actors have drawn upon

colonial principles of domination over the land and the people who inhabit it, this time in the name of saving it. In the Congo for example, restrictions on indigenous peoples' access to their territories have increased along with commercial exploitation of the forests, and as the rich biodiversity of the country's remaining areas has attracted conservation projects.

This archaic "fortress" approach to nature conservation which excludes indigenous peoples from their land in the name of earth rights, fails to respect the incredible role which indigenous peoples play in protecting nature – excluding the human part of the ecosystem who can create the greatest ecological gains. Ironically, by failing to integrate earth rights and human rights, earth rights are compromised.

On 28 January 2016, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights found Suriname responsible for multiple rights violations including grants of individual titles to non-indigenous persons and restrictions imposed on the Kaliña and Lokono peoples in two nature reserves. The Court concluded that because respect for the rights of the indigenous peoples may have a positive impact on environmental conservation "the rights of the indigenous peoples and international environmental laws should be understood as complementary, rather than exclusionary, rights."

The US\$ 21 million Ridge to Reef conservation project in the Tanintharyi region, southern Myanmar – involving the Global Environmental Facility, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Flora and Fauna International and the Forest Department of Myanmar - was suspended in 2019 following complaints by indigenous communities and other villagers affected. The project was planned and designed without the participation or FPIC of

the Karen indigenous peoples, while threatening to displace and exclude them from their territories. In May 2020, indigenous communities developed an alternative vision to protect biodiversity, livelihoods, local indigenous practices and cultures, and peace throughout the region, and called upon conservation donors and implementing organizations to abandon top-down conservation initiatives.

Indigenous people in Sangha used to hunt and collect forest produce to sustain their families but now consider this too risky due to the repeated arrests and acts of harassment to which they were subjected by eco-guards.

Indeed, violence against indigenous peoples, associated with colonial conservation is often reported. In Africa and Asia, while tourists and other outsiders are welcomed into “Protected Areas” or “National Parks” (which were formally land belonging to indigenous peoples but stolen from them in echoes of original colonial land grabbing), the eco-guards and park rangers burn down local people’s homes, steal goods, vandalize property, and beat, torture, rape and kill local people with impunity. Conservation groups such as World Wildlife Fund (WWF), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and African Parks continue to fund and support the perpetrators of these atrocities, which they are alleged to have been aware of for many years .

■ Impact of climate change measures

Climate change adaptation and mitigation projects can also commercialize the forests upon which indigenous peoples are dependent. For example, displacement is taking place as the proliferation of dams - erroneously claimed to constitute climate change mitigation measures - force indigenous peoples to relocate.

IPCC has expressed concern that existing climate change policies and regulations may inadvertently constrain the effects of climate change measures in many regions, due to limiting access to indigenous territories, reducing genetic diversity, and loss of transmission of indigenous knowledge.

3.2 Disconnected

“One has to lay blame at the feet of the cultures of States bent on unbridled development through the exploitation of nature, conceived as a mere repository of resources”, United Nations Economic and Social Council, Study on the need to recognize and respect the rights of Mother Earth

Our institutions – governments, religions, universities, corporations, and especially the legal systems underpinning them – rest upon a perspective centred exclusively on the human. Other life forms are objects not subjects and have reality and value only through their use by the human. This is in dramatic contrast to indigenous ways of being, which have been subsumed by these ideals.

The concept of development is based on Western notions of achievement, progress and well-being. As indigenous peoples were forced away from their ways of being with the land, whether that be through land grabbing or a kind of cultural osmosis, the result is not ‘progress’ in any form.

Indigenous peoples were forced to replace subsistence with poverty; a wealth of meaning and connection with abandonment; plant medicine with pharma; traditional foods with processed foods; indigenous wisdom with mainstream education in national languages; indigenous livelihoods for wage labour far from “home”; and belonging for stigmatization and violence.

The indigenous peoples excluded from their forests by guards in Sangha, say their desire to

integrate with mainstream culture was fuelled by their being driven away from the forest. And with a lack of employment or any other source of income to support their families, they had no other viable option for ensuring their own survival. Members of the younger generation may believe that living off the forest is stigmatizing and perpetuates the image of indigenous peoples as inferior, due to Western notions of development and consumerism.

However, employment opportunities may be scarce. In the Congo, the logging company Congolaise Industrielle des Bois (CIB) and the Wildlife Conservation Society cited high levels of illiteracy, lack of qualifications and the semi-nomadic lifestyle as major barriers to the employment of indigenous peoples. Instead, they prefer to recruit indigenous peoples for a limited number of roles that specifically drew on their indigenous knowledge, for example as animal trackers, to guide tourists to wildlife, or tree specialists. It seems highly unjust that peoples are forced from their land which they are best-placed to protect – and then the only employment options offered are those cherry picked from the wealth of indigenous knowledge that has just been sidelined. In the Congo, where employment was gained, indigenous women reported working in the fields from the early hours of the day for CFA 500–700 (approximately US\$ 1) per day.

This forced disconnection is still happening. And in some ways at various levels it has happened to us all – that disconnection from values which sustain and nourish, and a restless search for meaning and comfort in acquisition and competition. Many indigenous peoples can still remember and practice their traditions, but for those of us born into industrialized society, we have to re-remember the connection to the land that lies dormant in all of us.

However, we cannot do that via eco-tourism, where it compromises both indigenous and earth rights. In Asia for example, indigenous peoples are concerned that tourism is increasingly being prioritized over their rights and may have a negative impact on conservation.

3.3 Applying indigenous values

“Only to the white man was nature a wilderness”, Chief Luther Standing Bear. The values of indigenous societies provide a bedrock for sustainable, harmonious living, at one with the family of life, the earth mother. Contrast this with the values of contemporary society in ‘developed’ countries and the picture is utterly bleak.

The values of modern consumer society are based on acquisition and emptiness. Acquiring more and more to fill a spiritual void, and to find connection in a world in which we are disconnected to everything but technology, to which we are plugged in like a life support machine. Except it takes our life force away.

Winona Laduke sums up the flaws in industrial thinking :

- Instead of believing that natural law is preeminent, industrial society believes that humans are entitled to full dominion over nature;
- Instead of modeling itself on the cyclical structure of nature, industrial society is patterned on linear thinking, with its associated values of progress, technological advancement and economic growth;
- The superiority of what is cultivated or “tame” as opposed to wild, and the superiority of civilized over primitive peoples. Related is the idea that some people have the right to civilize and tame;
- Industrial society speaks a language of inanimate nouns. Industrial language has changed things from being animate, alive, and having spirit to being inanimate, mere objects, and commodities

of society;

- The intent of capitalism is accumulation and conspicuous consumption, always to take more than is needed. From an indigenous point of view, capitalism is inherently out of harmony with natural law.

Exploitation and extraction are not viable in the long term, only stewardship and guardianship are. However, one needs to look through a lens of connection with the earth, with all of life, in order to reset our worldview and our intentions.

If we can look at the environment in such a way that we place it both as something to be revered and as something which is our equal, our fellow in a rich web of life, and also as something that simply is us – just as the Māori say the River is me and I am the River, this richer relationship will allow the world to instinctively protect and care for all of nature. Our current status quo based on extraction, acquisition and disconnection can be allowed to fall away.

The UN Secretary-General's Harmony with Nature Report 2020 notes that the key to sustainability and a healthy planet lies in restoring humanity's broken relationship with the land and with Nature as a whole . Indigenous peoples around the world still hold that relationship. They understand that life is about respectful, harmonious co-existence in which one takes only what one needs. And in which 'needs' are not grounded in fantasies perpetuated by advertising billboards.

3.4 The need for action and frameworks recognizing the interdependence of earth and human rights

“The success of every sector, system and institution of our society can be judged based not on the old bottom line of whether they maximize money, profit and power, but instead by the extent to which they maximize love and caring, kindness

and generosity, empathy and compassion, social, economic and environmental justice, peace and nonviolence, and protection of the life support system of our planet”, Network of Spiritual Progressives, A New Bottom Line

The importance of unifying indigenous rights with earth rights and conservation efforts

A compelling argument for a holistic approach to human rights and earth rights is the fact that the most diverse ecosystems are under the stewardship of indigenous peoples.

High levels of cultural diversity and biodiversity are strongly connected, with a direct relationship between the two. Cultural diversity is thus as important as biological diversity to sustainability, and the recognition of the territorial rights of indigenous peoples are vital for socioenvironmental diversity .

Take for example, an indigenous community in Assam in India, who produce a local wine containing over 100 different plant ingredients, requiring the maintenance of rich cultural and biological diversity for its production . Indeed, traditional indigenous food systems demonstrate an interdependent sociocultural relationship with Mother Earth, in contrast with the globalized corporate food system, which disconnects food consumption from food production and which creates devastating environmental impacts. Each year, around a third of all food produced – equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes worth around \$1 trillion – ends up rotting in the bins of consumers and retailers, or spoiling due to poor transportation and harvesting practices .

Change is afoot. In Amazonia, the prevailing view from mainstream perspectives including Government, was that it was a region to be exploited, due to the enormous presence of natural resources. Indigenous populations were thus seen as obstacles

to “development”. This view has been partially overcome thanks to action internationally, by groups supportive of environmental rights and indigenous rights, which have started to be incorporated into national constitutions and laws.

What helped promote the intersection of these rights is evidence: In the Brazilian Amazon, in areas where the State has recognized the forest rights of indigenous peoples, the deforestation rate is 11 times lower than in forests where their rights are not recognized. A recent study of 80 forest areas in 10 countries in South Asia, East Africa and Latin America also showed greater carbon storage, and concluded that strengthening indigenous peoples’ territorial rights is a way for Governments to meet climate goals.

Rather than constraining the rights of indigenous peoples, anyone truly interested in environmental protection in indigenous territories, should be advocating for them.

■ Strong foundations

In reframing and reconceptualizing our relationship to human rights and to the earth, there are foundations to draw upon, some laid decades ago . These include:

- In 1949, Aldo Leopold proposed a Land Ethic, arguing that the individual is part of a community and that this community is a Whole, in which the human is a citizen of the land not conqueror of it. This has echos of UNDRIP in which collective rights are recognized;

- In 1969, James Lovelock proposed the Gaia Hypothesis, which considered the Earth as a single organism in which all parts, including human beings, are almost as closely interrelated and as interdependent as the cells of the human body;

- In 1973, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess initiated the deep ecology movement, in which anthropocentrism is replaced by ecocentrism, in

which every living thing has inherent value regardless of its utility to human beings.

- The Earth Charter was created by the independent Earth Charter Commission, which was convened as a follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in order to produce a global consensus statement of values and principles for a sustainable future. The charter sees the protection by human beings of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty as a sacred trust, and recognizes that “all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings” .

- In 2009, The first UN General Assembly Resolution on Harmony with Nature was adopted and the UN General Assembly proclaimed 22 April "International Mother Earth Day”, this has been followed with other resolutions and reports on a yearly basis .

- In 2010 Bolivia hosted the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, a key outcome of which was the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth which notes that in an interdependent living community it is not possible to recognize the rights of only human beings without causing an imbalance within Mother Earth .

Indigenous peoples are calling for radical – and yet appropriate change. More recently, the Alliance of Guardians and Children of Mother Earth, made up of indigenous representatives from around the world, called on world leaders, the UN and civil society to start phasing out juridical systems inherited from the colonial times and replacing them with others that take up Nature, Mother Earth as a rights holder. The Alliance urges that we must evolve towards a paradigm based on Indigenous thought and philosophy, which grants equal rights to Nature and

which honours the interrelationships between all life forms and the preservation of Mother Earth .

The international movement Rights for Nature is calling upon the UN to add a seat within the General Assembly for a representative of each of the five landscapes recognized by the UN: Oceans, Mountains, Forests, Drylands, and Wetlands in order to give voice to nature in decision making as an important stakeholder.

We are undergoing an evolution in non-indigenous cultures – drawing on indigenous ways of being - in light of evidence that we urgently need a new relationship with nature.

■ Conclusion

“Don’t try to carry the whole future; if you do, you’ll just burn yourself out. And if you’re worried about the past, all you can do is look back and reflect on it and take counsel from it. But today is the day that you live”, Oren Lyons

The deeply spiritual and practical relationship between Indigenous cultures and the earth is one founded on a holistic worldview where everything and everyone is interconnected. This is a worldview industrialized society has long pilloried but is now being forced to confront, as it grapples with supply chain issues, increasing levels of homelessness, inward migration and a cost-of-living crisis resulting from complex intersections relating to conflict, climate change and the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 response measures.

Conceptions of earth right and human rights can both be found in indigenous societies, but are seamlessly integrated in support of each other. This stands in contrast to conceptions of earth rights and human rights in the Global North where these frameworks can clash, for example through a forest guard system which views nature as a distinct entity

to be protected from humans, and denies many indigenous rights as a result.

As we are forced headlong into a world of complex global emergencies as a result of the abuse and negligence of the West, indigenous ways of being have much to teach industrialized society, and indeed may provide the only option for sustainable ecosystems still welcoming of humans. There is a sense that those of us in the industrial north need to decolonize ourselves of deeply rooted, but false ways of being with the world, in order to achieve this.

There is an exciting challenge which is also an invitation to us all: To imagine and create means of Indigenous self-determination that do not revolve around or rely on state structures . This can impact not only Indigenous peoples, but all peoples who wish to live a more enriching and sustaining life, out of and away from colonial paradigms.

Our ability to self-determine our place in the world and our relationship to it, is ever more pressing, as issues such as environmental breakdown and food insecurity become a reality for us all. Indigenous cultures are well ahead: “Our work is about strengthening and restoring our own traditional economy, thereby strengthening our traditional culture as well, so that we can produce 50 percent or more of our own food independently, and can eventually produce enough surplus to sell... (as) part of an integrated restoration process that is focused on the full human being”, comments Winona Laduke .

La Hontan, a French soldier and historian in the seventeenth century, asked a community member of North American Indian nations, “What is this freedom you keep talking about?”. The man went inside his home and came back out holding a handful of corn. He said, “this is our freedom” .

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The right to cultural and spiritual end of life care : Māori perspectives

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■ Introduction

Indigenous Māori whānau (Indigenous families including extended family) from Aotearoa New Zealand have a right to access and use palliative care that is aligned with their cultural and spiritual values, beliefs and customs as determined by them (Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019; United Nations, 2007). Māori whānau have their own health aspirations, goals, priorities, and ways of working (Health Quality & Safety Commission, New Zealand, 2019). A number of important strategies have been developed which prioritise Māori cultural rights at the end of life (Health Quality & Safety Commission (HQSC), 2019; Hospice New Zealand, 2019; Ministry of Health (MoH), 2001; 2002, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2017a, 2017b, 2018). Recognition of these cultural rights is in accordance with priorities for Indigenous wellbeing

as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (United Nations, 2007). Nationally, there is also recognition that palliative and end of life care should support a decolonising and equity focused agenda to ensure whānau receive fair and just treatment (HQSC, 2019).

Although cultural and spiritual care is an accepted component within current Māori health and palliative care strategies and frameworks (Hospice New Zealand, 2019; Ministry of Health, 2014, 2017, 2018; Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019), Māori cultural and spiritual mātauranga (knowledge), tikanga (customs) and kawa (rituals) are not easily recognisable or understood by health professionals who deliver care. While specialist palliative care in New Zealand is leading the way in promoting holistic end of life care for Māori whānau (Te Ohu

Rata o Aotearoa, 2019), there is still a lot of work to do to operationalise and implement the safety and protection of Māori patients and whānau within every hospice, Aged Residential Care Facility, and hospital. Paying attention to the holistic care needs of Māori requires health services and health professionals to reflect on their own cultural biases, assumptions, and privileges, as well as being educated in cultural and spiritual customs and practices. Curtis, et.al. (2019, p.14) provide the following definition of cultural safety:

Cultural safety requires healthcare professionals and their associated healthcare organisations to examine themselves and the potential impact of their own culture on clinical interactions and healthcare service delivery. This requires individual healthcare professionals and healthcare organisations to acknowledge and address their own biases, attitudes, assumptions, stereotypes, prejudices, structures, and characteristics that may affect the quality of care provided. In doing so, cultural safety encompasses a critical consciousness where healthcare professionals and healthcare organisations engage in ongoing self-reflection and self-awareness and hold themselves accountable for providing culturally safe care, as defined by the patient and their communities, and as measured through progress towards achieving [sic] health equity. Cultural safety requires healthcare professionals and their associated healthcare organisations to influence healthcare to reduce bias and achieve equity within the workforce and working environment.

Māori are entitled to access care that recognises and responds to their end of life care preferences as tangata whenua (original inhabitants of Aotearoa New Zealand); this is their right under Te Tiriti o

Waitangi (1840). The founding agreement between the Crown and its Indigenous citizens is supposed to result in health care aligned with Māori health aspirations (MoH, 2017, 2018) including at the end of life (MoH, 2017). The Palliative Care Action Plan (MoH, 2017, p. 13) describes a preferred model of palliative care that responds to the changing needs of people as they navigate the health system. The approach will also meet the needs of an ageing population using a whole-of-person approach (holistic care); it will respond to the diverse needs of New Zealanders, including Māori who have previously had “variable experiences of palliative care.”

Developing a “whānau-oriented approach” to palliative care is viewed as the best way to care for Māori at end of life (MoH, 2017). For Māori, this will be realised when palliative care is provided in a way that is “tailored to the specific circumstances of a patient and their specific cultural circumstances” including the cultural needs of whānau who provide end of life care (Palliative Care Council, 2015, p. 25). Palliative care is considered successful when patients and whānau feel they have been cared for within a holistic approach which addresses “all dimensions of a patients’ needs including psychosocial, spiritual, cultural and physical symptom management.” (Ibid, p. 25)

The above approach moves beyond a western understanding of holistic end of life care informed by western philosophies and practices to embrace Māori whanonga pono (values), tikanga, and kawa; it places relationships with family, tribal groupings, and the whenua (land) as central to achieving quality care at end of life. This model of cultural safety places wairuatanga (spirituality) and rongoā (natural

healing) as critical components of optimal care no matter what form of spirituality a whānau subscribe to, or what forms of natural healing they wish to use. Health professionals are being called upon to place cultural aspirations and wairuatanga at the front and centre of palliative care (Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019). However, a recent survey of New Zealand medical schools' highlights those students do not currently receive specific cultural and spiritual education and training in palliative and end of life care (Heath et. al., 2021). Furthermore, palliative and end of life care teaching in undergraduate nurse education in New Zealand is not a mandatory requirement; there are inconsistencies in the teaching provided between educational institutions and significant barriers to its development (Heath, et. al, 2021a). Heath et. al (2021a) recommend the development of palliative care competencies should be mandatory to equip graduates with the right knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide optimal palliative care.

This chapter introduces and describes Māori palliative care and end of life cultural preferences and needs. This descriptive cultural and spiritual information will help to inform education and training programmes to equip health professionals to respond to Māori aspirations. We contribute to this agenda by drawing upon the Pae Herenga study to provide information on specific tikanga and kawa that strengthen Māori whānau to ensure the spiritual and cultural needs of the ill and dying and deceased are known and responded to.

■ Background context

Health professionals have an important opportunity to support Indigenous whānau to care for unwell and dying family members by ensuring their

practice reflects awareness and understanding of Māori end of life and death customs. This is needed to facilitate optimal end of life care within palliative care service delivery, including the care of ethnically diverse Māori (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2014; 2018; 2019; 2020; Reid, 2005). The Mauri Mate framework produced by Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa (2019) recommends the delivery of culturally aligned clinical and social care across diverse needs (adults, children, and people with special needs). The framework advocates for Māori to have their cultural customs upheld at end of life and it promotes the need for cultural safety training to ensure health professionals deliver on these cultural preferences. The findings from the Pae Herenga study provide some description of these fundamental cultural and spiritual values, beliefs, and customs that whānau draw from. This information is essential to inform the development of dedicated palliative care and educational and training programmes.

■ Pae Herenga study

The Pae Herenga study gathered evidence of traditional Māori end of life care customs from 61 Māori whānau (including individuals with a life limiting illness), rongoā practitioners (natural healers), tohunga (spiritual leaders; chaplains), and Māori health professionals in a face-to-face interview. The study was initiated by the Kāhui Kaumātua (advisory group) who provides cultural leadership and advice to the Te Ārai Palliative Care and End of Life Research Group, from the School of Nursing, University of Auckland. The elders asked Moeke-Maxwell to lead the study with Māori communities across four key geographical sites. The aim was to gather stories about traditional care customs and share those with families and health professionals in

need of this cultural information. The Pae Herenga study findings and digital stories (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2020) were made available on a public website developed to assist whānau caregivers and health professionals (www.teipuaronui.co.nz).

The qualitative study focused on the palliative and end of life care of older Māori because the Kāhui Kaumātua expressed a concern that whānau will be called on to provide end of life care more frequently over the next 30 years; they need this cultural information to support them. We used an indigenous research design to ensure the philosophical, theoretical, and ethical elements would respond to the Māori world and people (Bishop, 1999; Hudson, et. al. 2010). The authors employed Kaupapa Māori Research methods and a social constructivist Māori-centred thematic analysis (Eketone, 2008). Sixteen participants were further invited to attend one of three digital story telling workshops to produce a digital story describing an aspect of traditional caregiving before, during or following death. Participants who took part in an interview selected a pseudonym or they were assigned one by the team to protect their identity.

The right to cultural and spiritual end of life care

For Māori, the essence of life is contained within a person's body as wairua (spirit). The wairua lives on after that person has died. When a person dies, the spirit, now freed from the body, stays close to the body until it is interred. Therefore, caring for someone at the end of life means caring for that person after death with as much love, tenderness, and care of the tinana (physical body) and wairua, as if the person were still present. This is essential spiritual work that takes place at the end of a person's life and yet it will remain unknown by health professionals who

receive little to no training in cultural and spiritual end of life care (Heath et al., 2021, 2021a).

It would be accurate to describe an optimal death for Māori as a beautiful death because this reflects on the state of spiritual peacefulness that is present when someone dies. This point was highlighted by Nelson-Becker and Moeke-Maxwell (2020) where the authors described attaining a sense of 'ka ea' (fulfilment, gratitude, or peace) at the end of life, as this is an important aim of whānau who carry out end of life care (Nelson-Becker & Moeke-Maxwell, 2020). To achieve a state of 'ka ea' the dying person and their whānau will have knowledge, resources and tikanga (customs) to support them to peacefully transition through the ārai (veil) between the physical and metaphysical realms. Taking care of the body and wairua following death is part of this process. The spirit is believed to stay with the body until the body has been disposed of through burial or cremation (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2014; 2018; 2019). Cremation is still a relatively new method of disposing bodies for whānau and tribal communities (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al, 2020). Caring for a kaumātua (older man or woman) encompasses the ageing trajectory, through early to advanced stages of an illness, across the dying and post death phases, and through the period of carrying out tangihanga (funeral customs), kawē mate (memorial rituals) and hura kōhatu (unveilings).

For Māori, attending to the spiritual domain at end of life is just as important as attending to the physical domain (including the physical environment), as well as the mental/emotional, social and whānau domains of care. When these health domains are in balance there is greater opportunity that the care the ill person will experience in the last years, months,

weeks, days, or hours of life is pain and symptom free and, their passing over is as peaceful as hoped for. (Nelson-Becker & Moeke-Maxwell, 2020; Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2018; 2019).

■ The right to a trained and skilled workforce

Māori whānau have the right to live into their wairuatanga (spirituality) at end of life regardless of whether their spirituality involves specific religious beliefs or practices or observes traditional tikanga. Traditional beliefs and practices include relationships with Māori cosmology, atua (ancestors with continuing influence - supernatural beings), tūpuna/tūpuna (ancestors-grandparents), and whenua (land). Individuals may adopt religious beliefs and practices from other places or practice diverse forms of New Age spiritualism (Moeke-Maxwell, 2018, 2019). Our research findings will show there can be misunderstanding about Māori spirituality among non-Māori health professionals. Consequently, this aspect of end-of-life care is often missed. Furthermore, older Māori may feel afraid, ashamed, or embarrassed to express their cultural or spiritual needs to non-Māori health professionals. Some may still remember being punished for speaking their native language at school by non-Māori schoolteachers and are therefore reluctant to trust non-Māori health professionals when they are at their most vulnerable. In the following example, a Māori health care professional illustrates how she tries to explain the difference between a Māori and non-Māori understanding of spirituality to her non-Māori colleagues:

Well spirituality is more like their [patient/whānau] hāhi [religion] you know. For using Māori kupu [words] it's about... your wairua... it's about your feelings and the emotional stuff and what you

really need to do in terms to get to that other end [of life]. Or you've got something you know [that can explain how you feel] ... but you can't [explain that] because you might be too whakamā [ashamed] or something. Or you don't know, or you haven't got any knowledge or you're just too whakamā... to get help and things like that. So, it's about that wairua, that need... I was always taught you know, by my nannies and my dad and them just 'feeling' them [tūpuna]... [I] have evidence that what I'm feeling is my wairua. It's not about a hāhi [religion] or anything it's completely different. And the same with the kupu tikanga [customary words] it's quite simple. (Whaea T, Health Professional)

The health professional (Whaea T.) provided a further example of how she invoked a wairua connection for a kuia (older woman) to help her transition to a care facility:

I know this whānau here, because a lot of their elders have gone but when somebody is not feeling well it's about sharing or making copies of their tūpuna photos and taking it with them [into a hospital setting] and putting them [up] and having kōrero with them about [their ancestors], 'Well look, they're here now. And they're telling you this is what you need to be doing to get over your illness or move forward in your illness'... part of that [care] is just bringing up their tūpuna. (Whaea T, Health professional)

There is a need for Māori end of life care to be holistic, but this is often overlooked by medical teams. Health professionals need to take the time to acknowledge the spiritual needs of the patient and their whānau:

Yeah, and nobody's listening. They're not listening to that kuia [older woman]. They don't understand her wairua... Oh, we did have a

multidisciplinary team meeting every Tuesday morning at the hospital... We're all there but they're just focused on getting rid of their clients, pushing them out and not having our input into [planning] and they don't give the full presentation of the client; it's just brief clinical stuff... they don't look... into a bigger picture about what the needs of the clients are. (Whaea T, Health professional)

■ The right to having whānau at the centre of care

The relational dimension of palliative care incorporates the right of the dying person to have access to their whānau and their cultural and spiritual customs administered by them (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2014). Whānau will do everything they can to reduce physical distress and *mamae* (emotional pain); they will do what is necessary to produce the most optimal spiritual experience for the ill and dying person. For example, the simple act of obtaining, preparing, and serving foods and beverages the ill person wants before they die is concerned with ensuring the person achieves a sense of emotional satisfaction and spiritual well-being at end of life. *Kai rangatira* (food for the esteemed person, soon to cross the *ārai*) requires whānau being able to access specific *kai* (food) and being able to prepare it. This requires support from institutions to ensure suitable spaces are open and available to whānau. Some foods may have certain odours and will need to be accommodated or accepted by staff. An example of this is the preparation of seafoods such as *kina* (sea urchins), boiling crayfish or making *boil-ups* (meat cooked for a long slow period to impart flavours associated with pork, *puha* (sow thistle), watercress, cabbage, and root vegetables such as *kumara* (sweet

potato) and potato.

Immediate and extended family provide most of the practical support and comfort to the ill and dying. Being with whānau and spending time together is key in supporting the critically ill person, and each other, when someone in the whānau is *māuiui* (ill):

... that's the one thing I've always relied on. And that was the biggest thing for me when we were at the hospital. Mum at her lowest point had all of us nine siblings there at once... And it was an amazing feeling. (Matua R, Male caregiver)

Extended whānau can also provide valuable cultural and spiritual support at end of life:

Mum, when she was in hospital, it wasn't just us there. You know, it was her extended whānau; it was her friends. One of our aunties she came in and their other *kaupapa* (agenda) is *mātua karanga* (traditional calling performed by women) and she just blasted that in Mum's ear and it was making us *hōhā* [upset], but it was making Mum happy. It's not about us and how we're feeling, it is about what Mum wants, you know.... Those sorts of things you know are huge for her. That's what she loves is her family around her. That's the main thing that keeps her going. (Matua R. Male caregiver)

When whānau come together it helps the healing process for the whole whānau. Whānau reach out to other whānau members for spiritual relief and comfort while grieving. Healing can come from sitting with and listening to whānau, aunts and uncles about their memories:

Well, it's just about them coming together as one whānau... That's the healing, it's just them coming together as that one whānau... Yeah well basically I think it's, it's they reach out sometimes, especially

if they've lost a mum or a dad, they reach out you know to themselves, but also to the uncles and the aunties. You know the other koro (older males) and kuia within their family structure, you know, to bring them that more spiritual relief.

It's just drawing from within their own whānau, themselves, you know? And I think it's, about just sitting there with Uncle and Aunty remembering those times, you know. Because that's a big healing when you can remember those times and just enjoy the life that that person had by listening to what Mum's sister or Mum's brother had to say about, you know, how they grew up and different things like that. (Kaumātua P. Kaitakawaenga)

Whānau draw aroha (compassion, care, love), family unity and strength from each other.

We couldn't do anymore. And she drew all that aroha that we had you know. And that's what it was I believe, the love we had in us... that family unity and the aroha and... just her inner strength. (Matua R, Male caregiver)

Māori health professionals and cultural support workers (Kaitakawaenga, Kaiwhakahaere, Kaiawhina) are a vital link between health services and communities. They have an important role of supporting whānau who have become estranged from their whānau or who lack the cultural knowledge and resources to carry out their end of life care customs.

■ The right to have karakia and waiata

Karakia (incantations, prayers, and chants) have different purposes depending on what is happening. Karakia are used for comfort, protection, and blessing; they are utilised before treatment, to help the spirit leave the body, to send the spirit on a journey to its spiritual home after the person has died and to fortify whānau during their bereavement.

Karakia are considered the most important cultural and spiritual custom as it involves petitioning the help of atua and tīpuna (ancestors). Across all the Pae Herenga participant cohorts the power of karakia was expressed as being the most important resource.

The inclusion of karakia is integral to good clinical and social care. A senior rongoā practitioner concluded, "I found that karakia [is] most probably number one. The knowledge of medicine is number two. And who to go to and ask for support is number three (Kaumātua Ned)." Karakia are often said at night and sometimes in the morning at specific times depending on the religious or spiritual customs of the whānau. Spiritual beliefs and faith practices determine how whānau engage in karakia. Matilda, a community health care assistant, highlighted that karakia provide healing and comfort, "Their desires? I suppose it would be like having a church service each day, each evening is what they would want, and that's their comfort."

Waiata (singing) is an important cultural component in end of life care and often accompanies mihimihi (speech making) and karakia. Hīmene (hymns) and tribal waiata can be drawn on by whānau to uplift the ill and dying and each other. Specific waiata carry their own energetic frequency carried in the melody, beat, cadenza and words. Wairua can ride the frequency of these. Singing oriori (traditional lullabies) and hīmene to comfort the māuiui person at end of life are significant customs. A dying person's wairua can be carried on the wave of specific waiata explained Ipukutu:

Probably the oriori were the ones you'd probably use, or more sort of like a lullaby sort of thing [to comfort a dying person] ... He whakamāmā, tona [lighten them, bring them relief] you know to

light[en] all this sort of thing... I guess when you're doing waiata, karaka, hīmene, moteatea (traditional chant), oriori... what it does is... music culturally, is universal, through all cultures. Nē? [Isn't it?]. And... what it is, is the very style and substance of our existence, you know.

Yeah, because ko te mea, o te mea he wai, he rerekē ko te waiata. So, the words in singing, oh you know, in different forms, is different to the way you talk... And certain waiata, you've got the ia o te waiata, or the flow of the waiata that can transcend and carry the wairua of the person on that wave [across the ārai]. Nē? Kei runga, lift that [wairua]... Kei raro, te whakamāmā te mea. Ko te ia o te waiata, nē? (Ipukutu, Spiritual worker)

Supporting whānau to use their karakia and waiata requires health professionals to understand the importance of this cultural custom and the spatial requirement for whānau to gather (sometimes up to 40 people or more), and to be together to take part in karakia and waiata. Whānau may need health professionals to help them to access support if they do not have this type of cultural knowledge and spiritual leadership available within their own whānau.

Māori people need to have their wairua cared for alongside the care of their physical body:

You've got your hinengaro [mind-emotions] that's connected to your wairua that says, 'I need this...' nobody's helping them with it. So, it's about meeting those wairua needs, and it's not about meeting those wairua needs, and it's not about hāhi [church], religion or anything, it's about their immediate needs. Their need to have comfort - their need to be wanting good meals and that you know, good sleep. (Whaea T, Health professional)

There can be devastating consequences when the

spiritual needs of whānau are not understood or met by the wider health care team. A health professional provides an example of an older woman who had social problems within her whānau that were not understood or addressed by her medical team:

[T]hey [non-Māori health professionals] didn't know any of those [Māori healing] services that were out there and didn't really understand the wairua part of that kuia. About the needs, they're thinking 'oh spiritual must be religion' and I said 'nah, nah, nah. Wairua needs - meaning she's mokemoke [lonely] for her personal effects that have been left down in [town] and been kept by this niece down there. And not letting her go [to get them!]. And in that those personal effects are her whole life... because it's got her taonga [treasured objects] ... her korowai (feathered cloaks), her taonga that she wears...' (Whaea T, Health professional)

Whaea T further explained how the medical team were not addressing the older woman's wairua needs which meant she had a very negative experience using the health service:

[T]he hospital [said] that she was actively dying. So, they put her in a rest home. And from the rest home this is where she was traumatised badly. Left on the floor and yelling out and saying she can't get up to get into her bed. Nobody's answering the bells and things like that. And finally [an] ambulance took her back into hospital and this is where everything started. And she just went down into a really depressive mood... She was so pōuri [sad] and very weak, not eating, just wouldn't do anything. ... they put on her papers 'actively dying' and called the whānau up here to come down and get her. But [they] didn't identify the emotional issues, you know

the PTSD, the trauma; nothing was put in place.

■ **Right to have spiritual cleansing and clearing rituals**

Cultural rituals used at end of life are drawn on to clear tapu (spiritual restrictions) associated with the residue of spiritual energy that is present before and following death. Those who are in close physical contact with the ill and dying, or who have been in physical contact with the deceased, may take part in a whakanoa process to remove tapu and return things to noa (an ordinary) state. This cleansing ritual releases spiritual energy and returns people to an ordinary, non-tapu state. Whānau may solely observe karakia while others may use water to wash their hands, face, head, or body (sprinkling water from the hands), depending on their spiritual or religious beliefs and practices.

Karakia activate spiritual potency during the whakawātea process. To whakawātea is to cleanse or spiritually purify the death space by transmuting the environment into a non-tapu state. In addition to cleansing or purifying the place of death, any equipment used in the community needs to be spiritually blessed and then physically cleaned before being sent out again for use in the community:

Equipment that was used outside and given out to the community was another area [of tikanga] I sort of put in practice. So, every bit of equipment that came in, started going into the shed. They had to be blessed even before they were cleaned, and before they were stored and handed out again. So, all those practices had to be done too... The use of the equipment [is] same as the whare [needs to be blessed]. (Ipukutu, Spiritual worker)

Right to have tohu (signs) and death bed phenomenon respected

Māori whānau accept that a person nearing death may see and speak with their tūpuna. Sometimes the ancestors may also visit close members of the whānau or the wairua of the person who is soon to be dying may visit their whānau. These death bed tohu (signs) act as messages from across the ārai. They indicate to whānau that the person will soon cross the ārai. Or sometimes the tūpuna or dying person may wish to communicate something to the living. It is a common phenomenon for kaumātua to see and talk to their tūpuna before they die. It is also accepted that when someone rouses from an unconscious or semi-conscious state before dying that their spirit has sent them back to say their last goodbyes:

We've had occasions where kaumātua and kuia have come in and they've seen their tūpuna and you know they're talking to their tūpuna... it's something that is part of us as a people. And it does happen... a lot of times the family will be there with that person, and they will talk that person through seeing those ancestors you know, they could be semi-conscious then all of a sudden, they'd wake up. And to me that's a sign that they're wanting to say the last of their goodbyes before they go. (Kaumātua P, Kaitakawaenga)

■ **The right to use rongoā**

Māori use many forms of rongoā to reduce pain and discomfort and to enhance well-being physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Rongoā practitioners do this by releasing blocked energies and giving physical relief to affected areas in the body, mind, and spirit. Healing works across all dimensions, physical and metaphysical. For example, mirimiri (massage) is much more than physical massage:

Yeah, mirimiri the hinengaro; mirimiri the wairua [massage the mind/emotions, massage the spirit]. A

lot of them [non-Māori health professionals] think mirimiri's just a massage. I said 'no... It's massaging the hinengaro; it's like giving them talking therapies from our old Māori stories'. (Whaea T, Health professional)

In the following example, a rongoā practitioner illustrates a cleansing ritual using water and leaves. A mist of wai rākau (Indigenous herbal remedy) is sprayed over the body and special leaves are used by the practitioner to gently slap the body. This helps clear and release blocked or lower vibrational frequency energies:

So, it's with the use of water we use the rongoā on the body... and that's an old, old tohunga ritual... to hit the body... with the leaves and it's the sound [vibration that influences the healing]. So rongoā being about sound, the smell, the touch, you know - the senses. So... it's the hitting of the leaves on the body to help cleanse down the body, you know, to help release that and give them a blessing. (Whaea Marama, Rongoā practitioner)

The rongoā practitioner below expressed her healing work is directed by Io (Creator). In the healing process, Io guides her and tells her who needs healing so that she can offer support and karakia to that person and their whānau:

So, in our mahi we're solely directed by Io. Io will tell us who needs mahi [work] done, so we'll just āki āki [encourage] you know, support those ones that need [that]. And if whānau are going through that grieving process then you can be sure it's the whole whānau, at one level or another. So, bringing in the karakia, and that's tikanga. Tikanga for us as Māori is so important because it gives us that self-foundation that we can stand strong on, you know. (Whaea Marama, Rongoā practitioner).

Karakia and wai rākau are used to heal the whānau after a loved one has passed over as a way of relaxing grieving whānau members. A mother and daughter healing team discuss this form of healing:

Whaea Marama: And they're grieving, and so we always give them karakia. So, it's te taha wairua (the spiritual first), always karakia and manaaki (caring for) them.

Kuia Maria: And give them a rongoā.

Whaea Marama: Mm.

Kuia Maria: We give them rongoā to relax them.

(Whaea Marama & Kuia Maria, Rongoā practitioners)

Rongoā practitioners are recognised by their communities as healers and makatite (seers). They have gifts in discerning the spiritual influences and energetic patterns influencing a person. Many receive training from their elders to carry out rongoā healing and they learn other ways of administering healing throughout their life course. Rongoā practitioners may "scan" the person before working on them with mirimiri (massage). When they see the body's energy, they can discern māuiui:

Colours. I see colours also...in the body. If I see an illness, you know, and that's when I find it, you know, hard. If I see a māuiui. Because they're not talking about it - an illness, a cancer or something, how do I say to them, 'You know, that's what I find?' And I still get teary... do I tell them that?

And we try and heal everything under the sun. We're not a professional at any particular... sickness, disease or whatever. But I guess through our mirimiri which is what we do, physical mirimiri [massage], that is the time... other problems that's not pre-given to us by the client, I pick up. (Matua N, Rongoā practitioner).

Rongoā practitioners work with the person's spiritual support system:

Rawi: And if our manuhiri [visitors] come, you know, sometimes they'll come in with their ancestor. And so, it's them that's telling me- [guiding the healing].

Matua N: They are there as well.

Whaea R: Telling me what their-

Matua N: To guide.

Whaea R: Yeah, to help them... well they tell-tale don't they dear? You know, so I'm relaying to our manuhiri, 'Oh, I've got somebody here' and I'll describe them. (Whaea R & Matua N, Rongoā practitioners)

Rongoā practitioners also support whānau to provide healing to an ill person:

We have been asked, you know, at some point where the whānau's come and asked... 'Show us how to miri [massage] 'How can we do it without having to hurt them...' So, I'll go and show them how to. (Whaea R & Matua N, Rongoā practitioners)

Some health professionals support rongoā practitioners to provide natural treatments but others avoid it. The following practitioners talked about providing Māori medicine to a person who was dying in hospital. They explained that at that time the doctor who had given permission for the use of Māori medicines knew the healers, but it was not normal practice to have Māori medicine in the hospital:

Whaea R: There was one particular doctor that we know really well, that allowed us to [use it]. We had one whānau that was-

Matua N: That asked for Māori medicine.

Whaea R: Yeah, and-

Matua N: And he ok-ed us to supply it to the

dying person.

Whaea R: Yeah, at the hospital. You know, and he, he said, 'It's not normally done'. But you know, because he knew our whānau so well, that he allowed us to bring [rongoā]..., that was really good of him too. (Whaea R & Matua N, Rongoā practitioners)

However, not all health professionals support the use of rongoā Māori, particularly where wai rākau is concerned as they fear this may contravene the use of western treatments such as chemotherapy. This highlights the need for more research, education, and training into the relationship between western pharmacology, rongoā Māori and wai rākau.

The right to diverse cultural and spiritual needs

The Pae Herenga study participants highlighted that we live in te ao hurihuri (the changing world) and that the traditions held strongly to by tīpuna may not hold as much salience for whānau who live and work in a contemporary world and time. There may be differences in the intergenerational spiritual needs of whānau. Although spirituality is often considered extremely important for kaumātua, it may not be so important for younger generations of Māori:

Well with the younger generation, with some of them spirituality isn't at the forefront of... how they live their lives. Whereas with the kaumātua, it is... I see mainly kaumātua and kuia through the work that I do so I think you could put [spirituality as] extremely important for them. (Kaumātua P, Kaitakawaenga)

Again, karakia is an important cultural custom of many whānau, however some whānau may not observe any form of spirituality and so therefore may not need karakia to strengthen them or bless them. Other whānau may prefer to take care of their own spiritual needs in their own way and time:

If they want- if they come in and they want karakia.... they either do it themselves or I can. [I] usually invite in the Takawaenga Service, they have the kaumātua there yeah. And I always give [that]. We can't always assume they want that. Sometimes they ask for it. Yeah. Because not all whānau want to do that; they might do it privately in their own homes so yeah. (Joy, Health professional).

■ The right to have tangihanga and funeral customs

Māori have a long and strong tradition of caring for tūpāpaku [deceased bodies] and carrying out their spiritual post-death care practices. Caring for tūpāpaku was, and still is, a deeply spiritual ritual for many whānau:

My dad was always doing [washing, preparing] the tūpāpaku [bodies] down at the river with others and there was a lot of karakia happening... I know my dad was one of them. I think because... his father was the actual tohunga. And he did a lot of the medical stuff with rongoā, and you know from the bush and stuff like that. But I think Dad was one of those who... got that manaaki [care of others] ... that caring and passion about our people... My dad was... mostly doing quite a lot... it was just because of his wairua and that... he'll go in and whakapai [make good] everything and do the karakia you know... (Whaea T, Health professional)

Traditionally planning and organising tangihanga is the domain of kaumātua, tohunga and those who work closely with their iwi (tribes) and hapū (sub-tribes) who have a relationship with their marae (ancestral lands, building) and the people there. Today many whānau still rely on support from their kaumātua, spiritual leaders and caretakers of Māori urupā (graveyards) to conduct tangihanga.

Many decisions need to be made such as choosing the marae the body will be taken to, where they will be buried, and who will conduct the service. Traditionally the method of koha (gifting) food or money was widespread and helped to pay funeral costs. This practice still exists among iwi and hapū although the process is less adhered to by some urban Māori who may not know the importance of these traditions. Decisions around tangihanga and the form of body disposal is often based on the tikanga of specific tribal groups, whakapapa (genealogical connections) and the preferences of individual whānau (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2018, 2019).

Whānau pani (grieving families) have the right to be cared for and protected (Hospice New Zealand, 2019). Their role is to spend time with the tūpāpaku and grieve in the whare tīpuna (ancestral home) located at the marae. Tangihanga can last days or in some cases weeks. Gendered roles are also observed. For example, women have the right to karanga (traditional calling), but women are not always permitted to make speeches inside marae depending on the customs of their iwi. Burial is the most common form of body disposal among whānau. The body is given back to Mother Earth. However, we live in unprecedented times and during COVID-19 whānau were exposed to cremation as their traditional burial methods, often involving large communities, was restricted during the COVID-19 Lockdowns (Moeke-Maxwell, et. al., 2020). Cremations are also a cheaper method of body disposal as they use less land.

Whānau have the right to have the type of funeral they would like but financial costs can be prohibitive for poorer whānau. Many urban whānau have lost connection with their ancestral

lands, homes, and people. Some whānau may lack the cultural and spiritual support needed to help them navigate these obligations. They may rely on western funeral services to help them navigate this part of the life cycle as well as prepare the body for burial or cremation. Families may need support of a kaitiakitanga (Māori liaison worker/guardian) to help them make important decisions and arrange a tangihanga, particularly as funerals can be very expensive.

I had dealings with the local undertaker down here who was just all about how much [money] he can get from you. And many a time I've had to sit with families... because when you lose somebody, you're at a real vulnerable stage. So, when you lose somebody whatever you hear that's going to make you put that person on a ... real high stand, you'll do [it]. And I heard that with this local undertaker, knowing that this family wasn't a very financial family, and [the funeral director] tried to make them spend thousands more than what they really needed to. (Matua P, Kaitakawaenga).

■ **The right to have a culturally safe workforce**

Health professionals who work with Māori patients and whānau at end of life should understand cultural safety within the context of palliative and end of life care. As the Pae Herenga study participants have shown, optimal palliative care includes cultural and spiritual practices. At the very least health professionals should be comfortable with supporting whānau to carry out their care customs unimpeded by ignorance, judgemental attitudes, and racism. A competent workforce will be able to take part in these cultural processes when needed and they will have the ability to access these resources for whānau who may lack the capacity within their own whānau.

For example, staff will respect and support whānau to observe whakanoa and whakawātea processes. Caring for Māori who are dying can exact a toll on Māori staff and others who are involved. Taking time to recuperate following a bereavement by swapping shifts and working different hours could help support staff affected by a loss in the workplace.

Health professionals will feel more confident to support whānau who have social issues if they have training to do so. They need skills to talk through issues that arise before someone dies, and with their whānau. Whānau will feel confident knowing who to approach to help them process and heal any mamae they have. With appropriate education and training the workforce will acknowledge and respect the spiritual role kaumātua play. They provide valuable cultural and spiritual support to whānau; they know who the right people are in their communities to help whānau when someone passes over:

I mean a lot of our kaumātua [have] passed on now. So, it's the younger generation that are coming up, I mean when I say younger, looking at your 60s-70s sort of thing. So, it's usually the elders of the whānau that are taking on that role yeah. (Kaumātua P, Kaitakawaenga)

■ **The right to have Māori working within the palliative care sector**

Pae Herenga participants identified a need for more Māori health professionals to support whānau at end of life. Hearing their own language and having people who understand their spiritual needs is essential for older Māori to feel safe. Cultural liaison workers can play a crucial role:

There's no Māori in the hospital. All Pākehā [descendants of British colonials]. [There are Māori who work there] ... They call them kaitiakitanga

[guardians]. Well, it's somebody who's well cultured in looking at the bigger picture... in terms of their wairua needs... Well [they're not] just sitting in their office and hoping they'll [get a] call saying, 'oh we've got a Māori patient can you come down?' Yeah, they should be walking throughout the hospital. Putting some wairua into there and identifying some of the needs of some of those whānau and making sure that they understand what's going on. (Whaea T, Health professional)

■ Discussion

Culturally safe practice is a recognised right of Indigenous people and yet the Pae Herenga findings show that this level of cultural and spiritual care is not consistently being achieved. The findings illustrate that there is an urgent need to move toward a Māori model of palliative care that places whānau at the centre. Cultural and spiritual customs should receive priority within education and training programmes alongside clinical and social care (Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019). Māori whānau, kaumātua, tohunga, and rongoā practitioners are the kaitiaki (guardians) of this vital cultural knowledge. Māori leaders are needed to develop and lead an Indigenous cultural safety programme of palliative care education and training in Aotearoa New Zealand (MoH, 2017).

The Mauri Mate Māori palliative care Framework provides a useful resource that can be operationalised into education and training programmes to ensure all health and palliative care services and professionals have access to this vitally important information (Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019). There is a need for medical, nursing and health students to be educated into a deeper and richer understanding of the needs of Māori whānau who are accessing and using health and palliative care services. This

moves beyond basic cultural safety training and the administration of cultural and spiritual assessment tools (Heath, 2021, 2021a). It moves into the space of the relational where health professionals critically examine unhelpful assumptions or biases they may have towards Māori peoples, and their culture, and they share power and resources.

Current and future workforces need to be upskilled in working with, and for Māori and their whānau, at end of life (MoH, 2017). Working with whānau and Māori communities will help to ensure important cultural and spiritual resources are available to support whānau. Local communities and whānau can help guide health professionals to understand their cultural values and how to avoid risks to patients and families to keep them safe. Whānau have the right to confidently voice their spiritual needs supported by competent staff. They have the right to receive treatment from palliative care professionals who are familiar with the concept of tapu and noa. They have the right to have their cultural and spiritual needs met at the end of life. This will happen when their cultural spiritual processes and procedures are observed within all health care settings. Respecting sacred space when prayers are being said and when waiata are being sung, and supporting whakanoa and whakawātea rituals, such as blessing a hospital room after a body has been removed and blessing hospital equipment after someone who has used it has died, are some examples of this.

As with cultural safety requirements (Curtis et.al., 2019), whānau and their communities must be involved in the cultural and spiritual development of palliative and end of life care services, including the environmental structures and physical spatial

configurations within the service. For example, large spaces within hospitals and residential care facilities are useful for gathering to conduct karakia and waiata and to companion the dying. Having space to prepare special food and drink for those at end of life, and to nurture their whānau who provide end of life care, is helpful.

The end of life provides an important opportunity to confirm the mana (status, authority, and prestige) of an ill or dying person by recognising they are more than their tinana; they are wairua, and this essence is eternal. Finding ways to support the culturally disenfranchised, and those yearning for connection with whānau they are no longer in communication with is spiritual work. For those who have lost connection, there is an opportunity to companion the person during their final months, weeks, and days. Working with whānau to establish whānaungatanga (relationships, connections) is spiritual work. Connecting whānau with tohunga, rongoā practitioners and kaumātua when they feel spiritually vulnerable is spiritual work.

Education and training are needed to support the dying and their whānau who experience spiritual distress to help them process and release suffering and guilt in a culturally safe way. Knowing how to access rongoā practitioners, tohunga and people who can rekindle hope and alleviate spiritual distress is spiritual work. When the culturally disenfranchised question life's purpose and meaning health professionals have an opportunity to support them to reconnect with their whakapapa, whānau, whenua and their spiritual source. Some people may wish to return to their ancestral homes to be farewelled and buried or to have their ashes scattered there. This needs careful planning and execution involving

kaumātua who have the mana and leadership to do that work. This is spiritual work.

An unwell person may need help to explore something that is worrying them; for example, they may fear something concerning will happen to their family after they die. Their whānau may also need support to manage and process feelings associated with loss, grief, guilt, anger, and despair. Māori healing modalities can spiritually strengthen whānau pani (bereaved family) who are in a state of pōuri (sorrow), and they can be drawn on to fortify and protect people from harm. Knowing what rongoā is, and how it works, and being able to refer whānau to tohunga and rongoā practitioners is spiritual work (Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019). Being able to draw on Māori knowledge, spiritual practices, and rituals to clear any negative thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or concerns that influence a dying individual to prevent their wairua from leaving, is spiritual work.

Health professionals must be given opportunities to learn new ways of engaging with whānau to develop meaningful connections. Communication skills need to be learned to ensure health professionals interact well with whānau while maintaining a high standard of clinical and social responsiveness. Cultural and spiritual education and training must be implemented if whānau are to have their cultural and spiritual needs met no matter what health care setting they are in, including their home. (Ministry of Health, 2017, 2018, 2019).

■ Conclusion

This chapter acknowledges the rights of Māori whānau to enact their cultural and spiritual customs at end of life and to receive culturally and spiritually responsive palliative care from New Zealand health professionals (Hospice New Zealand, 2001; MoH,

2017; Te Ohu Rata o Aotearoa, 2019). The vision is for health services and professionals to take part in education and training to ensure whānau can easily access palliative care support when needed and that services provide a welcoming environment aligned with the cultural and spiritual needs of whānau. Health and palliative care services and staff are required to become informed about Māori end of life care values, beliefs, and customs (Hospice New Zealand, 2019; MoH, 2017). Health care professionals must be given opportunities to learn new ways of engaging with whānau to develop trusting supportive relationships. Whānau and their communities must be involved in the development of cultural and spiritual palliative care education and training programmes, culturally responsive services, and infrastructures, including the spatial configurations within those services.

When Indigenous New Zealanders receive the cultural and spiritual care they are entitled to at end of life, as is their right, this approach can be extended to other ethnic groups and peoples, as is their human right.

Ehara tkuā toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini

My strength is not of an individual but a collective

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Vedic Perspectives on the Human Being with a Focus on Human Rights, Spirituality, Religious Freedom, and Ecological Sustainability

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A nuanced understanding of the impact of the Vedas needs to examine conceptual continuities of Vedic principles and ideals that continue to stream through later and newer developments in Hindu theology and theoethics. It is important to take into account the inclusion of much of the vision of the Vedic saṃhitās in later Hindu theology, philosophy, and praxis which incorporate many of the hymns, prayers, perceptions, and precepts from the śruti and continue to surge, gathering the waters of various tributaries—theological, philosophical, practical, and novel—as it has moved dynamically, in a transformative manner to the present. In light of this continuity and development of Vedic concepts, this chapter looks at a few important examples of

significant principles and perspectives that have potent implications for justice, ethics, and the moral dimension of human life.

Sri Aurobindo expresses this insight without equivocation in his critical translations, analysis, and commentary on the Rig Veda that were originally published in the journal *Arya* between 1914 and 1920:

If the Vedic hymns are, as represented by Western scholarship, the ritualistic compositions of joyous and lusty barbarians the Upanishads ‘have then to be conceived as a revolt . . . against the ritualistic materialism of the Vedas. From both premiss and conclusion I have dissented and I have finally described, not only the Upanishads, but all

later forms, as a development from the Vedic religion and not a revolt against its tenets. (emphasis added)

To offer one example of a Vedic concept that shows both continuity and new development is the central Vedic praxis of the *yajña*. Before all other later aspects of the traditions of Hindu philosophies and theologies, was a foundational concept that informed the practice of *yajña*—that of reverential “offering.” The enactment of the *yajña* encapsulated other significant ideals as well, including the perception of a reciprocal and interconnected relationship with the community, elemental nature, the Earth and, foundationally, divine forces and potencies. The ritual performance of the *yajña* as an act of gratitude; an embodied acknowledgement of the perception reciprocity; and its enactment was experienced as a powerful rekindling of the human relationship to the forces of the luminous divine world, offered multiple levels of meaning.

The idea of “sacrificial offering” that was highlighted by the *yajña* is internalized in the Upaniṣads as the sacrifice of one’s sensorial cravings in order for the supreme desire—the knowledge of the Divine: *atha yadyajña ityācakṣate brahmacaryameva tadbrahmacaryeṇa hyeva yo jñātā taṃ vindate'tha yadiṣṭamityācakṣate brahmacaryameva tadbrahmacaryeṇa hyeveṣṭvātmānamanuvindate ||*

Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.5.1

Then that which is known as *yajña* [sacrifice] is *brahmacarya*. This is because one who knows the Self attains *Brahmaloka* through *brahmacarya*. Again, that which is known as *iṣṭa* [worship of one’s vision of divinity] is *brahmacarya*, for the desired Self is attained through *brahmacarya*.

The sacrament of offering, *yajña*, is explained

in a variety of ways in Hindu textual interpretation. For example, the *Bhagavad Gītā* explains several worshipful offerings that have validity:

dravya-yajnas tapo-yajna yoga-yajnas tathapare swadhyaya-jnana-yajnas cha yatayah sanshita-vratah || Bhagavad Gītā 4.28

Some offer their possessions/wealth as *yajña*, while others perform ascetic practices as *yajña*, [or engage in] yoga practices as *yajña*; others study the scriptures and cultivate Self-knowledge as *yajña*, enlightened persons also undertake strict vows.

In this way, Krishna explains to Arjuna the many forms that *yajña* can take, but when offered while maintaining the remembrance of the Divine, they become means for spiritual growth and development. This continued importance and ongoing hermeneutics on *yajña* is one important example of how a central tenant of Vedic thought and praxis continues to flow through Hindu life and theology through history.

The roots of Hindu ethics, vision of a moral order; the importance of community and family; the sacrality of the Earth and the intrinsic value of its forms and phenomena; and the place of the individual in the greater order are elements that emerged first in the Vedic *saṃhitās* and informed the Hindu vision and worldview in myriad ways. There are two paths that this chapter takes to approach the *saṃhitās*. The first is through foundational concepts. The second is through a care-based hermeneutical engagement with three key doctrinal hymns—*Puruṣa-sūkta*, *Devī-sūkta*, *Prīthvī-sūkta*—which have influenced later Hindu theologies in profound ways.

The Implications of the *Puruṣa-sūkta*: Transcendence within Immanence. The *Puruṣa-sūkta* is hymn 10.90 of the *Rigveda*, dedicated to the

Puruṣa, the Supreme Cosmic Being. The hymn is also explicit about divine transcendence. Puruṣa remains both organically immanent in the universe and yet possessor of the divine freedom of transcendence. This organic connection that marks the deep, organically immanental relationship between the Supreme Being and the world, affirms the uniqueness of species, and diversity of beings, is known as *bhedābheda* (difference and non-difference, or simultaneous unity and multiplicity). This viewpoint has had a significant impact on Hindu theologies—in particular, certain Vaiṣṇava theologies. Several important doctrines that later inform various Hindu theologies are implicit here. These include:

1. The doctrine of which envisions the Divine as fully and organically immanent.
2. The universe and all beings are a transformation of the Supreme Divinity (*pariṇāmavāda*);
3. All persons and life forms derive their existence from the Divine in which they inhaled in potential form (*satkāryavāda*).

Satkāryavāda principle of causality wherein the effects in pre-existent in the (Divine) cause. The hymn does not make a direct reference to *satkāryavāda*, later developed as a philosophical principle in the influential philosophical school of *Sāṃkhya*. However, *satkāryavāda* is clearly implied by the hymn. The organic, intrinsic immanence of the Divine in physical reality, endowing natural phenomena—air, earth, flora, fauna, and waterways—sanctity and intrinsic value.

The powerful proclamation of immanence and transformation of the Divine into the matter continuum holds great significance and has deeply informed various later Hindu theologies.

The implications are wide-ranging for planetary flourishing:

- There is no theological ground for classism, sexism, casteism, racism, ableism, and speciesism, or any other form of subjugation. All parts of the Supreme Divinity are equally divine.
- There are no grounds, according to this vision of organic divine immanence for colonialism, enslavement, genocide, civicide, or laws that promote or sanction inequity.

2.1: The Puruṣa is indeed all this (Creation) in essence; that which existed in the Past, and that which will exist in the Future...

2.2: Everything (i.e. the whole Creation) is woven by the Immortal essence of the Great Lord (Puruṣa); by becoming Food of which (i.e. by getting consumed in Whose Immortal essence through surrender) one transcends the gross world (and becomes Immortal).

3.1: The Puruṣa is Greater than all the Greatness (which can be expressed by words),

3.2: His One Part has become all these (visible) Worlds, and His Three Parts rest in the Immortal World of the Transcendence

Intrinsic value can be maintained as something that is foundational to justice. During the Vedic period, in seeking to determine the *Ṛta* or order underlying all phenomena, a postulation was made that change can be understood in terms of a potency inherent in these phenomena, that is, in the cause to produce the effect, this potency was termed *svadha* (own power).

Swami Krishnananda explains the importance of the doctrine of deep immanence in a way that offers supreme value to all things because, indeed,

the transcendent Divinity lies (is pervasive) as immanence:

“[Here is a] classical examples of the pervasion of the cause in the effect...The Supreme Being is the cause, the universe is the effect. Clay is the cause, the pot is the effect. Clay pervades the pot and water pervades the cloth in two different senses; and God pervades the universe, perhaps, in both these senses and in either way. The concept of the Ultimate Reality decides our conduct in life. All questions get automatically [resolved] by the way in which we are able to conceive the nature of the Supreme Being....Differences in the outlook of life among human beings arise on account of differences in the conception of the Ultimate Reality, which means to say, the conception of the relationship that obtains among God, the world and the individual, which automatically follows from their notion of the nature of Reality.

■ **Devīsūktam of the R̥gveda**

The Devīsūktam, also called the *Ambhṛṇīsūktam*, after its author, is the 125th sūkta (hymn) of the 10th maṇḍala of the R̥gveda. After nearly four thousand years of an oral and subsequent written history, this hymn dedicated to the Devī, the Supreme Divine Feminine, continues to be chanted liturgically at worship ceremonies dedicated to the Devī, sacramental rites, and in the quotidian temple rituals, as well as by practitioners whose focus is the Devī. It is recited at the conclusion of the canonical text known as the *Devīmāhātmya* (c. 500 CE), which began the theological “crystallization” of the systematic philosophical theology of the Mahādevī (Great Goddess) tradition.

This foundational text of the theology of the

Mahādevī, as well as other central texts such as the *Devī Gītā* (c. 9th – 12th centuries), integrate key philosophical concepts from the Upanishads. This is evinced by the vision that views Devī as Brahman (ultimate reality, first cause, all-pervasive); ātman (the inner Self); grantor of spiritual liberation or mokṣa; the law of karma and punarjanma (rebirth) arise from the universal order that She sets in motion. Śakta theology also incorporates complex concepts from Sāṃkhya, one of the six systems of Hindu philosophy; (1) She is Puruṣa (inner witness, pure consciousness, the Self), as well as (2) Prakṛti (nature, matter) with its (3) guṇas (three constituent characteristics of matter). The concept of satkāryavāda (see earlier explanation)—which developed in Sāṃkhya, and is accepted by Patañjala Yoga, and the philosophical theology of Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism)—is incorporated in Śakta theology. Sāṃkhya is also the source of pariṇāmavāda, a highly significant doctrine that is pivotal to Śakta theology; it maintains that the Devī/Śakti is Prakṛti, the material cause of cosmogenesis.

In consideration of the integration of these later philosophical concepts, orientations, and ontologies, why does the Devīsūkta of the R̥gveda still matter? Why would the Devīsūkta of the R̥gveda be part of the liturgical life of the *Devīmāhātmya*, composed nearly 2,500 years later? Why does it continue to be central to the contemplative and liturgical worship of the Mahādevī today? It matters and remains foundational because it is the first instance of the explicit expression contemplative realization and revelation of dynamic, organic, material immanence of the Supreme Divine. The Devīsūkta (DS) experienced by the woman sage (rishika) who

composed it in a profound contemplative state of consciousness. The sūktas of the Vedas must specify the following four elements (I have shown the relevant information for the DS below):

1. name of the seer (rishi/rishika): Ṛṣikā Vāgāmbhrṇī

2. name of the divinity to whom the hymn is addressed (devatā): Vāgāmbhrṇī

3. number of verses (ṛks): 8

4. metre of the verses

The Devīsūktam, authored by a renowned woman sage the ṛṣikā known as Vāgāmbhrṇī, appears to have been composed in a state of ecstatic, unitary mystical experience of the Self as pervasive, unlimited, and nonlocal. These verses from the hymn bear testimony to her experience (Rigveda 10.125, Devīsūktam) :

Verse 1

I am the power that moves all divine powers (Viśhvadeva), including the Rudras, Vasus, Ādityas; I am the source that powers [the divine ones such as] Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Iṅdra, and both the Aśvins.

Verse 3

I am the cosmic sovereign, the one who collects all treasures, the first to be worshipped through [the offerings of the sacred] yajña. The Luminous Divine Powers (devāḥ) have located me in innumerable spaces, I am all-pervasive and inhere in all beings.

Verse 4

Through my pervasive immanence, all eating, seeing, breathing, and hearing are experienced.

Even those who do not perceive my presence dwell near me. Hear me, those with faith (śraddhā). I proclaim the truth!

Verse 8

I breathe forth all the worlds and the cosmos into existence. So vast is my glory that it transcends the greatness of the heavens and the Earth.

The hymn is expressed as an experiential realization of divine immanence in the materiality of the cosmos and viscerally present in embodiment. This is vastly expanded in explication by the future development, in Śakta theology, of the principles expressed in this sūkta. The immanence of the Divine in embodiment has highly significant implications for justice and the impulse to protect the physical flourishing of humans and, indeed, all sentient beings. The Divine, here, is not only the spirit/consciousness/transphysical Self (ātman) but the senses, experiences, and physicality of a being. Oppression and cruelty do not torment the ātman; such horrors torture the body-mind. The foundational proclamation of the sacredness of embodiment and the intrinsic value of the Earth and the natural world is clear and explicit here. The oppression, subjugation, and tormenting of physical beings and the living world is the desecration of the presence of the Supreme Divinity (the Devī of the Devīsūktam).

Concepts and Principles Supportive of Human and Planetary Flourishing There are a number of conceptual orientations in the Vedas that support the wellbeing and sustenance of humanity and the Earth. The first among these is Ṛta, which puts forward an important vision of the cosmos as having an order, guided by natural law, and the belief that humans could participate in that order and create a harmonious, abundant, and peaceful life by understanding and taking action in accordance with Ṛta—the recognition of a divine order underlying the universe. This important concept is also analogized

with yajña, the systematic praxis of sacred offerings. Ṛta is not associated with a particular yajña, or even the practice of yajña in general. Rather, it is identified with structured and ordered flow of yajña in general. Several remarkable verses posit Ṛta numerous times and present a vision of the cosmos and the world not as that over which humans have “dominion,” but as that which is pervaded by cosmic divine law, and accountable to the same as the source and sustenance that moves through all living things as averred by Rigveda (4.23.8-10):

Eternal Law [Ṛta] hath varied food that strengthens; thought of eternal Law [Ṛta], removes transgressions.

The praise-hymn of eternal Law [Ṛta], arousing, glowing, had opened the unhearing ears of the living.

Firm-seated are eternal Law's [Ṛta's] foundations in its fair form are many splendid beauties.

By holy Law [Ṛta] long lasting food they bring us; by holy Law [Ṛta] have cows [representing all abundance] come to our worship.

Fixing eternal Law [Ṛta], [a person], too, upholds it swift moves the might of Law [Ṛta] and wins the [treasure].

To Law [Ṛta] belong the vast deep Earth and Heaven: Milch-kine supreme [all sources of abundance], to Law [Ṛta] their milk [plenitude and profusion of the Earth] they render.

Such a cosmovision creates a sense of reverence. It is first necessary to recover the epistemologies of respect for the earth's ecosystems before recontextualizing theoethics and theopraxis for a viable future. This paper will seek to draw attention to some key principles and perspectives within early Hindu textual traditions that can and should

be ecotheologically understood for ecosystemic and societal sustainability. The fabric of Hindu thought, from its inception, has contained strands which have been informed by a deep reverence for, and profound intimacy with, the natural world. This sense of relationality, reverence, and gratitude—rather than dominion—has a deep and powerful foundation in the doctrine of Ṛta, which later becomes the north star for dharma as its fulfillment and enactment in human society for a just, communitarian, responsible, dutiful, and virtuous life.

The second Vedic concept that has continued to profoundly impact the Hindu understanding of reciprocity between the human and the divine, as well as the human community and the natural world, is visible in the principle of The visualization of elemental forces in terms of sacred cosmic geometry laid out in the yajna. This reciprocal interrelationship was invoked through prayers and offerings, hymns, and mystical sounds (mantra). And it created a locus of empowerment which then could be channeled productively for the welfare of the community and the world. Humans in this worldview did not see themselves as separate and disconnected from the other-than-human-world. Humans, animals, plant life, the sun, the moon, the stars and, indeed, the entire cosmos, were seen as one continuum. Humans, as participants in the cosmic drama, had a special obligation to acknowledge the sacred forces that gave rise to life on an ongoing basis. When the forces and phenomena that sustain life and fecundity were unacknowledged, unrecognized, and offered no reciprocal communion (through prayers, reverence, or the offerings of the yajña), they were weakened, dispersed, and their ability to bless, fructify, and

nurture was considered to be reduced. Because many Vedic rituals are still carried out, it is important to conceptualize this as the idea of an ecological consciousness, viewed as necessary for the benefit of humanity and nature through the sacred act of ritual.

The third principle that I would like to highlight is the acknowledge of dependence and interconnectedness with the Earth. The indigeneity of the Hindu religion at its source, the Vedas, is expressed through the sacred hymns, which are still chanted today. The Vedas exalt the marvels of nature and regard the Earth (Pṛthivī), forests (for, e.g., Araṇyānī-sūkta), and the rivers (Sarasvati, Ganga, Yamuna) as aspects of the Devī. The perception of the Earth as Mother and as a manifestation of the Divine Feminine is first seen in the Pṛthivī-sūkta of the Atharvaveda (AV), where the Earth is eulogized as the lavish bestower of all precious things. But she is also the Mother who deserves our respect and protection. The perception of Earth as the mother that creates all life from her own being (and, therefore, identified as Devī), is highly significant for Hindu ecotheology and ecopraxis even today. Various passages from the Pṛthivī-sūkta refer to such an awareness, including the following:

The earth is the mother, and I the son of the earth! AV (12:12)

Upon the firm, broad earth, the all-Begetting mother of the plants, that is supported by (divine) law, upon her, propitious and kind, may we ever pass our lives! AV (12:17)

Another passage reflects a deep concern for the wellbeing of the Earth, in a sacred text composed nearly four millennia before our planetary ecological catastrophe. The verse expresses a sense of

responsibility for her care and preservation:

What, O earth, I dig out of thee, quickly shall that grow again: may I not, O pure one, pierce thy vital spot, not thy heart! (12:35)

This sentiment is echoed again in the following passage, which expresses recognition of the value of the rich wilderness by which the Vedic people were surrounded, as well as an assurance of protection from harm due to human settlement:

Thy snowy mountain heights, and thy forests, O earth, shall be kind to us! The brown, the black, the red, the multi-colored, the firm earth, that is protected by Indra, I have settled upon, [and] not suppressed, not slain, not wounded. AV (12:11)

The hymn is an interesting testament to the clear awareness of the absolute dependence of humanity upon the Earth for all needs; everything that humans require and continue to use is mentioned. That acknowledgement, by itself, is not adequate to engender an ecological consciousness, but it is a critical step; this is evidenced by our current calamitous relationship with the ecosphere at a time in which the global commercial culture does not recognize this integral dependence at all. There is an urgency for this recognition to emerge again, in our current culture. Without such awareness, we will continue to live under the illusion that the plunder and ravaging of the Earth will not impact human lives, at least not the privileged ones.

■ Conclusion

The Vedas proffer a paradigm that is based on responsibility over rights. This responsibility is incumbent upon each human being vis-à-vis the human community and the natural world. The theoethics implicit in the Rigveda are antithetical to

human subjugation, religious intolerance, economic inequity, gender and class oppression, and the destruction of the Earth.

Such a responsibility-based paradigm protects the rights of all when all are expected, encouraged, and empowered to fulfill their responsibilities. This sense of responsiveness to the needs of other beings and the Earth itself is imbued through the principle of Ṛta and the ritual order that confirms and affirms one's need to recognize that one is in debt to the entire cosmos!

This verse from the Rigveda states this conception powerfully: *iyam adadād rabhasam ṛnacyutaṃ divodāsaṃ vadhryaśvāya dāsūṣe | yā śaśvantam ācakhādāvasam paṇim tā te dātrāṇi taviṣā sarasvati ||*

[Sarasvatī] bestowed upon Vadhryaśva, the donor of the offerings, a son Divodāsa endowed

with speed, and acquitting the debt (due to divine powers and ancestors)—she who destroyed the ill-natured petty [individual who] cared only for his own interests—such are your gifts, Sarasvatī.

The Vedas suggest that it is in living in awareness of ṛṇa—our debt to the Divine, the sages, ancestors, and the Earth itself, in accordance with dharma (based on Ṛta), that a communitarian and ecological culture can be cultivated.

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Basic principles of Bhagavad Gita and Human rights during the time of Bhagavad Gita

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Bhagavad Gita is a book of Counseling. Lord Krishna is the counselor. Arjuna is the person with conflict and needed counseling. And Gita was the discourse of, and from the Lord himself –

Ya Swayam Padmanabhasya Mukhapadmath Vinisrutha (His own – Mahavishnu – Lotus shaped Face – telling us)

Lord Krishna, the counselor, nudgingly guides Arjuna, the patient, out of Vishadam (sadness and panic) and gets him back on his feet to fight the Kurukshethra war, and to win.

Krishnam Vande Jagadgurum Krishna – You are the Universal Teacher (of all the supposed Dasavataras(10 Avatars), it is only the Avatar of Krishna who gave a DIRECT message; Lord Rama rarely spoke, He only walked the Dharma, and the message was indirect. Brahma and Eashwara have not given any discourse or message)

Gita is supposedly a compilation about 700 slokas out of which almost about 600 are from Lord Krishna. We all have lessons to learn in Bhagavad Gita, to guide us in our lives, from the teaching of Lord Krishna.

Bhagavad Gita has Eighteen Chapters

1. Arjuna Vishaada Yogam
2. Samkhya Yogam (72)
3. Karma Yogam
4. Gnana Karma Sanyasa Yogam
5. Karma Sanyasa Yogam
6. Aathma Samyama Yogam
7. Gnana Vignana Yogam
8. Akshara Brahma Yogam
9. Rajavidya Rajaguhya Yogam
10. Vibhuthi Yogam
11. Viswaroopa Darshana Yogam
12. Bhakthi Yogam (20)

13. Kshethra Kshethragna Vibhaga Yogam
14. Gunathraya Vibhaga Yogam
15. Purushothama Yogam
16. Daivasura Sampadvibhaga Yogam
17. Sradhathraya Vibhaga Yogam
18. Moksha Sanyasa Yogam (78)

YOGA means SYNTHESIS

“The word 'Yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj', meaning 'to join' or 'to unite'. ... "Yoga" refers to an inner science comprising of a variety of methods through which human beings can realize this union and achieve mastery over their destiny”

And we have 18 chapters of “Yoga” in Gita

Context of Kurukshetra and Krishna’s Role:

In the context of Bhagavad Gita Lord Krishna was often accused of being blood thirsty, encouraging Arjuna to fight the war. This needs to be understood with a perspective considering past events prior to kurukshetra war.

1. Krishna approached Kauravas as a mediator / negotiator on behalf of Pandavas for a compromise to prevent war, which failed

2. Following the failure of compromise formula to avoid war, Pandavas have taken, in consultation with all their fellow kings and well-wishers, to declare war. This remains a decision – COLLECTIVE and CORTICAL (Brain’s Cognitive centers involving Frontal Cortex) - after an elaborate discussion weighing the pros and cons of war which they have to fight with a powerful and highly resourceful, warriors like Bhishma Drona on the opposite side, enemy, who is none other than cousins and uncles...)

3. Arjuna was not just a part of this decision taking process, but also was looked upon as THE LEGENDARY ARCHER WARRIOR on whose

skills and bravery the fortunes of war depend. Pandavas can never imagine stepping on the battle field without Arjuna!!! And Arjuna is completely aware of the magnitude of his contributory role in winning the war and.

The narration in the first chapter of Gita goes – Panchajanyam Hrishikeso Devadattam Dhananjayah I...15

(Arjuna responded to Bhishma’s call with equal energy by blowing the conch)

Sloka 15 of first chapter clearly denotes the willingness, eagerness, confidence and high energy of Arjuna to participate in the war

Senayor Ubhayor Madhye Radham Sthapaya me Achyutha I....

(Arjuna request Krishna, the charioteer, to drive the Ratham to a strategic place in the middle of the two armies to gauge the enemy’s resources, that will help in formulating a strategic advantage for Pandavas in the war

4. And Krishna drove the vehicle to the point in the middle of two armies – Pandavas on one side and Kauravas on the other side....And then all hell broke loose for Arjuana.....Result is Arjuna Vishada Yogam.....Arjuna plunged into Panic, Sadness and GUILT.....Instantly Decides not to fight the war.... Alas, Chaos.....Arjuna’s decision not to take part in the war is – One man’s (INDIVIDUAL against the COLLECITVE) and Amygdaloid (Brain’s Emotional centers involving Limbic system) – in a fit of tsunamic emotional mind overwhelming rational mind....and it is a Crisis situation....there is no time to sit and ponder over....(let us, for a few seconds, imagine ourselves being in the place of Krishna facing a similar situation and think about our plan of

action!!!). Something needs to be done on an urgent, literally war footing basis.....

5. The backdrop Scenario at which Lord Krishna had to step in and has to take charge...HE promised to be only a passive charioteer and never to hold a weapon in this war.....now HE is forced to shift his role to the “DIRECTOR” of the battle scene.... and Krishna is always a master in anything he does. And HE delivered the Masterpiece – Bhagavad Gita – a “Blockbuster Scripture” for millennia to come. The single point agenda in front of Krishna is to get Arjuna out of that mood of sadness and guilt, and on an immediate basis.....Thus Spake the counselor Krishna

Asochyan anvasochastvam Pragna-vadams cha bhashase gatasun agatasumscha nanusochanti pandithah (You worry about events you are not supposed to....) II....11

.....and BHAGAVAD GITA is born.....

Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grihanthi naro parani tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany-anyani samyathi navani dehi (As you discard torn clothes and wear new ones Soul leaves the body... and occupies a new body) II ...22

Nainam chindanthi sasthanam Nainam dahati pavakah na chainam kledayantyapo na soshayati marutah (Soul CAN NEVER BE torn by arrows (bullets), Burnt by fire, Washed by floods.....) II...23

To summarise – you are unnecessarily worried, Death is only to the body, The Soul (Atma) enters another body and continues its journey; Soul is undestroyable. So your perception of killing is a myth. Learn that and Stop feeling guilty!

Theory of Counseling:

Getting Arjuna out of guilt is the goal of counseling. And the counseling process generally is to re orient the patient’s cognitive distortions which demand repetitive emphasis, combining facts with fiction and drama, elaborative conversations fine tuning counselor’s expressions to maintain the attention of the patient and driving the point when the patient is in the receptive emotional state, cognitive consonance and inner harmony. And many a time the counselor has to entertain conversation on related, but not directly connected with the main problem. There is an absolute need to build confidence (Trust) on the counselor which is psychologically described as Therapeutic Alliance between patient and the counselor. Lord Krishna’s approach can be described as Eclectic Counseling in the modern day psychological terminology. Trust, which can be broadly accepted as Bhakthi, remains an essential ingredient, along with Activity and Wisdom. That could be the reason for the counseling process to get prolonged to 18 chapters with a few chapters, Vibhuthi, Viswaroopasandarshana, Bhakthi, Kshetrakshetragna, Purushothama yogas for example, specifically focusing on the exercise of building up the trust in the counselor. There is valid reason to say this, as on a few occasions Arjuna expresses doubts on what Krishna said; Arjuna sounds irritated and even doubts the veracity of Krishna’s words - doubts his friend, philosopher, guide....

Vyamisrenea vakyena buddhim mohayasiva me Tad ekam vada nischitya yena sreya ahum apnuyam (You play with nice words and “cloud” my mind Tell me only one which certainly helps me) III...2

Krishna said

Imam vivaswathe yogam prokthavanaham
avyayam Vivaswan Manave praha Manur
Ikshvakave braveeth IV...1

“I instructed this imperishable science of yoga to the sun-god, Vivasvan, and Vivasvan instructed it to Manu, the father of mankind, and Manu in turn instructed it to Ikshvaku. Thus handed down in succession the royal sages knew this (Karma-Yoga). The Karma- Yoga was lost from this earth after a long time. Today I have described the same ancient science to you, because you are my sincere devotee and friend. Karma-Yoga is a supreme secret indeed.” (IV.1, 2, 3)

Arjuna Doubts

Aparam bhavatho janma param janma
vivaswathah (Surya)

Kathamethadwijaniyam thvamaadou
prokthavanithi IV...4

(Sun God has been around for many millennia,
you are of recent born

How do I believe your words that you instructed
Sun-god)?

Krishna clarifies

Yadayadahi Dharmasya Glanirbhavathi
Bharatha

Abhyuddhana madharmasya thadathmaanam
srujamyaham

(I was born many times before, whenever
IV...7

There was increase of adharma in the world)

You are putting in all your efforts to bring the
other person out of the mess he is stuck in and the
other person suspects you of talking lies!!! Krishna
neither loses patience nor gets irritated but goes on in

his attempts to help. It takes time and energy.

And thus the process went on and the counseling
got extended to 18 chapters giving the mankind the
benefit of the share of Lord Krishna’s wisdom

Lord Krishna’s Personality :

Lord Krishna, if I may dare an attempt to have a glimpse into his personality, the Krishna Avatar has shown a brilliant synthesis - Sensuality and Spirituality, Pleasure and Happiness, Playfulness and Statesmanship – as a Master craftsman. HE had envious Attachments of love and emotional generosity with Yashoda, Radha, Satyabhama, Arjuna; and also demonstrated firm and determined Detachments from them all; was supposedly “alone” on his last day of life when he was hit and killed by an arrow. Krishna had more than enough share of hardships – born in a prison with the threat of murder awaiting his birth, multiple vicious attempts on “Balakrishna” in gokulam, driven from his country by the king Jarasandha, public insult and shame by Shishupala in the assembly of kings – which he survived, and survived with grace. May be He is the first Go Getter! His patience is unlimited and his grace is unmatched. A Bhagawan who sanctified sensuality, living a playful life and demonstrated that life is a playground – Ranganathudu. (Radha – Krishna remains a legendary love couple even today). A stark contrast from Sri Rama Avatar’s Personality – Lord Rama rarely, if ever, spoke a word of discourse, was banished for 14 years, but had NEVER shown any resentment, anger or frustration; remained the model personification of Sthithapragna, not only for himself but radiated the same calmness and happiness to Sita and Lakshmana. He practiced Ekatpnavratha; banished Sita from the kingdom, he

distanced only his queen but not his wife, Rama's approach was mostly Reactive. Whereas Krishna was always Proactive, Flamboyant. He was always Playful, a Master communicator, Brilliant strategist, and a skillful negotiator. He always demonstrated that he remains in control of the situation, whatever and wherever that was. That reflects a brilliant and an extraordinary person with knowledge of "Game Theory", concept of "Theory of Mind" at his finger tips, and He ever remained a master of "Social Intelligence"(Pardon me for my (mis) adventure, as a clinical Psychiatrist, "crossing the line" and making an attempt to describe the personality of Lord Krishna in the contemporary technical descriptions. I adore the personality of Lord Krishna....Krishanam Vande Jagadgurum...

Bhagavad Gita is a part of Virata Parvam of the epic Mahabharatha.

Gita was first translated into English by Charles Wilkins in 1785 and Published by the British East India Company with Introduction by Lord Warren Hastings, the first British Governor-General of India, in which he prophetically wrote:

"The writers of the Indian philosophies will survive when the British Dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist....I hesitate not, to pronounce the Gita's performance of great originality, of sublimity of conception, reasoning and diction, almost unequalled and a single exception amongst all the known religions of mankind"

Bhagavad Gita – Book of Counseling:

Bhagavad Gita is a perfect and masterly synthesis of the 3 yogas – Karma, Gnana, Bhakthi – which Lord Krishna achieved with an eloquent smoothness.

Gita is a treatise on counseling – patient is emotionally torn Arjuna and counselor is Krishna

1. Context – Crisis in the middle of battle field and panic reaction of a great warrior

2. Content – Process of attaining freedom from guilt and subsidence of panic anxiety

3. Format - Dialogue between Arjuna (patient) and Krishna (counselor)

Gita has about 700 slokas of which more than 600 slokas constitute dialogue between the two protagonists of Gita – Krishna and Arjuna.

The first chapter of Gita is Arjuna Vishada Yogam (Arjuna's Sorrow) which describes the anxiety, sadness and guilt of Arjuna.

Bhagavad Gita - The beginning....(1st Chapter) – Arjuna Vishadam

Arjuna enters the battlefield

Panchajanyam Hrishikeso Devadattam
Dhananjayah I...15

(Arjuna responded to Bhishma's call with enthusiasm by blowing the conch)

Sloka 15 – describes the willingness, eagerness, confidence and high energy of Arjuna to participate in the war Tsunami of Guilt and Emotional turmoil overwhelms Arjuana...

(From Sloka 21st to Sloka 29 of Chapter I)

Panic State:

Gandivam sramsate hasthath thvakchaiva
paridahyathe na cha saknomy avasthathum bhramathi
va cha me manah

(Gandivam slipping...Unable to stand,
Confused Mind) 1...30

Sadness:

Na kankhse vijayam Krishna na cha rajyam
sukhani cha Kim no rajyena Govinda kim

bhogairjvithena va (I do not desire victory, Neither kingdom or pleasures Why kingdom, why luxuries, why this war, why, why) I...32

Guilt:

Ahobatha MahatPAPAM karthum vyavasatha vayum Yadrajya sukhaobhena Hanthum Swajana mudyatham (Preparing for the SIN of killing our own kin...) I...44

Death Wish:

Yadi Ma Mapratheekaram asastram Sastrapanayah Dhartarashtra rane hanusthanme KSHEMATHaram bhaveth

(Even if I get killed in the war by my enemy it will be good) I...45

Visrujya sa saram chapam, shoka samvigna manasa(dropped bow and arrows, Sorrowful Mind) I...47

Tham thatha krupaya vishtam asru poornakulekhsnam

(thus Arjuna slumped in the chariot with tearful eyes) II...1

Sishyasthe Aham Sadhi Mam Tvam Prapannam (I am your sishya, HELP ME PLEASE....) II...7

Overpowering of Arjuna's Rational mind by his own emotional mind is total and complete and he falls on the feet of Lord Krishna requesting help

Bhagavat Gita - The End...(18th Chapter) – Moksha Sanyasa

Nasto mohah Smrtir labdha Tvat Prasadana maya Achyuta Sthithosmi gata-Sandehaha Karishye Vachanam tava

(“Clouds” have cleared... All YOUR GIFT doubts vanished, I AM READY TO ACT as per your guidance) XVIII...73

Counseling successful. Arjuna decided to fight. And Pandavas won Kurukshetra war!

Whatever transpired between Arjuna (the patient) and Lord Krishna (the Counselor) between those two slokas – from II...7 to XVIII...73 – remains a matter of great interest not only to students of Psychology, but to every human being.

And this is an attempt in that endeavor –

Arjuna's Vishadam is not about his capabilities as a warrior, not performance anxiety. Arjuna had no doubts about performance - like examination fears, anxiety about facing interview, work stress etc.... this is not the usual neurotic fears about fear of performancehe has total confidence in his capabilities as the best archer...he is confident winning over, and if required killing all relatives including Bhishma...but worry only for the consequence of guilt after the killing... Arjuna is certain about winning the war...but has fear of committing a sinful act of killing his kith and kin for the sake of kingdom and pleasures, emotional surge of guilt leading to refusal to fight the war...we need to understand that the conflict Arjuna is facing is at a different plane – Empathy, Ethics, Relationship, Moral values, societal judgement...

An important point to make note of is that the outward behavior of refusal to fight war – can be due to different cognitive disturbances

1. Performance Anxiety to fight - I can't fight
2. Guilt and not the fear of Performance – I can fight but worried about killing and winning

Guilt is the result of Attachment - an exaggerated and ill justified empathy

.....emotional mind's overwhelming capacity in numbing the rational mind...

(it is an accepted age old practice in medicine that even the best of surgeons generally do not take up surgical operations on their family (children, wife, parents...) for the simple reason of Emotional attachment interfering with correct medical decisions.)

And so the counseling is to be directed to remove that guilt. Krishna, the counselor, elaboratively explains about – Death is a natural process for every living being; death is only to the physical body and not to the immortal soul (Jeevathma); soul reentering another body and the process of rebirth is a natural phenomenon; what is being killed is only the body and not the soul; guilt is an unwanted emotional feeling which to be win over to continue and perform one's own dharma; and for kshatriya to fight the war

This is elaborated in the following slokas...

Asochyan anvasochastvam Pragna-vadams
cha bhashase gatasun agatasumscha nanusochanti
panditah

(You worry about events you are not supposed to, and also speak like a wise man...) II...11

Jatasya hi dhruvo mrtyuh dhruvam janma
mrtasya cha tasmaad apariharye rthe na tvam
sochitumarhasi II ...27

(Everything born has to perish...and has to be born again)

The goal was “Getting rid of Guilt” and it was largely achieved with the concepts of soul, jeevathma, paramathma, transcendence, and moksha. And understanding the gravity of emotional conflict Krishna took the opportunity to elaborate on the nuances of philosophy.

In the process of counseling Krishna's approach

was a “Menu Card” giving the choice to Arjuna, which, I think, is one of the greatest assets of Hinduism – Respecting the other person as another individual human being with his own intellect, emotions, attitudes, inclinations and reservations.... the beauty of Hinduism with a much higher level grant of freedom and choice.

Bhagavad gita is supposedly a description and explanation of Mama – Dharma

The first word in 1st sloka of gita is Dharma (Dhama kshetre kurukshetre...)

The last word in last sloka of gita is Mama (... Dhruvaneethi mathir MAMA)

Mama Dharma (My Dharma) – Realising the individual human being's potential with the knowledge of meaning, purpose, happiness, values, ethics, morality, rights, responsibilities, character, identity...

We need to understand that Dharma demands social engagement whereas attaining Moksha may require social disengagement....

Taking cognizance of the situation and the gravity and generalizability of the conflict Lord Krishna did not stop the goal of managing guilt but extended to have a discourse on several important concepts of philosophy. Gita mainly focuses on 3 aspects

1. Karma Yoga 2. Gnana Yoga 3. Bhakthi Yoga

All the three contribute immensely to the growth of an individual and whatever is the path one chooses the ultimate goal is Moksha – transcendence of Jeevathma with Paramathma with a full stop to the cycle of rebirths. Krishna repeatedly explains and elaborates on his being the creator, sustainer and destroyer of this universe. Except practice of

meditation and performing “yagna” Krishna does not talk about any specific ritualistic practices.

1. Karma Yoga: 3 full chapters are devoted to karma yoga

Karma – Action

Karma Sanyasa – Detached Action

Gnana Karma Sanyasa – Informed Detached Action

Karmany evadhikaras te Ma phalesu kadachana

Ma karma-phala-hethur bhur Ma te sango'stv akarmani II...47

Na karmanaamanaarambhath naiskharmayam purushoshnuthe

Nachasanyasanadevasiddhimsamadhighachithai II...4

(Without doing work no one will attain moksha

Just because you are a sanyasi you will not attain mokshs)

Sanyasah karmayogashcha nih sreya sakaraubhau

Thayosthu karma samyaso karma yogo visishyathe IV ...2

(sanyasam, karma yoga – both are good

But among the two, without doubt Karma yoga is better)

Karma (Action) is the path of one's work, where your work becomes in itself a spiritual practice (say, in the sense of benefit to fellow human beings), and not just for its material rewards

Gandhiji's action of Non Violence movement for Independence was more of spiritual practice!

Larry Page and Sergie Brin, the two youngsters, started Google with only one intention i.e to

provide a good search engine, which greatly helps in acquiring and disseminating knowledge. The concept and the initial Google project was certainly not for any material gains. Later, they becoming “Data Emperors” is another sequential event!

2. Gnana Yoga

Nahi gnanena sadrusam Pavithra miha vidyathe

Thathswayam yoga samsidhaha kale nathmani vindithe III...38

(there is nothing greater than knowledge in this world

attain gnanam by realizing self (Atman) over a period of time)

Uddharedatmana'tmanam Atmanam avasadayet

Atm'aiva hy atmano Bandhur atm'aiva ripur atmanah VI...5

(you need to uplift yourself...Self Actualisation...

You are your choices, you are your destiny

You remain your friend and not your own enemy

This one sloka summarises Advaita school of philosophy)

Arjuna expresses the doubt which we all face in our everyday life...

Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramadhi balavadhrudham

Thasyaham nigraham manye vayoriva sudushkuram V134

(Mind is so wandering Krishna, difficult to focus on meditation

I feel controlling mind is more difficult than controlling wind)

Krishna's response....

Asamsyam mahabaho mano durnigraham
chalam

Abhysena thu kauntheya vairagyena cha
gruhyathi VI...35

(no doubt about the wavering nature of mind

Practice and practice is the only way to control
it, with a detached attitude)

3. Bhakthi Yoga

Ananyaschinthayamtho mam ye jana
paryupasathe thesham nithyabhiyukthanam yoga
kshemam vahamyam (Whoever worships me ...I
am taking care of all of them). IX...22

Sarvadarman Parithyajya Mamekam
Saranam Vraja Aham Thva Sarvapapebhyo
Mokshaishyami Ma Suchah (Leave everything
and Trust me, I will rescue you from all the sins...
) XVIII...66

These two slokas summarise the Dwaitha
school of Philosophy. Paramathma (Bhagawan), the
immortal, has control over all Atmas (living beings)
the mortals; Paramatma decides the future of mortals
judging by their beliefs, acts and deeds. "You offer
prayers to me, not commit sinful activities, have trust
in me – I will take care of you"

Dwaitham – Bhagawan and you are separate;
HE decides....your destiny

Adwaitham – Everyone is Bhagawan. Aham
Brahmasmi, I am Brahman, I am divine....I am my
destiny....

Arjuna can choose any path....

From the 7th chapter, Gnanavignana yogam,
onwards, in the Askharabrahma, Rajavidyarakshasam,
Vibhuthi, Viswaroopasandarshanam, Bhakthi,
KshethraKshetragna, Gunatraya (in this

chapter discussion is on different personality
traits – Sathva, Rajas, Tamas), Purushothama,
Daivasurasampadvibhaga, Sradhatraya, Moksha
sanyasa Yoga....the summary being Lord Krishna's
dialogue predominantly emphasizing

Paramathma, Jeevathma, I am the unmanifest
Brahman....

I, Paramthma, is the creator, sustainer and
destroyer of this universe; I am Omnipresent and
omnipotent. The Jeevathma, soul, in you, is immortal
and imperishable (unlike your body which is mortal
and disintegrates after death). Your soul had a past
life, going through the present life and certainly
will have a future life. The Meaning and purpose of
life's journey is attaining Moksha – transcendence
of jeevatma and paramathma – which effectively
ends the cycle of life and death. Detached Karma,
Philosophical wisdom, Devotion are the means to
reach me.

Parithranaya Sadhunam vainasayacha
dushkrutham

Dharma samsthanarthaya sambhavami yuge
yuge IV....8

(I am being born again and again and so my age
is not as you thought

I did explain Surya as Vishnu...)

Chathurvarnyam maya srushtam gunakarma
vibhagasah

Thasya kartharamapi mam viddhi kartharam
avyayam. IV...13

(I have created the groups brahmin, kshathriya,
vysya and sudra

Based on their work and nature.....

Yey yatha mam prapandyante tham sthadaiva
bhajamyaham

Mama varthmanu varthanthe manushyah partha
sarvasah IV...11

(I offer people my benevolence as per their
prayers, activities...)

Bhoktharam yagnataphasam sarvaloka
maheswaram

Surudam sarvabhuthanam gnathva mam
santhimruchathi V...29

(Bhagawan is Bhoktha for all yagnas and tapas,
He heads the world)

He is kind and benevolent to all life, those who
are aware of this remain in peace)

Vedanam Samavedosmi Devanaam
Asmivasavah

Indriyanam Manaschyasmi Bhuthanam asmi
chethanah

(I am the best of everything - Omnipotent,
Omnipresent...) X...22

Mruganamcha mrugendroham Vainatheya
pakshinam

(Lion among the animals, Eagle among the
birds...) X...30

Pasyame Pardha Rupani Sathasotha Sahashrasa
Nana Vidhani Divyani Nana Varnakrithani cha
(Arjuna, Look at my Hundreds and Thousands
of forms XI...5

Different manifestations of shapes, colors and
forms)

Oppenheimer reportedly described Atomic
fission of Nuclear Bomb as demonstrated by Krishna's
cosmic force in viswaraopa Sandarshanam

Spirituality in Bhagavad Gita:

Culture of religion is belief - Bhakthi

Culture of science is question – Gnanam

Is Spirituality a hybrid / blend of the two?

“The meaning and definition of Spirituality
has developed and expanded over time. A survey
of reviews by McCarroll dealing with the topic of
spirituality gave twenty-seven explicit definitions,
among which "there was little agreement.
"Traditionally, spirituality is referred to a process
of re-formation, re orientation and re integration,
which "aims to recover the original shape of man",
oriented at "the concept of God" as has been detailed
in various scriptures of the religions of the world".
Spirituality also has been understood as relating to
spirit or soul, and not to physical body, i.e something
intangible. Also as a way of, and approach to life,
life's meaning, goal, emotionality and also Spiritual
intelligence.

Spirituality = Scriptures x Logic (Scriptures
logically discussed, understood and distilled)

Recent times witnessed spirituality and religion
becoming increasingly disconnected. “Broadly
speaking it may not be easy to separate Spirituality
from Religion. The important question is “ Can
I be Spiritual without linkage to any Religious
inclinations”?

Religion is categorised to be at a “lower plane”;
spirituality at a “higher plane” and it is not easy to
define the “plane”

In Atmasamyama Yoga (chapter VI), the sloka
Uddharedatmana'tmanam Atmanam avasadayet
Atm'aiva hy atmano Bandhur atm'aiva ripur atmanah
VI...5

(you need to uplift yourself...Self
Actualisation...

You are your choices, you are your destiny Know
Thyself, Self-Awareness, Mindfulness – the sense of
ongoing attention to one's internal state, a NEUTRAL

STATE that maintains self reflectiveness even amidst turbulent emotions, a state of fundamental emotional competence is the foundation for psychological insight and building block for a healthy emotional intelligence...

(Meta cognition – awareness of thought process
Meta mood – awareness of one’s own emotions, moods...)

Denotes spirituality without any religious belief systems involved in it.....

But, in my opinion, the three important concepts Karma, Gnana, Trust (Bhakthi) can be practiced to understand and enhance spiritual intelligence and leading a meaningful spiritual life with a purpose. (Bhakthi, understood as Trust, need not be always towards a deity). Trust, on another person, object, concept, plays an important role in giving us a peaceful existence. Properly evaluated, carefully nurtured trust is the secret of reducing worry and enhancing peace and thereby happiness.

Karma & Yagna:

Philosophy – Questions that may never be answered

Religion – Answers that may never be questioned
Artificial Intelligence(AI), Role of Consciousness, Metaverse – technological advancements that seem to be shifting discussions on - intelligent design / evolution, pleasure / happiness, ethics, morals.... from philosophers to engineers. AI guys had their foundations on mathematics and they demand metrics!

All organisms are Biochemical Algorithms
What is the role of Consciousness? AI does not need consciousness!

Why should you be Happy? Should you look for

Happiness or Meaning in life? what does meaning offer to human life?

Is it ethical to go for genetic engineering? if possible, can I tweak my egg to have a more resilient child?

Life expectancy increased from 40 to 68 years. Should we work to increase it to, say 168?

Very routine and mundane questions in the Silicon valley in 21st century

(by the way, Krishna’s weapon “Chakra” is a perfect example of LAWS (Lethal Autonomous Weapons System – Drone as a weapon with specific details of the target enemy loaded onto it – it executes with precision – recollect Shishupala vadha in Rajasuya yagam)

And So.....

The following topics raising doubts about definitions, qualitative description and quantification should not sound too silly, and so demand clarification.

The big questions now are –

1. What constitutes karma & yagna
2. is there a qualitative difference,
3. quality or quantity which is more important to attain life’s goals of happiness, meaning and moksha?

It may be difficult to describe it in absolute terms but at least a relative definition helps.

Cognitive and emotional components of attachment and detachment may be intangible, as they are mental phenomena, and difficult to measure. But Activity (Karma, Yagna) is behavioral expression and executed by the body and so tangible and measurable. Defining qualitative and quantitative criteria for activities should help an average human

being to practice it. We have been measuring and quantifying Happiness for about a decade now!

Karma - Definition, Quality, Quantity

Karma is one word we come across Bhagavad Gita several times, almost in every chapter at least once. In comparison to other scriptures, Bhagavad Gita stands out for giving supreme importance to karma i.e action, work. Lord Krishna devoted three chapters to teaching related to Karma implying that it is one of the important approaches to reach Brahman, Paramathma

Karma yogam, - Action

Karma sanyasa yogam, - Detached Action

gnanakarma sanya yogam – Informed (Wisdom)

detached action

Karmanye vadhi karasthe ma phaleshu kathachana

Ma karma phala hethurbhu ma the sangosth akarmani. II...47

Sanyasah Karmayogaschya Nih Shreya Sakarubhav

Thayosthu Karma Sanyasa Karma yogo Visishyathe. V....2

Na Karmanamanarambath Naishkarmam Purushosnuthe

Na cha Sanyasanadev Sidhim Samadhigachathi III....4

Niyatham kuru karma thvam karma jyayo akarmani

Sareerayathrapi cha the na prasiddhe akarmanah. III....8

Karma Brahmodhbhvam Viddhi Brahmakshara Samudhbhvam

Thasmath sarvagatham Brahma nithyam Yagne Prathistatham III....15

The big question now is – What constitutes karma, is there a qualitative difference, which is important – quality or quantity to attain life's goals of happiness, meaning and moksha?

It may be difficult to describe it in absolute terms but at least a relative definition helps.

Cognitive and emotional components of attachment and detachment may be intangible, as they are mental phenomena, and difficult to measure. But Activity (Karma) is behavioral expression and executed by the body and so tangible and measurable. Defining qualitative and quantitative criteria for activities should help an average human being to practice it

– Does “karma” apply to only certain religious / spiritual / philanthropic / community care / public service activities or Any activity performed with detachment ? Householder's (Samsarika) daily activities – marital relationship, child care, financial activities, social life - without reasonable attachment. We all know that most Hindu deities (except Lord Anjaneya) are happily married and samsarikas. Maheswara went a step further and incorporated his better half as his Physical half (Arthanaareeswara).

? A Sanyasi's (Brahmachari detached from the family and staying in ashram) activities like managing finances of the ashram, food supply chain for the ashram inmates, house keeping activities, organizing prayer activities but not directly involved in the prayers etc ?

We have the example of Vadhya Gita (the Holy song, spiritual teachings, of the Butcher) in the Vana parva of Mahabharatha which indicates “No duty is ugly, no duty is impure it is only the way in which the work is done, that determines its worth.”

I may be sounding silly, but unless I have a reasonable knowledge of the characteristics, quality and how much for how long, to reach my life's goal...

At this juncture it may not be irrelevant to quote Victor Frankl in his book "Man's Search for Meaning" – Happiness (may I include Transcendence also) cannot be pursued; it must ensue.....and it only does so as the UNINTENDED SIDE EFFECT of one's personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself or as the by-product of one's surrender to a person other than oneself.

Yagna – Definition, Quality, Quantity:

The expression also may need more clarification? Only Prayers performed with "Homam, invoking Agni" ? any activity done with public interest? does it have to be religious / spiritual activity or even non religious activity also

Swamy Chinmayananda's discourses on Gita are always described as "Gita Gnana Yagnam"

Similar doubts that have been expressed in relation to Karma also come applicable here and need some guidance for an average human to practice

Any advise, suggestion for the betterment of life, meaningful life with happiness needs to be Applicable to the larger mankind; in medicine, the dictum remains that any treatment suggested needs to be affordable, accessible and applicable to a larger section of community, without which it is considered "NO TREATMENT". In the same way, any spiritual / religious discourse, advise, suggestion needs to be applicable to a larger group of humans and not just for a select and elite group! If not, it can be an enormous effort wasted.

Anger:

Anger is classified as a destructive emotion. Anger leaves pain to both, self and the other person. And every single, without exception I can say (which may include Rakhasas also!) human being would like to be known as someone who is calm, composed and cool. None would like to have the nickname of being irritable, agitated and short tempered.

No one wants to be angry; Anger is ALWAYS looked down; never appreciated

But everyone gets anger at some time or other; difference is only relative in quality and quantity. Anger is an example of Emotional Hijacking of Rational Mind, Intellect...

Aristotle – "Anybody can become angry-that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, and to the right degree, and at the right time, and for the right purpose, and in the right way-that is not within everybody's power and is not easy"

Lord Krishna explains the probable originative causes for anger and also the resultant intellectual numbing that follows anger

Dhyayatho Vishayaan pumsaha, Sangastheshu upajayathe

Sangaath sanjaayathe Kaamah, Kaamaah Krodho abhijayathe II...62

Krodadbhavathi sammoha Sammohaa Smruthi Vibhramah

Smruthi Brahma Buddhaana Buddhaanaa Pranasyathi II....63

Anger is generally not without reason, but seldom a good one...anger is the mood people are worst at controlling...

Anger is the most seductive of negative emotions...energizing...at times exhilarating... exhibits power, command, control, can be appealing

at times at the risk of the “Angry young man” becoming a model....

Neurobiologically sudden sparks of rage are of Amygdaloid origin; controlled, calculated anger is of Cortical origin

Sthithapragasya:

Steady, Stable, Balanced, Unwavering, Calm, Composed state of Mind

(the first person that flashes in the mind is Lord Sri Rama, The Perfect Gentleman Avatar)

Arjuna enquires

Sthithapragasya ka bhasha Samadhisthasya kesava

Sthithadhim kim prabhasheta kim aaseetha vrajetha kim. II....54

Athakena prayukthoyam papam charathi poorusha

Anischannapi varshneya balaadiva niyojitha III....36

(why do people resort to these sinful activities

When, most of the times, they don't even want to do)

Krishan Replied

Prajahaathi yada kaaman sarvaan partha manogathan

Athmanyetha vathmanasthah stithapragasthya dochyathe II.....55

Dukheshu mano vighnamahnah sukhesu vighnasthah

Veetharaaga bhaya krodhah stithadheer muniruchyathe. II.....56

Kama esha krodha esha rajoguna samudbhavam Mahasano mahapapma viddhi ena miha vairinam III...37

(kama and krodha are products of Rajoguna

(Emotional mind)

We all need to understand their influence on our activities)

Desires are to be restricted, emotional responses are to be controlled, Pleasures are to be reined. The goal is not emotional numbing but nurturing better emotional intelligence (EQ)

The Personality traits of Sathva, Rajo. Thamo Gunas of an individual are to have a smooth sine wave flow and not as spikes and troughs...

Happiness as the goal of life demands restrained enjoyment of pleasures, and obviously it is hard work (Epicurus, Greek Philosopher)

Bhishma and Arjuna:

Thasya Sanjanayan harsham kurivridhah Pithamah

Simhanadam vinadychiikh sankham dhadhmau prathapavan I...12

(Bhishma blew his conch getting his army ready for the battle,

And Bhishma did it with so much energy, excitement roaring like a lion)

Arjuna is Bhishma's grandson and Bhishma's love and affection to Arjuna is well known. An average human being is relatively more worried about his child's wellbeing than about his Parent (I am not saying that we should ignore our parents, but only highlighting the general occurrence in the society. Arjuna was most distressed when Abhimanyu was killed) – it is an Evolutionary dictate, for continuation of race.

Arjuna considered it a sinful act to kill Bhishma in the war, and guilt was the only reason for his vishadam; but there doesn't seem to be any mention of Bhishma's worry about killing Arjuna in the war!

Human rights during the time of Bhagavad Gita
—
Vidya vinaya sampanne brahmane gavi hasthini
Suni chaiva swapake cha panditha sama
darshinah V....18

(A Learned man, Brahmin, cow, elephant,
Dog, chandala – Pandits will treat them equally)

This denotes how a learned man should have
equanimity towards all living beings!

It may be difficult to talk about Human Rights in
those days of kingdoms, emperors, chaturvarnams.
Egyptian Pharaohs are considered gods and later
day kings and queens (as in Britain and Japan)
are looked up as the representatives of gods. Kings
did take care, some were more benevolent towards
people, protected them from internal robbers and
external invaders and they paid taxes to the king
in return for providing them the security. Priests,
Ministers, and Army generals were the executives
in delivering king's dictats. Common men had their
specified functions as a Farmer, Trader, or a soldier
and they all served the king and there was no other
choice

In my limited knowledge the concept of
Human Rights taken birth only after introduction of
Democratic political systems

Emperor of Babylonia, HAMMURABI's (1776
BC) code of conduct divides human beings into 3
categories – Superiors, Commoners and slaves. And
the code of justice is separate for each group which
gives an indication of human rights of that era

1776 AD – American Constitution's declaration
of Human Rights

Philosophy, Economy, Politics:

Dhyayatho Vishayaanpusaha, Sangasthesh

upajayathe

Sangath sanjayathe Kaamah, Kaamaah Krodho
abhijayathe II...62

Karmany vadhikarasthe Ma phaleshu
kadachana

Ma karma-phala-hethur bhur Ma te sango'stv
akarmani II...47

Increased and repetitive attention leads to
initiation of desire

Persistent desire leads to kama (strengthened,
forceful desire to possess)

Possessiveness consolidates Attachment, and
the cycle of desire, possessiveness, attachment....
Pleasure...demands more pleasure and increases
expectations....

Non fulfilment of pleasure....unhappiness....
frustration....jealousy.....anger.....

And so Shun your Desires.....and temporary
Pleasures....for lasting HAPPINESS..

Sacrifice pleasures.....Do it voluntarily.....
Buddhism

Do your karma (say, work in a factory), not to
harbor the feeling that the "Phala"(product of the
factory) happened because of my skill, And never
entertain the idea of NOT WORKING because you
are not incentivised – your right and duty is only on
work; not on 'Phala'

And so Shun your Incentives....pleasures.....to
contribute happiness to your countrymen...

Sacrifice work incentives.....karma sanyasa....
Do it Voluntarily.....Lord Krishna advises in
Bhagavad Gita.....

If you don't practice this voluntarily....

The State will impose on you....Communism

Socio economic political doctrine of Karl

Marx's Das Capital seem to have origins, intellectual property rights, in the teachings of Gita and Buddhism!!!

And lastly...

Body & Soul: Body is the material component, the vehicle in which the "Soul" travels, . Body is the medium through which the "Soul" practices Bhakthi, attains Gnana, performs selfless Karma, which are basic requirements for transcendence of "Soul" (Jeevathma) in Paramathma. What is required is regulation of the body's Indriyas, Kama, Krodha etc. Discarding the body, especially with disgust as bodily craving of pleasures being the reason for our sins of kama, is unfair and can remain a classic example of throwing the baby with bathwater. "Body" the material flesh and bones demand some respect, as without which the it is impossible for the "Soul" to practice any – bhakthi, gnana or karma – I love my child as visualized by me in her body, not by her soul!!!

Gnanendriyas (Sensory organs – eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin)and Karmendriyas (Motor organs

– hands, legs, mouth, anus, genitals) constitute essential elements in our journey, for the spiritual journey too.

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Ancient History of the Human Rights Movement : Need for a Post-Modern Framework

Dr. A. Adityanjee & Ripudaman Pachauri

The ideas and notion of human rights as conceptualized today have a very definite Western and imperialistic orientation. Human race has been there for a long period of time, do we really think that there was there no concept of human rights in other civilizations except for Western civilization? The discourse in the ideological West about universal human rights is essentially a post-World War II phenomenon. All the international covenants and human rights and charters were written by the Allied powers who emerged victorious in the Second World War. As usual, the victors write not only the history but also the rules for the future.

A careful study of history of human rights suggests that the concept of universal human rights has been there for thousands of years in one form or the other and is not a post-WW-II notion and certainly not a Western phenomenon. The current western imperialistic but post-colonial paradigm is very lopsided and somewhat myopic. In this article,

we will discuss historical dimensions of concepts of human rights from alternative cultural perspectives and propose a new framework that balances the stridently individualistic concept of human rights.

While talking about individual human rights per Western traditions, we must go much beyond the jaded unidimensional concept. The modern post-second millennium focus should rightly be on the Diamond of Humanity that comprises four corners or pillars:

1. Human Rights
2. Human Dignity
3. Human Duties
4. Human Responsibilities

These four constructs are not mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive. Individuals do not exist in vacuum.

While individuals are the focus of the society, and yes, individual rights are important; they are not absolutely supreme. There must be a sense of

balance and proportions. One person's rights should not be an excuse to deny human dignity of another person. While demanding for their rights, each individual, has certain duties and responsibilities that must be fulfilled. Rights can not exist in vacuum. Human dignity is as important as human rights. While trumpeting for individual's rights we can not strip other human beings of their dignity and there must be a balance between the two. If our right to do something actually ends in end of life for another human being that is not a good example. Championing individual human rights human rights of whom and against whom that is a very important issue. So, in the diamond of human dignity there are four corners individual human rights, human dignity human duties and human responsibilities. Unfortunately, the western conceptualization of human rights does not take into consideration the concept of human dignity. If you fallaciously focus more on individual human rights and less on human dignity and the fact that there's no concept of human duties and human responsibilities as conceptualized in international law at this point in time and that needs to be rectified. Whether there are treaties and covenants at this point in time is not the issue, the real issue is that we have to look at the whole issue the diamond of humanity in a holistic manner.

The matrix of individual human rights is also intersectional with the following dimensions that cannot be ignored:

1. Individual
2. State
3. Non-state Actors
4. Family
5. Community

Individual human rights need to be viewed

and balanced in the context of states' rights, the conduct of non-state actors and overall community's rights. At this point in time there's just a dichotomy individual rights versus states' rights but in other civilizations a much more balanced understanding is there about human rights. Individual rights are pitted against rights of the state but there are other entities that impact on not only the individual's rights but also the rights of communities. When the human rights covenants were written the individual's human rights were viewed against the power of the state. The notion of non-state actors was not prevalent in the post WW-II scenario. Now we know, sometimes individuals can deceptively collude with non-state actors using the tactic of lawfare to harm the interests of either the state, family or the interests of community at large. Affiliation with small groups, non-state actors or cults in the garb of individual rights can be seriously detrimental to larger interests of the state, family, or community.

There are multi-national business corporations that have extreme concentration of power both economic and political. Such inappropriate and unregulated concentration of economic and political power interferes with the human dignity of a number of individuals worldwide. Technically these MNCs are not state powers. Hence pitting individual human rights versus state dichotomy is not a good dichotomy when non-state actors like trans-national business corporations violate human dignity. We must ascertain individuals' rights, states' rights and then look at the non-state actors which may be corporate sector, terrorist organizations, drug cartels, and religious cults etc. For example, the right to freedom of belief exercised by a religious cult in Georgetown, Guyana led to murder of 2000

individuals. There are nuances and we cannot take an extremist view of individual human rights as the only concept to champion and of course when you have large transnational organizations pitted against the small person or the smaller entities like a village or a rural community or the small groups whose rights are we going to uphold?

Again, we must take a very balanced and holistic approach and not just join the bandwagon of human rights and religious freedom from a narrow Abrahamic perspective. Your right to practice your religious belief allows you to convert another person could actually affect the dignity of another human being. When one says that one's right to practice one's religion is to convert the entire world into one's own religious sect for which one will use any means whether it is money, fraud, inducement, deception and violence; there is a serious problem. Per one's religious belief, the non-believers can be physically eliminated per the directives of one's religious books is an example of distorted thinking and logic. As upholders of human rights and religious freedom we must balance all these factors into the equation of the diamond of humanity and evaluate what is right in one particular situation or the other.

Notions of righteousness present in ancient law and religion are sometimes retrospectively included under the term "human rights". While Enlightenment philosophers suggest a secular social contract between the rulers and the ruled, ancient traditions derived similar conclusions from notions of divine law. It is imperative that we critically evaluate the concept of human rights as we understand today and study as to how it was prevalent in other societies, cultures and civilizations.

Eastern Dimension in History of Human Rights:

As we stated earlier, there is an East versus West dichotomy in human rights movement because of the shrill, narrow and short-sighted emphasis of the individual human rights without balancing against other stakeholders.

In the Eastern philosophies the concept of Rights or Adhikara is balanced against a much loftier notion of Dharma or righteousness. The focus is on individual's righteous conduct fulfilling one's duty in an honorable manner. In ancient Hindu texts of Vedas, there is a mention of concepts of Dharma (obligations and rights) or righteousness. This is balanced against the concept of Karma (responsibilities and duties).

In the ancient Hindu text Manusmriti, the great law giver, Maharishi Manu has beautifully described Dharma as:

Dhritih ksama damo'steyam
sauchamindariyanigraha.

Dhirvidya satyamakrodho dasakam
dharmalakshanam.

Maharishi Manu's above definition of Dharma has ten characteristics, i.e., dhriti (perseverance), forgiveness (kshama), self-restraint (dama), not to take possessions of others without permission (asteya), internal and external purification (shaucha), senses control (indriya nigraha), improvement of intellect (dhi), acquisition of accurate knowledge (vidya), truth (satya), abstaining from anger (akrodha). This definition of dharma which is as relevant today as it was in the ancient times is majorly taught to kids in most of the DAV Schools and Gurukulas run by Arya Samaj in India. Everything pertaining to dharma should stand the test of Veda and logic says Maharishi Manu (Manusmriti). Acharya Brihaspati says "When there is a contradiction among the

Smrities, treat Manu Smriti as the authentic one. But it should be taken like this only, when the Manu Smriti is in consonance with the Vedas and not where it contradicts the Vedas."

■ Duties of the State or the Ruler:

The state is supposed to behave in a righteous way also. There are duties and responsibilities of the state in the notion of Raj Dharma.

Raj Dharma was the 'Code of Conduct' or 'Rule of Law' that was superior to will of the ruler and governed all his actions. In Hindu scriptures, good governance is called Raj Dharma, i.e., righteous duty of the king. Kautilya aka Chanakya (Vishnu Gupta) in his famous statecraft treatise Arthashastra states: "Happiness of the people is the happiness of the King". King can not do anything unlawful to his subjects.

Edicts of Ashoka: The Edicts of Ashoka are a collection of more than thirty inscriptions on the Pillars of Ashoka, as well as boulders and cave walls, attributed to Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya Empire who reigned from 268 BCE to 232 BCE. Ashoka used the expression Dhamma Lipi (Prakrit in the Brahmi script: □□□□□□□□, "Inscriptions of the Dharma") to describe his own Edicts. These inscriptions were dispersed throughout the areas of modern-day Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The edicts focus on social and moral precepts rather than specific religious practices and his social and animal welfare program. The Dharma preached by Ashoka is explained mainly in term of moral precepts, based on doing of good deeds, respect for others, generosity and purity. The expressions used by Ashoka to express the Dharma, were the Prakrit word Dhamma, the Greek word Eusebeia (in the Kandahar Bilingual Rock Inscription and the

Kandahar Greek Edict of Ashoka), and the Aramaic word Qsyth ("Truth") (in the Kandahar Bilingual Rock Inscription).

Right behavior: The Prakrit word "Dha-m-ma" (□□□, Sanskrit: Dharma) in the Brahmi script, as inscribed by Ashoka in his Edicts. Topra Kalan pillar, now in New Delhi states:

Dharma is good. And what is Dharma? It is having few faults and many good deeds, mercy, charity, truthfulness, and purity. Thus, the glory of Dhamma will increase throughout the world, and it will be endorsed in the form of mercy, charity, truthfulness, purity, gentleness, and virtue.

Benevolence: Ashoka's Dharma meant that he used his royal power to try to make life better for his people and he also tried to change the way people thought and lived. He also thought that dharma meant doing the right thing for his people.

Kindness to prisoners: Ashoka showed great concern for fairness in the exercise of justice, caution, and tolerance in the application of sentences, and regularly pardoned prisoners. But it is desirable that there should be uniformity in judicial procedure and punishment. "This is my instruction from now on. Men who are imprisoned or sentenced to death are to be given three days respite. Thus, their relations may plead for their lives, or, if there is no one to plead for them, they may make donations or undertake a fast for a better rebirth in the next life. For it is my wish that they should gain the next world. In the period [from my consecration] to [the anniversary on which] I had been consecrated twenty-six years; twenty-five releases of prisoners have been made."

Respect for Plant and Animal life: The Mauryan empire had a clear-cut policy of exploiting as well as protecting natural resources with specific officials tasked with protection duty. When Ashoka embraced

Buddhism in the latter part of his reign, he brought about significant changes in his style of governance, which included providing protection to fauna, and even relinquished the royal hunt. He was perhaps the first ruler in history to advocate conservation measures for wildlife.

This rescript on morality has been caused to be written by Devanampriya Priyadarsin. Here no living being must be killed and sacrificed. And also no festival meeting must be held. For king Devanampriya Priyadarsin sees much evil in festival meetings. And there are also some festival meetings which are considered meritorious by king Devanampriya Priyadarsin. Formerly in the kitchen of king Devanampriya Priyadarsin many hundred thousand of animals were killed daily for the sake of curry. But now, when this rescript on morality is caused to be written, then only three animals are being killed (daily), (viz.) two peacocks (and) one deer, but even this deer not regularly. But even these three animals shall not be killed (in future).

King Devanampriya Priyadarsin speaks thus. (When I had been) anointed twenty-six years, the following animals were declared by me inviolable, viz. parrots, mainas, the aruna, ruddy geese, wild geese, the nandimukha, the gelata, bats, queen-ants, terrapins, boneless fish, the vedaveyaka, the Ganga-puputaka, skate-fish, tortoises and porcupines, squirrels, the srimara, bulls set at liberty, iguanas, the rhinoceros, white doves, domestic doves, (and) all the quadrupeds which are neither useful nor edible. Those [she-goats], ewes, and sows (which are) either with young or in milk, are inviolable, and also those (of their) young ones (which are) less than six months old. Cocks must not be caponed. Husks containing living animals must not be burnt. Forests must

not be burnt either uselessly or in order to destroy (living beings). Living animals must not be fed with (other) living animals. Ashoka advocated restraint in the number that had to be killed for consumption, protected some of them, and in general condemned violent acts against animals, such as castration.

■ Ancient Mesopotamia:

The earliest Mesopotamian law code was the Code of Urukagina (c. 24th century BCE) which exists today only in fragments. The reforms of Urukagina of Lagash, the earliest known legal code (ca. 2350 BC), is often thought to be an early example of reform. He is best known for his reforms to combat corruption, which are sometimes cited as the first example of a legal code in recorded history. In it, he exempted widows and orphans from taxes; compelled the city to pay funeral expenses and decreed that the rich must use silver when purchasing from the poor, and if the poor does not wish to sell, the powerful man (the rich man or the priest) cannot force him to do so. He cleared and cancelled obligations for those indentured families, citizens of Lagash living as debtors because of grain taxes, barley payments, theft or murder. Urukagina solemnly promised that he would never subjugate the waif and the widow to the powerful.

The earliest extant set of laws from ancient Mesopotamia is the Code of Ur-Nammu dating from c. 2100-2050 BCE and set down in the city of Ur either by King Ur-Nammu (r. 2047-2030 BCE) or his son Shulgi of Ur (r. 2029-1982 BCE). These laws were written by a king who ruled over a homogenous population and were operating from a standard recognition of what was expected of the citizens. The Code of Ur-Nammu, although also fragmentary in the present day, is still cohesive enough to give a

clear understanding of what the laws addressed. The laws were written in cuneiform on clay tablets and follow a model possibly first established by the Code of Urukagina which would also influence the later Laws.

Ur-Nammu claimed that the laws came from the Gods and Ur-Nammu was only the administrator, passing down to people the will of their Gods. Ur-Nammu understood the importance of identifying himself with these heroes of the past who, in his time, were no longer remembered as oppressors but as great father figures who had cared for the land and its people. He therefore presented himself as just such a father figure and instituted a patrimonial state, encouraging his subjects to think of themselves as his children and all as members of a family. In order for this model to work, however, the people had to agree to it. Ur-Nammu claimed the laws came from the gods and Ur-Nammu was only the administrator, the middleman, passing down to the people the will of their gods and enforcing their precepts. The laws all follow the pattern of the conditional sentence, if-this-then-that.

The Code of Hammurabi was a set of 282 laws inscribed in stone by the Babylonian king Hammurabi (r.1795-1750 BCE) who conquered and then ruled ancient Mesopotamia. Although his law code was not the first, it was the most clearly defined and influenced the laws of other cultures. By the time of Hammurabi's reign, the population was more diverse, and his law code reflects this in its precision to make sure everyone understood what was expected of them. The laws address business contracts and proper prices for goods as well as family and criminal law. Every crime inscribed on the stele is followed by the punishment to be inflicted. No one

could claim they were ignorant of the law as the over seven-foot-tall stele was erected publicly. At the top, it was engraved with an image of Shamash, the god of justice, handing the laws to Hammurabi and the following text makes clear that these are laws of the gods, not arbitrary rules created by mortals.

■ Ancient China

Ancient China had certain norms and concepts which were given by Confucius who focused on responsible behavior towards others to the best of one's capacity. Following Confucius there were other philosophers like Mozi or Motzu who gave the Mohism school of moral philosophy and Meng around 370 BC, who was a follower or student of Confucius, again talked about all humans being sharing the same humanity.

■ Magna Carta:

Generally, most Western scholars believe that the birth of human rights begins with the birth of Magna Charta in 1215 in England. Magna Charta, for instance, asserted that the king had absolute power (the king who created the law, but he himself is not bound by law), must be restricted his power and began to be held accountable in public. Since it was born the doctrine of the king is not above the law and began to be responsible to the law. if the king violated the law he must be prosecuted, and his policies should be accounted in the parliament.

The birth of Magna Charta is regarded as embryo for the birth of a constitutional monarchy that the point is that the king's power is only a symbol. After Magna Charta, Bill of Rights in England in 1689 comes in more concrete development. At that time known an adage that says is that human beings are equal before the law. This adage then encourages the emergence of law and democracy. Bill of Rights

emphasizes the principle of equality. This emphasis is based on core principles of human rights defender who always struggle for equal rights since the right of freedom cannot be obtained without any right to equality. For that purpose, there are various theories related to the rights of equality, such as Roesseau's theory (his theory about the social contract / covenant community), Montesquieu's theory with his *Trias Politica* which teaches the separation of powers to prevent tyranny, John Locke in England and Thomas Jefferson in America who introduce the basic rights of freedom and equality in society.

■ **Abrahamic Religions and Human Rights:**

But once religion was codified in the form of the religions-of-the-book and the three religions-of-the-book trying to propagate each of their religion, in that process causing strife and causing the death destruction and pillager of the non-believers and it led to a lot of human misery. When we look at the crusades the other religious campaigns out of the national boundaries from where these religions arose there was a lot of violation of human rights so just to simply say that Nazis slaughtered six million jews and that's how human rights history or human rights movement started, I think is very fallacious we have to take a much longer historical point of view and not gloss over historical mistakes.

European Colonization and Empire Building:

Settler colonization was an ongoing system of power that perpetuated the genocide and repression of indigenous peoples and cultures. Essentially hegemonic in scope, settler colonialism normalized the continuous settler occupation, exploiting lands and resources to which indigenous peoples had genealogical relationships. Settler colonialism included interlocking forms of oppression, including

racism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and capitalism. Settler colonizers were Eurocentric and assumed that European values with respect to ethnic, and therefore moral, superiority were inevitable and natural. However, these intersecting dimensions of settler colonialism coalesced around the dispossession of indigenous peoples' lands, resources, and cultures. The ongoing systems of domination in places such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, where colonialism was not a thing of the past because the settlers had come to stay, displacing the indigenous peoples and perpetuating systems that continued to erase native lives, cultures, and histories.

An example of settler colonialism can be found in the History of Algeria. Between 1830 and 1962 (date of independence of Algeria), Algeria was considered a "French Department." Unlike other French colonies (Haiti, Ivory Coast, etc.), Algeria was annexed and made officially a part of France in 1848. The French aim was to make Algeria a part of France by erasing the Indigenous' rights and displacing them from their lands. Atrocious crimes were committed by French colonial authorities in Algeria throughout the 132 years of colonization. Five million indigenous Algerians were killed and crimes including torture, murder, rape, the displacement of indigenous people, nuclear tests, land theft, and denial of the most basic rights were committed against the Indigenous population. Similar stories of massive human rights violations are documented from other erstwhile colonies in Asia, Africa. Oceana and Americas.

■ **POST COLONIAL WORLD:**

World War I and II were influential in the genesis of the current human rights covenants. During the World War II there were human rights violations by

both Axis Powers and Allied powers. Axis Powers' Human Rights Violations are generally talked about more. Nazi human rights violations are already well-documented. Most of these violations have been documented and justice rendered. Italian government under Benito Mussolini committed similar human rights violations in North Africa. Japanese forces had a brutal record against other Asian countries during the World War II. Much has been written about the Korean comfort women exploited by Japanese troops for sexual atrocities. Burmese Railways project was used for slave labor by Japanese. Allegations are that Japanese troops indulged in cannibalism during the World War II.

Allied forces indulged in repeated carpet bombing of Civilian populations in Germany. After the fall of Nazi Germany, US and allied soldiers indulged in mass rapes of German and Italian women. The Soviet army raped over two million Soviet, German and Polish women which had been liberated from the Nazi concentration camps. Over 240,000 women died because of rapes. Many of them committed suicide or died from venereal diseases. US justified using nuclear bomb twice to subjugate Japan. The argument is that the use of nuclear weapons forced Japan to surrender and end the World- War II. However, use of this twisted logic could justify the dropping of nuclear bomb only on Hiroshima and not on Nagasaki three days later.

■ **Post-World War II period:**

Tuskegee Experiments were conducted in 1950 after World War II in which African American males were denied treatment for syphilis in order to study the natural course of that dreaded sexually transmitted disease, although safe and effective antibiotics were available. The ideological west during post-

colonial period has suffered pangs of civilizational guilt resulting in use of psychological defense mechanisms of projection, projective identification and a severe counter-reaction (reaction formation). This counter-reaction has resulted in a piecemeal approach to the Human Rights Movements. Instead of taking a holistic viewpoint about human rights, activists and lobbyists have latched on to small niches for populist and marketing purposes. Extremist organization have found a foothold in environmental protection and other movements including animal Rights movements, e.g., PETA, feminist movement for women's rights. Some of these extremist organizations have advocated use of violence as a rationalized means to achieve their cause and have included activists of dubious credentials. Some of the pro-life movements in the US reflect the same philosophical approach while advocating the right to life of unborn fetus, have resulted in targeted killing of healthcare professionals.

■ **Post-colonial World:**

In the 3rd millennium, intellectual colonization has replaced physical colonization of the developing world and marginalized societies. Weaponization of Human rights movement has served as a potent means for continued colonization of the former colonies. Same approach about extremely narrow focus on labor standards have led to use of artificial standards to deny some of the developing countries their fair share in global commerce and trade. Intellectual property rights and trade mark and patent protections as non-negotiable instruments of commerce have resulted in playing with the healthcare of poor countries under the garb of fairness.

■ **Epilogue:**

Danger of excessive weaponization of human

rights movement with narrow, extreme piecemeal approach devoid of common sense and rational thinking is serving as danger to humankind instead of helping raise awareness of human rights. We need to change the framework under which human rights are discussed, debated and implemented. We exhort the international community to pay heed to newer framework of diamond of humanity while discussing human rights protection, preservation and propagation.