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SUCHIRITHA: A JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

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Editorial

At the outset I express my happiness for this wonderful opportunity Almighty showered on me to initiate and launch this journal Sucharitha. The object is to publish research articles pertinent to Philosophy and Religion which have significant relevance and applicability to the current academic scenario.

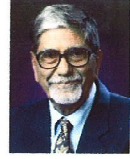
My exposure to the subject of philosophy and the conviction thereof, led me into the dream of commencing Sucharitha, its prominence relating to Gautama Buddha's ideals "Good Character". The attempt is to dedicate this journal to the Vision of Mahatma Gandhi and to put in efforts to cover articles more in tune to philosophical and religious matters for connectivity to the recent emerging trends. Non-violence, Women Empowerment, Human Values and related issues need the focus.

I am optimistic that you all will provide the concern Sucharitha needs and contribute to its growth.

Thanking you

(Dr.Victor Babu Koppula)

N. Suryanarayana (Dhanam)



FOREWORD

Dr.K.Victor Babu,s stupendous efforts are strikingly pertinent to the field of learning.

This Journal 'Sucharitha' (Journal of Philosophy and Religion) will be publishing papers on Philosophical and Religious matters; products of a life time from researchers and acadcmicians.

Dr. Victor Babu, an experiecned Editor will certainly bring out the best of contributions. His relentless efforts will address the curiosity of readers.

I personally appreciate his initiative and am very optimistic that the journal will provide food for thought.

I wish him all the success.

With best wishes and regards.

(N.Suryanarayana)

Operations Manager, Vice President, Executive Director and Joint Managing Director-Positions held in the Chemical, Petro Chemical & Oil Refining Industries in India and Abroad (Philippines, Kuwait, South Korea, Bahrain and Oman)

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CREATING A GLOBAL CULTURE OF NON-VIOLENCE : GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE

K.R.Rajani

Non – violence is not only non – killing or no – injury but an inner feeling of mind and heart, it means the largest love and greatest charity”.

— Speeches and writings of Mahatma Gandhi, P-346.

Non – violence is the most active force in the world...
and is the supreme law”

— Harijan, 24 – 12-1938, P-393

The entire theme of the paper is constituted in the above said words of Gandhi about non – violence. The intension of the paper is to high light non-violence as method in the educational system. The goal of education according to Gandhi is moral education or character building of persons. How can we build character? Gandhi had no belief in the existing system of Indian education. He realized that the prevailing system can only impart instructions or makes man literate, but literacy is not education. True education is that which “ draws out and stimulates the spiritual, intellectual and physical faculties.¹

“ By education I mean an all – round drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit”². He further held that true education of the intellect can

only come through a proper exercise and training of the bodily organs. In other words an intelligent use of the bodily organs in a child provides the best and quickest way of developing his intellect. But unless the development of the mind and body goes hand in hand with a corresponding awakening of the soul, the former alone would prove to be a poor lopsided affair. “ By spiritual training I mean education of the heart. Proper and all – round development of the mind, therefore, can take place only when it proceeds pari passu with the education of physical and spiritual faculties of the child. They constitute an indivisible whole.³

Non-violence is the method to draw out and stimulate the spiritual, intellectual, physical faculties of man.



Gandhi's non-violence as a method of education predominantly structured with eight facets (Astanga) : Humility, Faith, Prayer, Fearlessness, Cleansing heart, Love, Sacrifice, Service. These qualities represent the " largest love and greatest charity" (non-violence), which should be cultivated by each and every individual. Gandhi believed, as there is an element of goodness essentially present in every man, there is the need of a proper education to bring out this element of goodness.

THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF NON – VIOLENCE:

The personal character '**Humility**' should be cultivated basically by pupils and people. "Non-violence is impossible without humility... If one has... pride and egoism, there is no non-violence"⁴. The Quality of humility reduces ego and pride. One can confess his errors only by humility. " Humility constitute knowledge"⁵ .The 13th chapter of Gita proclaims this Truth. From the Holy Bible in the book of Isaiah 57:15 says, "I (God) dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones". Humility is the pre-requisite to acquire knowledge. Every person needs to cultivate this virtue.

Faith is not only a precondition to prayer but the first constituent of non – violence. Gandhi described it as " a power, which can be wielded equally by all..... provided they have a living faith in the God of Love and have therefore equal love for all mankind. When non – violence is accepted as the law of life; it must pervade the whole being and not be applied to isolated acts"⁶. Non – violence is the law of life but to possess it the first requisite is to have a 'living faith in the God of love'⁷. Faith is not a delicate flower which would wither under the slightest stormy weather; faith is like the Himalaya Mountains which cannot possibly change. No storm can possibly remove the Himalaya Mountains from their foundations.... And I want every one of you to cultivate that faith in God⁸. Gandhi admitted that, " My faith has saved me and is still saving me from pitfalls. It has never betrayed me. It has never been known to betray any one⁹.

Prayer requires a living faith in God.¹⁰ Prayer is the precondition to peace. Without prayer there is no inward peace¹¹. Prayer had been the saving of my life. Supplication, worship, prayer are no superstition. They are acts more real than the acts of eating, drinking, sitting and walking. Prayer is the first and the



last lesson in learning the noble and brave art of sacrificing self in the various walks of life¹². Prayer is the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening¹³. Prayer is impossibility without a living faith in God¹⁴. Many of the Indian schools start their day – work with prayer to Almighty (not to any personal God). Gandhi proclaimed that, " That peace, I tell you, comes from prayer; I am not a man of learning, but I humbly claim to be a man of prayer"¹⁵.

Fearlessness is the first requisite of morality and spirituality. Cowards can never be moral¹⁶. Gandhi analyzed that; fearlessness doesn't mean arrogance or aggressiveness, which in it self are a sign of fear. Fearlessness presupposes calmness and peace of mind. "Each individual must be educated in the art of self – defense. It is more a mental state that has to be inculcated than that our bodies should be trained for retaliation. Bravery (fearlessness) is not a quality of the body, it is of the soul. I have seen cowards encased in tough muscle, and rare courage in the frailest body..... The weakest of us physically must be taught the art of facing dangers and giving a good account of ourselves"¹⁷.

How can a person possess a **clean – heart**? Gandhi's answer is –

'prayer is an unfailing means of cleansing the heart of passions'¹⁸. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart.¹⁹ The man who goes about the affairs of the world without a prayerful heart will be miserable and will make the world also miserable. One with a wicked heart can never be conscious of the all – purifying presence of God.

Gandhi defined Non-violence as the "**greater love**" i.e. love in its deep sense; its pure form is Non-violence. It is a synonym of love. However, Gandhi has given a scientific explanation to love. " The Scientist tells us that without the presence of the cohesive force amongst the atoms the entire universe cease to exist.... And the name for that cohesive force among animate beings is love. We notice this cohesive force between father and son, brother and sister, friend and friend. But we have to learn to use this force among all living beings. For in the use of it consists our knowledge of God"²⁰. Gandhi's logic of love is that those who "seek after Truth, a follower of the Law of love cannot hold anything against tomorrow... He never creates more than what is strictly needed for the moment."²¹ As the man of love does not have greed for anything he never adopt any violent methods for his needs. "Love never



claims, it ever gives. Love ever suffers, never resents, and never revenges itself."²² Hence the logic of Love pre-supposes Non-violence.

The human body is meant solely for service never for indulgence. The secret of a happy life lies in sacrifice. **Sacrifice** is life, indulgence spells death. Therefore, everyone has a right and should desire to live 125 years while performing service without an eye on result. Such sacrificed life must be wholly and solely dedicated to service. Sacrifice made for the sake of such service gives indescribable joy, which sustains life. Without this joy long life is impossible and would not be worthwhile even if possible. This body therefore, has been given us only in order that we may serve all creation with it.²³ Sacrifices can be categorized in many ways. The first and the highest form of sacrifice considered by Gandhi is the 'bread labor'. He viewed that: " If all labored for their bread and no more than there would be enough food and enough leisure for all. Than there would be no cry of over population, no disease, and no such misery as we see around. Such labor will be the highest form of sacrifice²⁴." Everybody striving for 'bread labor' is lagging behind in all third world countries. This is the basic root cause for poverty and violence.

There is a great need to cultivate this aspect of life through education.

Gandhi believed that "... **service** is not possible unless it is rooted in love or ahimsa... This service is again impossible without bread labour, otherwise described in the Gita as yajna. It is only when a man or woman has done bodily labor for the sake of service that he or she has the right to live."²⁵

Moreover, service to the helpless is the life mission of Gandhi. The freedom struggle in India was lead by him to help the millions of helpless Indians. He believed that, " God manifests Himself to us in the form of the helpless. Hence the true religion is service of the helpless. I am endeavor to see God through service of humanity, for I know that God is neither in Heaven, nor down below, but in every one."²⁶

The safest rule of conduct is to claim kinship when we want to do service, and not to insist on kinship when we want to assert a right. This has been called by Gandhi as the golden rule of conduct to maintain relationships. As the character building is the aim of education one should be inculcated with this rule of service.

"Non-violence is an unchangeable creed"²⁷ and is a rule of conduct for



society if it is to live consistently with human dignity and make progress towards the attainment of peace for which it has been yearning for ages past.²⁸

How to train people and communities in this difficult art?

“ There is no royal road, except through living the creed in your life which must be a living sermon”.²⁹

Cultivation of non-violence may need long practice. It “ presupposes great study, tremendous perseverance, and thorough cleansing of one’s self of all the impurities”³⁰. He who has not overcome all fear cannot practice ahimsa (non-violence) to perfection. The votary of non-violence has only one fear that is God. He who seeks refuge in God ought to have a glimpse of the Atman that transcends the body. Training in non-violence is thus diametrically opposed to training in violence. Violence is need for the protection of things external, whereas non-violence is needed for the protection of the Atman (soul), for the protection of one’s honor.

In order to develop the whole man - the intellectual, physical and spiritual powers of the individual need to be trained and there by we can produce a best citizen of all round development.

Gandhiji believed that, in every man there exists an essential goodness, and a proper education can bring out that essential goodness which is inherent in men. The basic elements of Gandhi’s non-violence would result in the creation of a global human society involving non-violent methods of resisting exploitation. “ An all around drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit”³¹ with the technique of non-violence is the Gandhian concept of education. The young generation is neglecting the religious and moral values of the past and has given it a name as “ generation gap”. But there exists certainly a link between past and present. The feeling of generation gap is the impact of the absence of proper guidance and lack of training in cultural values. The educational institutions are the authorized agencies in imparting formal education to a child. All round development and character building of child should also stake place there at the very beginning itself. A child can become proficient in any subject he likes even without attending class-room teaching, providing efficient and sufficient private coaching in the area chosen is imparted to him. But character building is highly impossible, unless an ideal educational atmosphere is created to the child. The



main purpose, therefore, of a school is no just to impart knowledge on different formal subjects but to impart good values in all respect.

It is apt to reiterate a Chinese saying that: " If there is nobility in heart, there will be beauty in character, if there is beauty in character, there will be harmony at home, if there is harmony at home there will be order in the nation, if there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world". Creating a peaceful world, a world of non-violence is possible when all schools of the world integrated the methods of non – violence in their curriculum. Therefore a curriculum on these lines of Gandhian thought needs to be designed to build the culture of non – violence in the world.

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EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Rajana Ramani

"You educate a man; you educate a man. You educate a woman;
you educate a generation."

-Brigham Young

Introduction:

Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with knowledge, skills and self confidence necessary to participate fully in the developmental process.

Education is important for everyone, but it is especially significant for girls and women. This is true not only because education is an entry point to other opportunities, but also because the educational achievements of women can have ripple effects within the family and across generations. Investing in girls' education is one of the most effective ways to reduce poverty. Investments in secondary education for girls yield especially high dividends. However women's literacy rates are significantly lower than men's in most of the developing countries. Women empowerment stands for empowering women with legal and social rights, education, awareness about the self and the world. Women empowerment is the

cause for change in the social and family structure.

In the earlier times the place of women was considered to be within the four walls of her home alone. But all over the world important changes have taken place in the political, social and cultural aspects of the life of people. Consequently changes have also taken place in the attitude of the people towards women and towards the role women in the society. The social reform movement undertaken by Kandukuri Veeresalingam emphasized the urgent need to liberate women. The Women's Indian association started in 1917 with its headquarters at Madras presently Chennai to tackle the educational and social problems of women. The Andhra Mahila Sabha came into existence in 1937, since then contributed for the cause of women empowerment through education. Thus women activists and women organizations gave importance to education through



which women can be liberated and empowered. It is felt that education as a potent tool in the emancipation and empowerment of women.

The Indian Government has expressed a strong commitment towards education. However India is still has the lowest female literacy rate in Asia. This low level of literacy not only has a negative impact on women's lives but also on the country's economic development. A woman's lack of education also has a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of her children and family which again reflects the society. Women's education in India has been one of the major issues of concern of the government of India as well as the society at large. It is because of the fact that today the educated women play a significant role in the overall development and progress of the country. It has been identified that the greatest single factor which can incredibly improve the status of women in society is education. It is indispensable and it enables women not only to gain knowledge about the world outside and home, but also helps her get a status, positive self-esteem, self-confidence, necessary courage and inner strength to face challenges in life. Educated women can play equally important role as men in nation building.

Thus there is no denying the fact that education empowers women. Indeed the different organs of the United Nations and experts on women's liberation argue for women's education as the basic step to attain equality with men.

In ancient India women and girls received less education than men and boys. This is due to a set of social norms that were existing during those times. But in the Vedic period women had access to education but gradually they had lost this right. In medieval India the situation much deteriorated with the introduction of purdah system. In colonial India through the various movements launched by eminent personalities like Raja ram Mohan Roy, Iswer Chandra Vidya sagar, Mahatma Gandhi, Mahatma Jyothi Rao Phule, Periyar and Baba Saheb Ambedkar paved way to make women of the country literate. The position of women education in India revived with the invasion of the British in the country and the various movements launched to make women of the country literate influenced the modern Indian education system for women. Women's education in the modern India is traced back to the years after the independence of the country. In the present times, the government of India takes measures to provide education to all women of the country. Women literacy



rate seemingly rose in the modern days. At present the constitution of India guarantees free primary education for both boys and girls up to the age of 14. Education in India plays a vital role in the overall development of the country. This proves that educated women promote education in their family. Further, learned women can also help in lessening of child death rate and expansion of population. In modern era, women education is the replica if a Vedic model for instructive inspiration.

Women's education plays a very important role in the overall development of the country. It not only helps in the development of half of the human resources, but in improving the quality of life at home and outside. Educated women not only tend to promote education of their girl children, but also can provide better guidance to all their children. Moreover educated women can also help in the reduction of infant mortality rate and growth of population. In spite of the governments concern over compulsory education for both boys and girls, there still persists low literacy rate of girl child. The various studies which have been conducted for the low literacy rate and also not attending school, revealed multifaceted reasons. The socio-economic factor plays a very important

role in the low enrollment of the girl child in the school. High level of poverty is one of the major reasons. Over one-third of the population is estimated to be living below poverty line. Though the schools are administered by the state and local governments, required funding for the maintenance of the buildings and recruitment of teachers is very much lacking.

Although admission into schools is free, the costs of books, uniforms and transportation to school cannot be borne by the parents because of their acute poverty. Poor families are also more likely to keep girls at home to care for their younger siblings or to help the mother in her work place. Negative parental attitudes towards educating daughters can also be a barrier to a girl's education. This is so because they consider that the girl gets married and what is the use of sending her to school. The other concern is that daughters with higher education levels will likely to have higher dowry expenses. Another barrier to education in India is the lack of adequate school facilities. Many schools in the country simply do not have enough class rooms to accommodate all the school-age children. When I was member of the legislature, I myself made visits to some villages and found some schools where



teacher and students were not present, instead the school premises was used as buffalo shelter, and when questioned the local people informed that the teacher comes once in a month signs in the register and this happens because none of the children showed interest to attend the school, I termed these schools as “**ghost schools**”. Such was the situation during 80’s. This situation changed to some extent but still a lot has to be done to improve the standards of the schools run by the local governments, particularly the rural schools. Furthermore, the schools lack sanitary facilities and water supply. This is a major drawback for the girl child to attend the school. This situation is almost the same both in urban and rural areas. Inadequate sanitary staff to maintain the toilets and to keep the school premises also is another reason for poor attendance of the girl child. As the school atmosphere is not in a viable mode which inculcates a child to go to school, the child always prefers to stay back at home or go for work to earn in support of her family. Lack of latrines is another detrimental to girl’s attendance.

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Indian Constitution in its Preamble, Fundamental Rights, Fundamental Duties and Directive

Principles. The constitution not only grants equality to women, but also empowers the States to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favor of women. From the 5th Five Year Plans onwards there has been a marked shift in the approach to the women’s issues from welfare to development. Thus the government of India constantly working for the betterment and improving the conditions for imparting good education for girls which paves way for the empowerment of women in the long run. However The 73rd and 74th CAA (1993) providing 33 percent reservation of seats and 112th CAA (2012) providing 50 percent reservation of seats for women in local bodies of both rural and urban, is a foundation for their participation in decision making at the local level. This is a clear indication that the Government of India is very much concerned about women and for their empowerment both socially, economically and politically. A person to be elected democratically will definitely need basic education. It is not mere political reservations that matters most for empowering women. Women should work for empowering by themselves.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I would like to mention that though the Government of India and

States are working for empowering women, there is a vacuum in the implementation of various measures taken by the government. The loop holes to be identified and to be rectified by the concerned authorities. The Mahila organizations and NGOs should play a positive role in bringing women to the forefront of the society. Though it is felt that women are still unequal to men, the last quarter century has seen a tremendous improvement in their status through progress in education. Women empowerment should not be in theory, but ought to be practiced by every individual starting from his family. **The world cannot make lasting progress if women and girls in the 21st century are denied their rights and left behind. "Unless the Gender Relations Change - The women Status Never Change"**

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HUMAN VALUES : A PHILOSOPHICAL STAND POINT

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Introduction:

Human Values - Is human value acquired or inherited? Human behaviour, desires, aptitudes, and attitudes always constituted the central stage of discussions of all philosophers, Indian or Western irrespective of the period. The focus is on the central and pivotal role of human beings as the key factor in the developmental process. Human values are important irrespective of the nationality.

Decent living conditions with the political and civil freedom to promote the life in community, living a healthy life, are important indices for human excellence and economic progress.

The prosperity and progress of a nation depends not only on the material resources but to a large extent on its human element too. Increasing the knowledge, providing the requisite skills, increasing mental and physical abilities, all these aid the human capital.

We put forward many goals. These are meant for the billions of people. For these goals to become meaningful and a reality, the nation must commit itself to

work on the human values. It is important to work on the human development and when this is addressed the subject in detail; it will be a journey through the ages as to how philosophy viewed this aspect. The research examines the social values, makes us understand our obligation to human beings from a national and global perspective.

The purpose of this paper-Human Values: A Philosophical Stand Point, and the role of philosophy is primarily intended to bring out the areas of concern where the child misses the values while studying and to produce a proposal that addresses concerns of youth. The fact remains that there is urgency to identify the practical importance of lack of harmony in society and also to find out ways as to how the contemporary challenges can be faced.

The two basic human urges are reasoning and vision. In Indian philosophy is not a mere theory but a "way of life". The Indian Philosophers represent a synthetic and balanced approach to two tendencies: "Know in



order to believe and believe in order to know".

Accepted values must be taught, encouraged and supported at National and International levels. The pluralistic society recognizes the human rights of each individual and that should be treated equal. Humanistic values are built upon moral and ethical values.

We have to refer to the schools of Indian thought which are from the Indian Philosophy. Belief in the reality of the world, Belief in the reality of the Self, Faith in the law of Karma, Faith in the law of transmigration of soul, feeling of bondage to Samsara and necessity felt for emancipation, Authority of Vedas, philosophy based on psychology where in the ego is studied in all its possible states viz, waking, dream and dreamless states and philosophy as a means and not as an end in itself, these are the tendencies.

Philosophy distinctly adds measures for the betterment of the human race particularly at a time when the values are deteriorating with no value attached to human life. Philosopher's understanding is based on reflection and their vision and wisdom will formulate a decisive role to bring into equilibrium the

requirements of happiness, freedom and justice.

The topic "The Role of Philosophy in shaping human values" is meant to embark on the nature of human values. Advancement of technology, apart from its use to provide material benefits, also can create havoc to human life by way of man made disasters. Regional differences, discriminatory attitudes, establishing supremacy over other nations and erratic behavioural patterns disturb the living conditions.

The changing world with its technological developments and the rat race of the human kind to fit into its demands is to be acknowledged. Human behavior, desires and attitudes always constituted the central stage of development and the endeavour always has been to bridge the differences and to arrive at the commonalities. Human element is an important characteristic and this human resource is prominent amongst all the other material resources. Science and technology have conferred on man innumerable benefits and in spite of this more than of seven billion people are in poverty. There is no harmony in society. Anomie, boredom, addiction to alcohol and to internet have reduced human life to meaningless existence. It is



not the lack of concern. Programmes, projects and budget allocations, all these exist, and when it comes to translating the objectives into action stage, things appear different. The drift is high and variances for whatever reasons do not contribute to the intended betterment. Mismanagement, apathy, geographical situations or lack of accountability, the list is by no means exhaustive.

The argument continues but it coils back to the basic concept 'Values'. The child is not taught about the importance of these values and the youth are not in a position to face the contemporary challenges. It is necessary to understand our obligation to human beings. These deteriorating values are threatening the very survival. Human values are important irrespective of the nationality. The prosperity of a nation depends largely on the human element in addition to its material resources. The human capital can be strengthened by increasing the knowledge, providing requisite skills and increasing the mental and physical capabilities.

Nation's goals are many and multifold which are designed after scrutiny and by understanding the requirements in the rural and urban areas. These evolve out of observation of

statistical data collected and as a result of specific target areas whether agricultural or manufacturing. With specific reference to India, the progression has been meaningful because of the five year plans adopted.

India's aim has been to develop this human potential. Education has received the priority inclusive of adult education and particular stress was on vocational training. Approach is to develop skilled work force. A noteworthy feature is that India's technicians and engineers are utilized elsewhere in the global market.

Philosophers Views on Human Values:

Kant said that the subject matter of philosophy is all comprehensive. "The speculative employment of reason with respect to nature leads to the absolute necessity of some supreme cause of the world: the practical employment of reason with a view to freedom leads to absolute necessity, but only of the laws of the action of a rational being as such".

Traditionally, Kant has been seen as an ethical formalist, according to whom all judgments on the values of ends must be subordinated to the obligatory universality of a moral law derived from the very concept of rationality its self.



Whitehead said "It is descriptive of the generalities which apply to all details of experience.

The systematic period of the two great philosophers of antiquity, Plato and Aristotle, is characterized by a concern for all the problems of philosophy. The metaphysical problems concerning reality and the humanistic problems relating to man's knowledge conduct and place in the world order. Plato and Aristotle tried to show the true character of each of the main moral and political virtues (such as honor, civic responsibility, and justice) , first by relating each to the others, and them to the bread ethical ideals their translators summarize as personal 'happiness' . The happiness that Plato and Aristotle evoked was to be achieved by living ethically, and this meant living according to independent moral principles. Plato and Aristotle build upon the foundations laid by the master Socrates and construct rational theories of knowledge (logic) conduct (ethics) and the state (politics).

Philosophy is critical in the sense it investigates the principles of knowledge; as rationalistic, it accepts the competence of reason in the search after truth; as humanistic, it studies man; as spiritualistic or idealistic, it makes the mind an important factor.

One cannot miss the Greek's Sophists period of enlightenment. The individual began to think of himself independent of the old traditions. "Man is the measure of all things" is the famous saying of Protagoras (490 – 420 BCE). Life existed before us, the Earth existed long before we came along, and life on earth and the rest of the universe will still be here long after humanity's days have ended.

This famous saying "Man is the measure of all things: of things which are, and of things which are not, that they are not. Its meaning is open to interpretation.

Descartes morals had its roots in metaphysics. He argues for the existence of god, and investigates the place of men in nature. Being a rationalist he clearly says that reasoning guides our actions.

Descartes stressed the importance of philosophy to practical aspects of knowledge and in his words "Philosophy is a perfect knowledge of all that men can know as well as for the conduct of his life as for the preservation of his health and the discovery of all the arts".

Soren Keirkegaard, a Danish philosopher, followed the argument and technique of Socrates in the field of epistemology and ethics as well. He



further believed that the highest philosophical merit that any man can attain was self knowledge. Man can exist at any one of the three stages of life viz., (1) Aesthetic stage of life (2) Ethical stage of life and (3) Religious stage of life.

In the aesthetic stage, according to Kierkegaard many people spend most of all of their lives in this mode. The person lives as a slave to their senses, they do, eat etc, only what their senses tell them they like. They define good as that which brings them pleasure, and all other decisions are based upon this criterion. In this stage a feeling of emptiness remains.

In the ethical stage, the person develops his system of morals and adheres to these. Reason takes priority over emotion.

In the religions stage faith is the key word and transcends the aesthetic and moral standards.

Karl Jaspers a great German existentialist in his book "Man in the Modern age" makes an in depth study of the effect upon man of science, technology and industrialization. Man in the modern age has lost his individuality and humanity and has become mechanical. He is bored. He is afraid to

look inside because his inner life is completely desecrate and vacuous. He is afraid that through inward look he would lose the world. The main purpose of philosophy is to guide man, not to preach escapism. Philosophy, should enable man to attain peace of 'mind'.

Jean Paul Sartre, a French Philosopher developed insights into existentialism. Existentialism is a Humanism. This is to make every man aware of what he is. Responsibility of his existence rests on him. When he is responsible for himself he is responsible for all men. What is good for us has to be good for all. In general our life is based on half hearted approaches without firm commitment.

John Dewey an American philosopher and educationist, insists, that one has to apply critical enquiry in problem solving and his stepwise procedure can be applied to personal, social conflicts and weighty scientific problems. This is a reflective thinking process.

The ancient Indian philosophy believes that life is full of suffering and that the aim of religion and philosophy is to attain freedom from suffering. The contemporary Indian thinker acknowledges the reality of suffering and



speaks about the possibility of an escape from it. Some of the contemporary Indian thinkers go to the extent of saying "through pain and suffering, life gets dignity and a human significance.

Contemporary Indian thinkers are aware that there is a distinction between a "purely academic philosophy" the philosophy of the scholar and a philosophy of life and existence the philosophy of wise man. Deliberations were on conduct, behaviour and way of life. There is no simpler way to describe human mind.

Renaissance movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Humanism of Tagore, Humanism of Radhakrishnan, Swami Vivekananda's social philosophy, universal religion, neo-vedanta; Radhakrishna's idealist view of life and the finite aspect of man; Tagore's views on creation, finite aspect of man and infinite aspect of man; Aurobindo's triple transformation and integral yoga; Mahatma Gandhi's Truth is god, Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Sarvodaya, trusteeship; Nehru's views on democracy, socialism and secularism; J. Krishnamurthy's conception of the thought, and concept of Mind: and Prof.K.Satchidananda Murthy's beliefs on views on political and religious

situation, view on polity and spirit of sportsmanship. All these modern thinkers abundantly discussed about human values.

Philosophy seeks to provide answers to the numerous riddles and paradoxes that confront the human mind. From time immemorial seers and saints, scholars and scientists have turned to philosophy for solutions to the endless problems of human existence. More recently it has been aptly said if the purpose of life is a life of purpose, only philosophy can help humanity in finding a roadmap for harmonious living. Man has conquered nature but is unable to conquer his own nature said Maxim Gorky the Soviet author. One of the biggest challenges facing human kind is the problem of human relationships. Science and technology have conferred on man innumerable benefits. Longevity is on the increase. People are living more comfortably than before though poverty continues to afflict more than half of the seven billion people living on planet earth.

This is the age of the computer the mobile phone, the awesome power modern technology. A click of the button or a press on the remote brings many pleasures, joys and headaches too into every home. Still, there is no peace at



home, no harmony in society and no happiness for most people. Anomie, boredom, addiction to alcohol and do addition internet have reduced human life to meaningless existence in many towns and cities.

Only philosophy can discuss and solve contemporary challenges created by (1) growing technological power (2) growing human greed (3) increasing poverty (4) alarmingly rising violence.

War is now taking new forms such as terrorist strikes that kill innocent people in mindless violence. War begins in the minds of men says UNESCO charter. As a scholar puts it "the minds of men are nurtured in nurseries". In every home the young minds must be taught the importance of human values and the need for global peace and harmony. As Harvard President Neil Rubenstein said the of higher education ultimately is "how to create a just and humane society".

In the 21st Century the school, the media and the NGO, civil society institution will shape human destiny. Philosophy will become the source of human values at both micro and macro levels.

Concept of Value:

The concept of value is important, not only because it is one of the leading

trends of recent philosophical thinking, but also because it forms the basis of the cultural pattern of a nation.

The uniqueness of the Indian concept of values lies in the fact that the material and mental values have been integrated with moral and spiritual values of life.

The fact of value preference and the problem of value gradation are the most important questions.

Values need to be systematized and coordinated in order to get a comprehensive perspective of values.

Thought and practice and philosophy and religion are found to influence one another.

The Indian concept of values is represented in the four fold aim of life (ChutusPurusartha) which consists of politico-economic values (Artha), moral values (Dharma) and religeo - spiritual values (Moksha).

Human Values in Social Philosophy:

Social philosophy is the philosophical study of questions about the social behavior (typically of human), social philosophy, ethics and political philosophy all share intimate connections with other disciplines in the social sciences.



Human values in the ambit of social philosophy, are social agency and free will the will to power, accountability, speech acts, situations, modernism and post modernism, individualism, crowds, property rights, authority, ideologies, culture criticism. Each one of the above concepts are intended to identify the human acts, stipulate the external factors, and create motivational traits. Many themes in social philosophy include the self, social entities, and the relationship between them. Social philosophy often mixes with sociology and psychology.

Human Values in Political Philosophy:

Political philosophy is the study of concepts such as liberty, justice, property rights and law. History of political thinking, takes us back to antiquity. Philosophers were obliged to confront social and political breakdown, and seek solutions to the crisis. Disintegration of the social order was avoided. Aristotle's dictum was that man seeks to be happy.

European age of enlightenment, new theories about what the human was led, to a conceptual distinction between state and government. The industrial revolution reshaped human society. Contemporary period debated regarding

punishment and the degree to which human constraints on action are determined. Influential philosophers were Confucius, Chankya, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, Mill Marx, each of Rousseau these contributed and created thoughts such as relating ethics to political order, divine virtues, righteous government, world peace, social justice and governance. All these focused on human values.

Ethics of Humanism :

Ethics is the science of conduct. It considers the actions of human being with reference to their rightness or wrongness. Different philosophers projected different theories on moral consciousness and judgment. Categories of duties, moral codes outline many requirements to treat every individual as a person and never as a means to attain some end. Virtues

(a) Cardinal Virtues (b) Courage (c) Temperance and (d) Justice, these qualities are human values and harmonious balance has to be arrived at between them. We need ethical standards because they provide us the basis to reconcile with selfish interests of the individual with the interests of the group.



Values are misplaced in the present turmoil. Better ethical guidelines are required for broad based applicability. Entire human race is one community.

Human Values in Professional Fields:

When it comes to professional fields, the basic requirements are to obtain proficiencies in the chosen fields, such as a doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect etc. Professional ethics determine the methodologies outlined.

All over the world people are wanting their independence and their sovereignty. Humans aspire of their distinctiveness. Managers know that when people are treated with dignity the efficiency improves. Humans value respect and recognition. People's beliefs cannot be ignored and managements have to be cognizant of this basic ingredient.

Human Values – Philosophy of Education:

Man is essentially a member of the community. Political, social and economic improvements are for the better being of man. Human heritage focused on spirituality and efforts are to know the Divine within and Adhyatmika vidya catered to these vital requirements.

The youth of modern India strove to become dynamic and education became the source. Upanisads advocated this character development aspect. Education is not worth its name if it does not generate a feeling of character and value formation.

Human integration is sought by way of education and all philosophers propounded this, virtues have to be taught at home and school level and children are to become contributors to the society and cause betterment. Human values in education becomes a subject of utmost importance. Values once imbibed and forgotten, and they are unable to accept the technological changes in entirety. The philosophers need to focus on the educational methods, taking into consideration the impact of transition. Philosophy in education enables to treat education comprehensively; paying special attention to the observations of modern philosophers in east as well as west.

Human Values in Science and Technology:

Science and technology with its rapid growth is of paramount importance for a better economy. The knowledge and skills required to face these challenges are an asset. Understanding, mutual respect,



team spirit, confidentiality, risk taking are all requirements. With this type of acumen and with values, honoured and protected by the authorities, the team members perform for profitability.

Conclusions :

There is an increasing awareness amongst the world community for achieving better living standards and to ensure that economy balances out to a reasonable degree. The world leaders apart from their own strategies in the areas of military, protection etc, always project ideal views with other countries to share and participate for bettering the life style.

Mineral resources are spread over the globe and the wealth of the nation to a large extent depends upon their share of owning within their territorial limits. Industrializations depended largely on their capacities. One significant factor is that Human element is common to all. Billions of people play their roles globally. Our effort has to be to erase the artificial structures and recognize that the individuals mind and behaviour is what matters'. Virtues and vices have to be dealt with. The paper aims at these human values, a subject of concern centuries ago, and with ongoing significance for now and future. In spite of the fact that the human

race has performed extremely well from its evolution, there is a lot desired. The deficiency primarily stems from the "mind" and the thinking/ decision process. Individual's rigidity, ego aspects need to be understood, and trimmed to meet challenges that the world is facing today.

Human potential is the best of all assets and ignoring this will mean that knowingly the nations are marching towards imperfection, which might even affect the very survival.

Human values and ethical concerns have to be dealt with, understood, analyzed and in the appropriate manner, to be communicated to the majority of populations across the world. This can be accomplished by way of publishing findings, conducting seminars and with the help of the media make it available to the society at large. Educational institutions, industrial sectors, and other agencies and many other associated groups should benefit and understand the need for asserting on human values.

Individual always aims to uphold his self esteem and ego. Role of Philosophers is of paramount importance. Established norms are vanishing rapidly. The modern age demands express attention to let philosophy regain its



supremacy. Leadership is imminent to ensure that every human being is respected and recognized. The ideals have to be incorporated in day to day life. Its applicability covers present as well as future generations.

It is not out of context to mention about the concept of "Chinese Room" brought out by John Searle. A program cannot give a computer a "mind" regardless of its intelligence/ behaviour. A Robot does not have a feeling. Human actions perceiving, feeling and thinking; all these have to be cognized and respected.

Some nations are developed, some developing and the remaining undeveloped. The world community targets to achieve good living standards. Economics have to be in the right ratio. World leaders form their own strategies in the areas of military, protection etc. Aiming at these human values, a subject of concern dating back to centuries. Individual's ego, rigidity play roles and this is the crux of the problem. There is urgency to identify the practical importance of lack of harmony in society and also to find out ways as to how the contemporary challenges can be faced.

To achieve better living standards is the prime object. In a global situation

where billions of people play roles, a specific need arises to erase the artificial structures and recognize individual's mind and behavior. Virtues and vices have to be dealt with. Human potential is the best of all assets. Ignoring human values will mean that nations are marching towards imperfection. This might affect the very survival.

The concept of value is important, not only because it is one of the leading trends of recent philosophical thinking, but also because it forms the basis of the cultural pattern of a nation.

True awareness of values is at the root of most philosophical investigations. Philosophy and religion are found to influence one another. The four values of rather, karma, Dharma and Moksha together with Brahman are exhaustive of the entire value spectrum of Indian philosophy. Four values of life have been current in the thought and life of Indian people from ancient times.

Different values have emerged at different times and have made impact to the evolutionary process. Moral imperative has to be comprehended and philosophy should strive to carry its principles to the very limit of human reason.



One has to embark up on self-study, self analysis and self-criticism to locate areas of friction and disharmony. A desire to reduce the ego is of importance.

Moral values are deteriorating because it is evident with shootings in the public areas and school premises killing many young children. There is lack of respect for one another.

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MAHATMA GANDHI ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Sunil Karve

Empowerment of women means Development of women. The term 'Empowerment' is frequently used to describe a process where in the powerless gain greater share of control over resources and decision-making, and since women are generally accepted as being the most powerless members of the opposed classes. Women empowerment is commonly associated with women's struggle for social justice and equality. It is a process aimed at changing the nature and direction of systematic process that marginalize women and other disadvantaged section of the society.

The very concept of women empowerment shows that society as such has given a raw deal to women – who comprise nearly fifty percent of the population and women themselves have to come forward to fight for their rightful place in all walks of life and prevent their exploitation in every field. Women, who number 586,469,174 million according to the 2011 census of India, represent 49% percent of the country's population of 1,210,193,422 million. What is urgently required is a significant change in thinking. It is essential to promote an

alternative image for women so that she knows that she can and should make informed choices. Any movement for empowerment must fight these enfeebling socio-economic practices and must create an enabling environment in which women can participate as equals in social, economic, political and cultural life of the nation and discharge their responsibilities to the family, society and the nation.

The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times, through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers. One of them is Mahatma Gandhi. If today in India so many women can go to work in offices, educational institutions, and factories without fear or hesitation, the roots for such systems were laid ninety years ago by Gandhi and his followers.

"To all women the weaker sex is a libel; it is man's injustice to women", said
-Mahatma Gandhi

As a result of his strong principles, Gandhi created a strong



current of women emancipation across India. He encouraged women to start their own movements and compete on the working field with men. Political, economic and voting rights for women came naturally through the Constitution due to Gandhi and the roots he laid out 90 years ago.

Social evils such as child marriage, and dowry dominated Indian society when Gandhi came into political and social power. Gandhi took on a more authoritative stance towards women, unlike his contemporaries. According to Gandhi, **education** of women was imperative at the time to ensure moral development. It was the key to pulling women up on the same platform as men. Indian women, with a few exceptions, have lost the spirit of strength and courage, the power of independent thinking and initiative which actuated the women of ancient India, such as Maitreyi, Gargi and Savitri. He looked to ancient Indian role models such as **Draupadi, Savitri, Sita and Damayanti** to demonstrate women's real strength.

Mahatma Gandhi was a ceaseless crusader of women's equality. He brought the women out of their homes and made them equal participants in all walks of life – social as well as political. His entourage always consisted of several women and

many of his closest associates were women. Under Gandhiji's leadership thousands of women took leading roles in several movements. Gandhiji never considered women to be unfit for any position or task. Because of Gandhiji's support, women's groups were formed all over India and there was hardly a week when Gandhiji did not address a women's group.

When Gandhiji assumed India's leadership the average life span of an Indian woman was only twenty-seven years. Post partum and child mortality was high. Child marriage was very common and widows were in very large numbers. Only 2% of the women had any kind of education and women did not have an identity of their own. In North India, they practiced the purdah system. Women could not go out of the house unless accompanied by men and the face covered with cloth. The fortunate ones who could go to school had to commute in covered carts (tangas).

It is in this context that we have to recognize the miracle of Gandhiji's work. Gandhiji claimed that a woman is completely equal to a man and practiced it in strict sense. Thousands of women, educated and illiterate, house wives and widows, students and elderly participated in India's freedom movement because of



his influence. For Gandhiji the fight for freedom was not political alone; it was also an economic and social reform of a national proportion. After a couple of decades, this equality became very natural to India with the adoption of Constitution (1950), post independence India's (in 1947).

Gandhiji always advocated a complete reform which he called "*Sarvodaya*" meaning comprehensive progress. Gandhiji opined that "*The wife is not the husband's slave but his companion and his help-mate and an equal partner in all his joys and sorrows – as free as the husband to choose her own path.*" He believed that the difference between men and women was only physical and has expressed several times in his writings that in many matters especially those of tolerance, patience, and sacrifice the Indian woman is superior to the male. He included women's upliftment in his Constructive Programme as an important point not only for their elevation but also for positive social change and attainment of independence. Gandhi described "Woman as the embodiment of sacrifice and ahimsa". Women imbued all qualities needed for **virtues of Satyagraha**; virtues like knowledge, tolerance, faith, humility and sacrifice. Women could also

endure endless suffering, according to Gandhi. He felt women played a large role in establishing non-**violence**.

He offered spinning and the salt agitation as nonviolent ways for women to join the political movement for Swaraj. He saw it as right as well as possible for women at that time in history. That is one of the reasons why women participated in his programs so overwhelmingly.

Gandhiji declared that there is no school better than home and there is no teacher better than parents. He said men and women are equal, but not identical. "Intellectually, mentally, and spiritually, woman is equivalent to a male and she can participate in every activity."

In a letter to Rajkumari Amrit Kaur from Wardha on 21, October, 1936 Gandhi writes, " If you women would only realize your dignity and privilege, and make full use of it for mankind, you will make it much better than it is.. But man has delighted in enslaving you and you have proved willing slaves till the slaves and slave - holders have become one in the crime of degrading humanity. My special function from childhood, you might say, has been to make women realize her dignity. I was once a slave holder myself but Ba proved an unwilling slave and thus opened my eyes to my



mission. Her task was finished. Now I am in search of a woman who would realize her mission. Are you that woman, will you be the one?"

Gandhiji struggled very hard to understand a woman's physical and mental pain. "Womanhood is not restricted to the kitchen", Gandhiji opined and felt that "Only when the woman is liberated from the slavery of the kitchen, that her true spirit may be discovered". It does not mean that women should not cook, but only that household responsibilities be shared among men, women and children.

Gandhi's unique contribution was the awakening of the immense untapped power in Indian womanhood, both urban and rural, for its utilisation for the progress of the Indian National Movement. He wanted women to outgrow the traditional responsibilities and participate in the affairs of the nation. He criticized Indian's passion for male progeny. He said that as long as we don't consider girls as natural as our boys our nation will be in a dark eclipse.

Power provides social recognition, dignity, prosperity, property, value, and security; hence, empowerment has acquired a considerable aura of

responsibility and social status in the development vocabulary.

The various Articles in the Constitution of India that enshrine principles of gender equality, rights and privileges of women are Article 14, 15, 15 (3), 16, 39, 42, 51 (A).

Amendments – 73 and 74 provides 1/3 of total number of seats reserved for women in

- Panchayat (50% from 27-08-2009)
- Municipality and local bodies and Local Self-Government (incorporated under State Act)

However it was only in the Fifth Five year plan that special attention was given to the cause of women. Several bills and laws have been passed under different Acts to protect the human rights for women. National Commission for women was set up in 1990 to consider the grievances and prevent atrocities against women.

The Hon'ble President of India (Smt. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil) has recently said that –

Half of population is women's population, half the progress, half the development. Thus, 50% is contributed by women, so it must be realized and use of



talent (available) should be there. Thus, opportunity needs to be given to women for development. Gender justice is possible only through Women's Empowerment which involves Economic and Political opportunities, Social Equality and Personal Rights. As said by Gandhiji, today's women need to recognize their inner capabilities.

Women empowerment should be practiced seriously by politicians, educationists, feminists and society people together to give justice to women and enhance empowerment amongst them.

- Education and training should provide SWOT and introspection to females so that they realize their inner strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-defense training-the physiological limitation emphasizes that she be trained to self for self protection and capable of protecting her and be self reliant.
- Increase in skills of decision making ability and boosting her ability to judge.
- Training them to say "NO" instead of always giving in to the suggestion / proposals of male counterparts.

- Let women come up and fill the gaps of jobs / seats reserved for them and prove their worth.
- Develop self-respect, dignity of labour, understanding amongst women and imparting wisdom to counterparts to give respect, dignity and patient listening to women, training male members to enhance the female empowerment.
- Society psyche change attitude change and opportunity change towards women.
- Gender budgeting: Allocation of a budget for women's health, reducing maternal mortality, reducing malnutrition etc.

On paper, India is far ahead in policies and legislation favouring women. Yet men in the political structure refuse to acknowledge the relationships between social justice and gender justice while women outside the political system are unable to effectively implement and integrate these two most powerful national and international agendas. With both caste and gender groups perpetuating traditional and modern divisions and indigenous human resources being replaced by western technologies the mission of Gandhi and



the dreams of women are yet to be fulfilled.

No one can double the efforts made by Gandhi to empower women. He had attracted so many millions of not only literate but illiterate women without the power of state, the modern information technology and offering in return only sweat, toil, and pain, is an exceptional feat!

We still have miles to go to achieve our cherished goal to empower women.

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THE POLITICS BEHIND DURGA PUJA IN 18TH CENTURY KOLKATA: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS.

Shinjini Gan Choudhury

Although the mythical roots of Durga Puja lay dominant in the story of Raja Surat and Rama, who worshipped the deity in spring and autumn respectively, yet the archaeological evidence of Durga's dates back a lot earlier. Durga Puja in its present form is said to have started in the Mughal era in the 16th century. Raja Udaynarayan took the initiative to hold the first Puja in around 1580. His dream was a show of strength on the lines of the elaborate *Aswamedha* or *Rajasuya Yagna* that the kings once organized to display their undaunted power. However, majority of the scholars argue that Udaynarayan could not fulfill his dreams and it was left upon Maharaja Kanshanarayan to achieve the ends. Unanimity exists, however, about a puja that took place a little later in 1606 by Bhabananda Majumdar of Nadia, ancestor of Raja Krishnachandra (1710-1782) of Nadia (Bengal) and later on Maharaja Krishnachandra to spread Durga Puja in the nook and corner of Bengal. Though it proved suicidal for his *zamindari* but it was important to have a strong social control and to maintain his position among his rival Hindu *zamindars*.

THE GENESIS

Durga Puja was prevalent in Bengal perhaps from the 9th century A.D. but became popular only with the Muslim invasion in Bengal on the ground that the contemporary rulers felt that their political position was at stake. They wanted to win over their subjects by taking shelter of religion. Bengal came under the Muslim domination at the beginning of the 13th century A.D. „*Bore that the central authority laid with the Hindu or the Buddhist kings who encompassed many rulers of the small kingdom, that were the major social units of the countryside,* 2 the rulers like Raja Bhabananda, the predecessor of Maharaja Krishnachandra and later on Krishnachandra took special measures to spread Durga Puja all over his kingdom. One of the main reasons for celebrating the Durga Puja with such grandeur was perhaps due to the fact that Lord Clive specially instructed his Hindu associates to celebrate the victory of Battle of Plassey with a dazzling array and with incomprehensible majesty.³ Since this Puja was not only cost bearing, but were all the more difficult for one person to



carry on the celebration for five days, in order to perform this puja financial contributions poured in. Even the rulers of Natore and Burdwan participated in this with great enthusiasm. If any affluent person did not perform this puja, he was called upon by the ruler and virtually ordered to do perform the worship. Hence, this application of dictation, in a way helped in the spread of Durga Puja throughout Bengal.⁴

Hitesh Sanyal draws our attention behind the use of political power and religion. He argues that local people seized on religion to retain their right of independence from the days of the Mughal authority.⁵ That was perhaps the main reason behind the growth of Durga Puja in Bengal. Dr. R.W. Nicholas has a different view to offer. He is of the opinion that Bengal came under Muslim rule at the beginning of the 13th century. Before that time, the central authority lay with a Hindu or Buddhist king whose kingdom encompassed many rulers of the small kingdoms that were the major social units of the countryside. There were, in each kingdom, central acts of worship in which the king, acting as sacrificer made offerings to the deity – often, perhaps, one of the special forms of the Goddess Durga – and then distributed the edible leavings of his offering to the form of the

favour (*prasadam*) of the deity among his subjects, and by reiterating the proper order and occupations of the caste. The little kings of the countryside themselves periodically filled the role of subjects in the still larger and more encompassing acts of worship of the king of Bengal (Gaura). In the initial years, this might have acted as a catalyst in the spread of Durga Puja throughout Bengal.

Muslim central authority in Bengal, which prevailed from 1300 until 1757, undermined the hierarchical order of the lesser and greater kingdoms. Although the Muslim rulers took the place of the Hindu kings at the center by the exercise of coercive force, they could never enjoy the legitimacy conferred by the hierarchical sharing out of the favour of this supreme deity to the lesser kings and through them, to the subjects. Islam places all believers on an equal footing before their God; not even a king can serve as intermediary between a person and divine favour or mercy. Within the small Hindu kingdoms, the old order remained to some extent intact, and the splendid worship of Durga continued and still continues among the descendents of the Hindu kings and the descendents of their high officials⁶. That was the initiation of Durga Puja in Bengal.



DURGA PUJA IN THE 18TH CENTURY BENGAL

With this background, 18th century was a complete departure from the past. It was marked with the coming of the Europeans and more expansion of trade and commerce. Gradually, the political vacuum that existed in India with the decline of the Mughals was filled up. After the Battle of Plassey (1757), the British emerged to be the new masters of Calcutta. Backed by an urgent need to create a new class to cater to their own needs, the agents of the local *taluqdars* and *landlords* like the *gomostas*, the *daalals* (brokers), the *Deewans*, (who became popular, as the „*gentoo* class) rose to prominence. With some knowledge in English, they came in close contact with the European servants of the Company and even occasionally became partners in the trading concerns of the European merchants.

After the grant of Diwani in 1757, the revenue farmers were sobriquet as *zamindars*. The scheme of revenue farming by public auction was introduced in 1793 with the objective of maximization of the revenue⁷. With the employment of the tactic of terror by the Company men, some benevolent *zamindars* fizzled out under revenue

pressure. In their place, new group of people like *baniyas*, moneylenders came in touch with the land that had nothing to do with holdings. These new short period leaseholders displayed extravagant arrogance to extract the last *paisa* from the peasantry in order to pay their quota to the Company. P.J. Marshall has pointed out „*Europeans traded on the capital of their baniyas or Indian agents; or to be more exact the baniyas traded on their masters* .⁸ To name a few, Maharaja Nabakissen of Sovabazar acted as the „*Deewan* of Lord Clive, Raja Sukhomoy Roy was the chief „*munshi* of Lord Clive, Ganga Govind Singh acted as the „*Deewan* of Warren Hastings. The Ghosals, the Roys, the Sinhas and the Tagores became the new masters of Calcutta. Their opulence, glitz and glamour were unmatched to that of the poor taxpayers⁹. The overlordship of land passed from the class of aristocracy to the class of what Karl Marx called „*moneycracy* .

With an increasing scope in business and job, money scudded across the sky of Calcutta giving birth to new spates. The display of exuberant wealth was absent in the generations before. This is perhaps because in the early period, this massive display of wealth



would invite the greed of the revenue collectors of the Central Government. In contrast to the earlier situation, the East India Company tied up the rate of revenue collection and submitted the same to the British treasury after keeping a portion for them, ensured security of property and wealth for them. Durga Puja became a platform in this display of wealth that they earned. Even scholars like B.N.Banerjee are of the opinion that this outburst of exuberance and extravagance by the native Bengalis was due to the reason that British rule ushered in peace and stability in Bengal and that the *zamindars* were unafraid of displaying their wealth publicly. Moreover, with the breakdown of the rural economy and shooting market prices, the number of pujas decreased. Naturally, those pujas that existed continued its magnetism and became the cynosure of all eyes. The same voice is noticed in „*Bangadoot*‘, a contemporary newspaper, where it was published „*During the last few years, there has been a considerable increase in wealth of Calcutta and other parts of Bengal. We should look for reasons why wealth increases. The present transformation can be explained by increased value of land; secondly, there is more trade in this country, and thirdly, many European*

gentlemen had gathered here. Plots of land that were bought for Rs.15/- unit 30 years ago have increased in value, more opportunities have opened up in the country. Those people who did not have any status in the past have now acquired distinction 10

As mentioned above, some historians argue that the lavish Durga Pujas were attributed to a new climate of stability and opportunity under the British, after or in anticipation of 1757, when in contrast with their entire period of governorship by local Mughal representatives, or *nawabs*, the *zamindars* dared show off their wealth and assert their prestige. Others believed that the puja became popular during the period prior to the Battle of Plassey and the transfer of power from the hands of the *Nawabs* to the East India Company, when the *Nawab*’s lenient rule allowed for the amassing of the great wealth of the Hindu *zamindars*.

According to the first view, conditions in the rural areas under the *Nawab*’s rule were not conducive to such demonstrations of pomp and prestige, as the Pujas would necessitate. Only when it was clear that the control of the *Nawab* was waning could people like Krishnachandra feel free to engage in



traditional acts of patronage. *"To the bigoted Mussalmans, the worship of the Hindu Gods was ever viewed with feeling of jealousy if not extremely hostility... the English Government...has allowed for general diffusion of wealth and security of property. Formerly, such a display of wealth would have subjected the patron to the rapacious exactions of his petty sovereign. Under the present system, the Government makes no enquiry into the private wealth of its subjects. In consequences of this security, the natives have given themselves up to unlimited extravagance in all that relates to their public festivals. 11*

A different twist on this segment was presented in the 19th century newspaper that blames Muslim religious feelings less than the conditions of lawlessness that pertained under the rule. *"In days when spoliation and plunder even practiced with impunity where robbery and theft were committed in broad daylight of the sun, or in other words when the security of the property was unprovided by any form of government, it was generally unsafe for the people to show off their wealth either by adopting a pleasant and comfortable mode of living, or*

*laying it out in some commercial speculation."*¹² According to Rachel Fell McDermott, the first point was repeatedly noted and written about by the English Company Servants in Bengal. In order to prove his point, he brought to the forth the writings of the soldier historian Robert Orme¹³.

According to other sources, the trouble was not simply fears of Muslim greed, but actual experiences of oppression. Aparna Bhattacharya argued that the worship of the powerful Goddess Durga attracted the Hindu Rajas as means to overcoming their inferiority complexes. Further, they hoped to imbibe some of the Goddesses strength, which could be useful to serve their political purposes¹⁴. McDermott argued that this theory merges well with the political environment of Bengal. He further argues that not all the *zamindars* were in best terms with the *Nawabs*. The displeased *zamindars*¹⁵ shared an increasing attachment to the British in this region. This view attributes large-scale celebration of the Goddess to the British tolerance and governing policies, particularly Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement of 1793 according to which taxes were determined by fixed land holdings, not personal wealth. Indeed in the rural areas, where the landed gentry



managed to stay financially viable after 1757 and in the urban streets of Calcutta from 1790's, we find much evidence of Hindu nouveaux rich commencing the Pujas in grand scale as a means to confirm and enhance their growing social status. ***Samachar Darpan*** reported in **1829** "*Gradually those who became rich under the British rule, in order to show off their wealth to those they ruled, cast aside their former fear and spent a lot of money in the Pujas.*"

Apart from the reasons cited above, the population of Gaur, Rajmahal, Murshidabad, Navadweep, Krishnanagore got diverted to Calcutta because Calcutta emerged to be the land of opportunities and securities. Calcutta, being the „*ex-centric city*” or transitional business city, was strategically located for the oceanic trade dotted with harbours facilitating loading and unloading the merchandise. Calcutta being a commercial city resided by the Europeans had the essential financial, insurance exchange and the transportation of infrastructure to organize trade on very large scale. Facilities for checking goods, collecting customs, shipping companies, ship building workshops and so on were all developed in Calcutta. Moreover, Calcutta served as a secondary (*ex-centric*)

transitional business hub with international finance, insurance, production and marketing. These developments created more job opportunities and wealth than in rural Bengal ensuring extended urbanization¹⁶.

In the days of Clive, Hastings and Hollwell, Raja Nabakrishna Deb, the Munshi of Sovabazar, Raja Ramchandur Rai, the Deewan of Andul, Gookool Chandur Ghosal, the Deewan of Bhukailash, Deewan Gangagovinda Singha at this time transformed the grand festival of the Hindus into „*the grand feast of the Gentoos*” because it was one of their easiest and most effective barometer of measuring their power and money as no other festival or occasion involved so much of social interaction.

In '***Kolikata Komolalaya***',¹⁷ it has been mentioned that the rich barons were always entitled to do welfare activities like cutting of pond, celebrating costly festivals like Durga Puja and Dol Yatra. Calcutta, at that time, was the potpourri of social groups that got embroiled into enragements against one another. Sekhar Bandopadhyay calls it „*daladali*”¹⁸. The most powerful person becomes the leader of the group or „*dalapati*” and gets the right to organize



the grand festival of the Hindus. In 18th century, Raja Nabakrishna of Sovabazar and the Prince Dwarkanath Tagore of Jorasako divided Calcutta into two groups or „*dals* . Both of them emerged as leaders because they were rich and politically powerful. Ramdulal Dey was another „*dalapati* who did not hesitate to exhibit his affluence¹⁹.

Brojendranath Bandopadhyay argued that „*daladali* comprised both positive as well as negative effects. If in one hand, it gave birth to problems like contestations, on the other hand it promoted group activity. Hence, it is a vital aspect where we find a ‘force from below’ dominated even in the realm of Durga Puja. The political scenario was not much promising that it would aid a rebellion against the intrusion of foreigners and their culture, so the ‘people from below’ felt that it was their social duty to protect their religion by rigidly maintaining their rites and rituals in assistance and in association with one another. The group or „*dal* to which an individual belonged regulated his activities. The group spirit was perhaps above the will and aspiration of an individual.

Gradually, under the aegis of the Babus, this divine festival became a

symbol of power and prestige. This accelerated their hunger for display of wealth and kept them ahead of their competitors. Rachel Fell McDermott had cited three reasons why Durga Puja was so important for these families. Firstly, while the Puja necessitate wealth, it was not at all bound by caste prohibitions. Since, most of the newly rich were non-Brahmanas, but Kayasthas, such ritual leniency was a great boon. Secondly, it provided occasions for showing off social standing, often aimed at preposterous luxury, ostentation and waste- a *nouveau riche* adaptation of feudal pomp and arrogance. Thirdly, in spite of the fact that Raja in Bengal was an honorific title and did not connote true royalty the rich and powerful appreciated Durga’s long history of involvement with Kings. Such aspects of the Puja make this royal overtone particularly compelling. The ordinary zamindars were aware on this link between their temporal authority and the worship of the Goddess is indicated by family stories²⁰. Whether or not, their upcoming lineages really enjoyed the status and power, which they claimed through their sponsorship of the Puja. One cannot gainsay the symbolic value of these festivals to those who sought to express their identities and aspirations through them. Pierre Bourdieu has



identified the zamindar's thirst for status through the showy patronage of public ritual as *"symbolic capital"*.

The *babus* used various means to keep them in limelight during the pujas²². In ***Calcutta Journal*** of **September 22, 1918**, it was reported *"The approach of the great Hindu festival of the Doorgah poojah has once more called forth into action that feeling of emulative rivalry so conspicuously displayed at the season, by the wealthy Natives in the splendid preparation for the Nautches*. Babu Prankrishna Haldar created a sensation amongst the common people and at the same time sent a message of competition amongst his contemporaries by printing invitation in the open newspaper. The biographer of Govindaram Mitra wrote *'He used to offer „Nyvedyas on very large bronze plates, the largest one contained 30-50 mounds of rice for a „Nyvedya to the principal Goddess Doorga.... During „Bodun cloths, silver and copper were presented to about 1,000 Brahamanas and Pundits from different parts of Calcutta and other places. The Calcutta Journal of 1819 compared „Astami , the eighth night of Durga Puja of Raja Ramchandur's home with glitz, glamour and alluring gold palace of the „Arabian*

Nights. There are other examples apart from these few. In ***'Samvadpurnachandrodaya'***, dated *Aswin* 30, 1259 (1851), mentions that Babu Rammohun Mullick, assembled a good number of Brahamanas on the day of *„Navami* at *„Puja Mandap* where he presented a gold necklace and some heavy utensils to the Brahamanas, and to others he offered a pair of bangles. On September 22, 1918, it was published in the ***Calcutta Journal'*** *"The approach of the great Hindoo festival of the Doorgah Poojah has once more called forth into action that feeling of emulative rivalry so conspicuously displayed at the season, by the wealthy Natives in the splendid preparation for the Nautches*.

It is not that the *Babus* were out of their brains and nodded irrationally to the unwieldy claims of their henchmen. They understood everything about their irrational wastage of filthy lucre but still they nodded perhaps they were in no mood to compromise with their prestige and show of their assets. To them, the concern of maintaining their pseudo prestige and winning the open competition overshadowed their grave loss of wealth.



By mid of 18th century, Durga Puja became a wide spread affair. The Mitras of Chakraberia began this puja in 1757. The Daws began this puja in 1760; the Srimanis of Jelepura began this festival in 1779. Even Chatu Babu and Latu Babu of Beadon Street inaugurated this festival after they achieved grand success in business. The Duttas of Hathkhola (1795), the Devs of Entally (1790), Rani Rashmoni of Jaan Bazar (1793), Motilal of Babubazar (1799), the Duttas of Akra (1786), Khelat Ghose of Darpanarayan Street (1819), the Basumalliks of Pataldanga (1831) tops the chart that unveiled lavish Durga Puja. All of them became rich by investing in business and became „*gentoos*“ in association with the foreign traders. As the number of rich men increased in the ‘Black Town’, the more was the rivalry. Nisit Ranjan Ray argued that during this time the Calcuttans were quite proud of their status that they knew was unmatched by the rural elites.²³ On the other hand, the rural elites did not consider them genuine on the ground that they had less of deity worship and more of festival lights. It was more of festival of amusements, ornaments and cloths.²⁴ By this time, Durga Puja became a feast of frenzy for the elite as well as the non-elite, the Hindus as well as the non-Hindu

sections of the society. The British natives openly participated in this fair of union. One of the British native was John Chips, popularly known as Chip Bahadur, who went to the extent of performing Durga Puja at his residence on the insistence of Shyam Kishore, the Deewan of Chip Bahadur. The Puja costed Rs.50/-²⁵. Rajnarayan Basu cites the example of a Hindu Stewart, who was a British military officer by profession but a devout Hindu by choice, earned the title ‘Hindu’ because of his ardent faith in Hindu religion²⁶. This unveiled another form of social co-operation that Bengali society did not experience before. Gradually the „*white collared men*“ got more inducted in the Bengali society through Durga Puja. ***The Calcutta Journal of 1819*** printed that the friends of Maharaja Ramchandur Rai and Baboo Beshtam Dash Mallick arranged for a new kind of Durga Puja, which was long unheard in this Presidency. However, it is not that all gentry liked or benefited from the British, and many of them were strident opponents of the British meddling in Hindu customs²⁷.

Since the very beginning, the British debated amongst themselves whether they should visit the native’s house on the eve of the *Puja*. If a group



diffused the intensity by branding it as „*Call it diversion and the pill goes down*28, the other group expressed their concern over the increasing participation of the British. They called it „*a very heterogeneous sort of businesses*29. However, these could not sublime the curiosity of the British to participate in the Indian affair. Rajnarayan Basu 30 once wrote that the Britishers of yesteryears were half Hindus. One of the reasons was that they could not visit their native lands frequently due to lack of transport and the other reason was since they were handful in number, they were left with no option but to mingle with the Hindus. They adopted and practiced the custom and culture of this land, used to chew the beetle leaf, see the nautch dancers perform and so on.

The first was a legislation introduced by the Company's Government in 1840 interdicting Englishmen from attending ceremonies connected with the religious festivities of the natives. Although many European officials paid a lip- service to this ordinance, a considerable number of them continued to flock to rich *bhadralok* tenements to enjoy Durgotsav till almost the end of the second decade of the twentieth century.31 In 1840, with the passing of the „*Dus numbari ain* , the

participation of the British was legally stopped.

CONCLUSION

Political condition of 18th century Bengal redefined Durga Puja in Calcutta from time to time. In fact, it will not be wrong that since 9th century onwards, politics played a grand role in enhancing the popularity of the cult of Durga and Durga Puja. The political developments of 18th century, like the victory of the British in the Battle of Plassey made them the supreme political power of Bengal. To celebrate their position, Lord Clive ordered his Hindu associates to celebrate Durga Puja in large scale. The Permanent settlement helped many „*gentoos* to become landed elites apart from the existing old zamindari class. Majority of them made money due to the flourishing trade and commerce of Bengal. The more the number of monetary class increased, the more number of Durga Puja flourished because Durga by that time was considered to be a symbol of money and power.

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- 2 received lands in Nepal, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, central India and the Deccan. The aborigines could be assimilated into the Hindu society only by the recognition of their non- Brahmanical deities and rituals. Hence, Tantrism came into existence, where the Mahadevi came to be worshipped in the form of Shakti Durga was also named Parnasarabi (cloths in leaves), was the Goddess of the Savaras who celebrated their festival „Savaratsova in Bengal.
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BUDDHISM AND POLITICS

Ch.Venkata Sivasai

INTRODUCTION:

When religion is used to pander to political whims, it has to forego its high moral ideals and become debased by worldly political demands. The thrust of the Buddha Dhamma is not directed to the creation of new political institutions and establishing political arrangements. Basically, it seeks to approach the problems of society by reforming the individuals constituting that society and by suggesting some general principles through which the society can be guided towards greater humanism, improved welfare of its members, and more equitable sharing of resources.

There is a limit to the extent to which a political system can safeguard the happiness and prosperity of its people. No political system, no matter how ideal it may appear to be, can bring about peace and happiness as long as the people in the system are dominated by greed, hatred and delusion. In addition, no matter what political system is adopted, there are certain universal factors which the members of that society will have to experience: the effects of good

and bad kamma, the lack of real satisfaction or everlasting happiness in the world characterized by *dukkha* (unsatisfactoriness), *anicca* (impermanence), and *anatta* (egolessness). To the Buddhist, nowhere in Samsara is there *real freedom*, not even in the heavens or the world of *Brahma*.

Although a good and just political system which guarantees basic human rights and contains checks and balances to the use of power is an important condition for a happy in society, people should not fritter away their time by endlessly searching for the ultimate political system where men can be completely free, because complete freedom cannot be found in any system but only in minds which are free. To be free, people will have to look within their own minds and work towards freeing themselves from the chains of ignorance and craving. Freedom in the truest sense is only possible when a person uses Dhamma to develop his character through good speech and action and to train his mind so as to expand his mental potential



and achieve his ultimate aim of enlightenment.

While recognizing the usefulness of separating religion from politics and the limitations of political systems in bringing about peace and happiness, there are several aspects of the Buddha's teaching which have close correspondence to the political arrangements of the present day. Firstly, the Buddha spoke about the equality of all human beings long before Abraham Lincoln, and that classes and castes are artificial barriers erected by society. The only classification of human beings, according to the Buddha, is based on the quality of their moral conduct. Secondly, the Buddha encouraged the spirit of social co-operation and active participation in society. This spirit is actively promoted in the political process of modern societies. Thirdly, since no one was appointed as the Buddha's successor, the members of the Order were to be guided by the Dhamma and Vinaya, or in short, the Rule of Law. Until today very member of the Sangha is to abide by the Rule of Law which governs and guides their conduct.

Fourthly, the Buddha encouraged the spirit of consultation and the democratic process. This is shown within

the community of the Order in which all members have the right to decide on matters of general concern. When a serious question arose demanding attention, the issues were put before the monks and discussed in a manner similar to the democratic parliamentary system used today. This self-governing procedure may come as a surprise to many to learn that in the assemblies of Buddhists in India 2,500 years and more ago are to be found the rudiments of the parliamentary practice of the present day. A special officer similar to 'Mr. Speaker' was appointed to preserve the dignity of the Parliamentary Chief Whip, was also appointed to see if the quorum was secured. Matters were put forward in the form of a motion which was open to discussion. In some cases it was done once, in others three times, thus anticipating the practice of Parliament in requiring that a bill be read a third time before it becomes law. If the discussion showed a difference of opinion, it was to be settled by the vote of the majority through balloting.

BUDDHA GAVE ADVICE TO GOOD GOVERNMENT

The Buddhist approach to political power is the moralization and the responsible use of public power. The



Buddha preached non-violence and peace as a universal message. He did not approve of violence or the destruction of life, and declared that there is no such thing as a 'just' war. He taught: 'The victor breeds hatred, the defeated lives in misery. He who renounces both victory and defeat is happy and peaceful.' Not only did the Buddha teach non-violence and peace, He was perhaps the first and only religious teacher who went to the battlefield personally to prevent the outbreak of a war. He diffused tension between the Sakyas and the Koliyas who were about to wage war over the waters of Rohini. He also dissuaded King Ajatasattu from attacking the Kingdom of the *Vajjis*.

The Buddha discussed the importance and the prerequisites of a good government. He showed how the country could become corrupt, degenerate and unhappy when the head of the government becomes corrupt and unjust. He spoke against corruption and how a government should act based on humanitarian principles.

The Buddha once said, 'When the ruler of a country is just and good, the ministers become just and good; when the ministers are just and good, the higher officials become just and good; when the higher officials are just and good, the rank and file become just and good; when the

rank and file become just and good, the people become just and good.' (*Angostura Nikaya*)

In the *Cakkavatti Sihananda Sutta*, the Buddha said that immorality and crime, such as theft, falsehood, violence, hatred, cruelty, could arise from poverty. Kings and governments may try to suppress crime through punishment, but it is futile to eradicate crimes through force.

In the *Kutadanta Sutta*, the Buddha suggested economic development instead of force to reduce crime. The government should use the country's resources to improve the economic conditions of the country. It could embark on agricultural and rural development, provide financial support to entrepreneurs and business, and provide adequate wages for workers to maintain a decent life with human dignity.

SUGGESTIONS OF THE STUDY

In the *Jataka*, the Buddha had given to rules for Good Government, known as '*Dasa Raja Dharma*'. These ten rules can be applied even today by any government which wishes to rule the country peacefully. The rules are as follows:

1) be liberal and avoid selfishness,



- 2) maintain a high moral character,
- 3) be prepared to sacrifice one's own pleasure for the well-being of the subjects,
- 4) be honest and maintain absolute integrity,
- 5) be kind and gentle,
- 6) lead a simple life for the subjects to emulate,
- 7) be free from hatred of any kind,
- 8) exercise non-violence,
- 9) practise patience, and
- 10) respect public opinion to promote peace and harmony.

Regarding the behaviour of rulers, He further advised:

- A good ruler should act impartially and should not be biased and discriminate between one particular groups of subjects against another.
- A good ruler should not harbor any form of hatred against any of his subjects.
- A good ruler should show no fear whatsoever in the enforcement of the law, if it is justifiable.
- A good ruler must possess a clear understanding of the law to be enforced. It should not be enforced just because the ruler has the authority to enforce the law.

It must be done in a reasonable manner and with common sense. — (*Cakkavatti Sihananda Sutta*)

In the *Milinda Panha*, it is stated: 'If a man, who is unfit, incompetent, immoral, improper, unable and unworthy of kingship, has enthroned himself a king or a ruler with great authority, he is subject to be tortured, to be subject to a variety of punishment by the people, because, being unfit and unworthy, he has placed himself unrighteously in the seat of sovereignty. The ruler, like others who violate and transgress moral codes and basic rules of all social laws of mankind, is equally subject to punishment; and moreover, to be censured is the ruler who conducts himself as a robber of the public.' In a Jataka story, it is mentioned that a ruler who punishes innocent people and does not punish the culprit is not suitable to rule a country.

The king always improves himself and carefully examines his own conduct in deeds, words and thoughts, trying to discover and listen to public opinion as to whether or not he had been guilty of any faults and mistakes in ruling the kingdom. If it is found that he rules unrighteously, the public will complain that they are ruined by the wicked ruler with unjust treatment, punishment,



taxation, or other oppressions including corruption of any kind, and they will react against him in one way or another. On the contrary, if he rules righteously they will bless him: 'Long live His Majesty.' (*Majjhima Nikaya*)

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The Buddha's emphasis on the moral duty of a ruler to use public power to improve the welfare of the people had inspired Emperor Asoka in the Third Century B.C. to do likewise. Emperor Asoka, a sparkling example of this principle, resolved to live according to and preach the Dhamma and to serve his subjects and all humanity. He declared his non-aggressive intentions to his neighbours, assuring them of his goodwill and sending envoys to distant kings bearing his message of peace and non-aggression. He promoted the energetic practice of the socio-moral virtues of honesty, truthfulness, compassion, benevolence, non-violence, considerate behavior towards all, non-extravagance, non-acquisitiveness, and non-injury to animals. He encouraged religious freedom and mutual respect for each other's creed. He went on periodic tours preaching the Dhamma to the rural people. He undertook works of public utility, such as founding of hospitals for

men and animals, supplying of medicine, planting of roadside trees and groves, digging of wells, and construction of watering sheds and rest houses. He expressly forbade cruelty to animals.

Sometimes the Buddha is said to be a social reformer. Among other things, He condemned the caste system, recognized the equality of people, spoke on the need to improve socio-economic conditions, recognized the importance of a more equitable distribution of wealth among the rich and the poor, raised the status of women, recommended the incorporation of humanism in government and administration, and taught that a society should not be run by greed but with consideration and compassion for the people. Despite all these, His contribution to mankind is much greater because He took off at a point which no other social reformer before or ever since had done, that is, by going to the deepest roots of human ill which are found in the human mind. It is only in the human mind that true reform can be effected. Reforms imposed by force upon the external world have a very short life because they have no roots. But those reforms which spring as a result of the transformation of man's inner consciousness remain rooted. While their branches spread outwards, they



draw their nourishment from an unfailing source — the subconscious imperatives of the life-stream itself. So reforms come about when men's minds have prepared the way for them, and they live as long as men revitalize them out of their own love of truth, justice and their fellow men.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine preached by the Buddha is not one based on 'Political Philosophy'. Nor is it a doctrine that encourages men to worldly pleasures. It sets out a way to attain Nibbana. In other words, its ultimate aim is to put an end to craving (*Tanha*) that keeps them in bondage to this world. A stanza from the *Dhammapada* best summarizes this statement: *'The path that leads to worldly gain is one, and the path that leads to Nibbana (by leading a religious life) is another.'*

However, this does not mean that Buddhists cannot or should not get involved in the political process, which is a social reality. The lives of the members of a society are shaped by laws and regulations, economic arrangements allowed within a country, institutional arrangements, which are influenced by the political arrangements of that society. Nevertheless, if a Buddhist wishes to be involved in politics, he should not misuse

religion to gain political powers, nor is it advisable for those who have renounced the worldly life to lead a pure, religious life to be actively involved in politics

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M.K.GANDHI'S CONTRIBUTIONS ON SOCIETY: A PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS

Jakku Srinivas

Gandhi is not an academic philosopher. He never engages himself with any serious metaphysical controversies that are common to any classical philosopher. He does not claim to have any metaphysical world-view. Nor he is even interested in analyzing metaphysical debates as the recent philosophical analyst is eager to carry on. When requested by Prof. RadhaKrishnan to write something about his own philosophy for the compilation entitled Contemporary Indian philosophy he only wrote a single page which hardly contains any argument that a professional philosopher might be interested to discuss. Gandhi does not profess to have certain philosophical doctrines or "isms" whatsoever. In fact, he dislikes to leave any set like 'Gandhism' after him.¹

But yet people both inside and outside the country somehow or other are greatly impressed with Gandhi's way of life, his love for fellow men and his regard for truth and non violence. In the present paper I shall confine myself to a study of Gandhi's attitude towards man in relation

to society. However, I shall refrain myself from giving any philosophical evaluation of this attitude.

It appears that Gandhi, all through his life, unfailingly advocates the cause of human dignity and prestige. There are innumerable instances in his life which can reveal how sincerely he stands for the cause of his fellow men. His resolute agitation against the color prejudice of the people and the government of south Africa, his appeal for the upliftment of the backward class people within the Hindu set, his unhesitating service to the British soldiers during the war and his relentless attempt for restoring peace among the different communities are some of the important measures which rank him as one of the first rate humanists of the world. With least selfish motive he fought for the cause of the Indian minority residing in south Africa. No doubt he established himself on the public platform after such kind of activities there. But this is quite natural for anybody who devotes. Himself to selfless service and gets the reward of popularity. Despite his incorrigible



idealism he proposed an experiment for society which he himself first undertook. No so much for the sake of the Hindu religion as for the sake of humanity he pleaded for the betterment of the Harijans. He boldly appealed to the entire Hindu world by commenting: "Nothing can be accepted as the word of God which cannot be tested by reason, or be capable of being spiritually experienced." ² Wherever humanity suffers either in the temple or in the war field or in civil life, everywhere Gandhi moved unhesitatingly to render his service, Mr. Brailsford rightly says: India honors Gandhi today chiefly because he led the fight for independence. Humanity owns him an even heavier debt because he opened the road of the untouchables to freedom.' ³

So far as the status of the human individual in society is concerned, Gandhi emphasized the development of the individual from a rigorous moral point of view. He believed individual from a rigorous moral point of view. He believed in the basic goodness of man. Though the individual is the compound of both good and evil it is desirable, says, Gandhi to hold to the good and to reject the evil. And this practice of retaining everything good and avoiding everything bad is justified not from a mystical but from a rational point of view. He says : ' I have

no desire to carry a single soul with me, if I cannot appeal to his or her reason.' ⁴

Critics often interpret Gandhi to be a mystic. It is because very often Gandhi justifies his action by referring to some inner voice and sometimes to the sixth sense. The moral ideal of pursuing truth unflinching is often quoted as visionary idealism and is not based on reality. But the aims of mysticism, ' says Underhill, 'are wholly transcendental and spiritual. It is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, rearranging or improving anything in the visible universe". ⁵ As hinted earlier, Gandhi keeps nothing secret. He has no secret methods.⁶ He himself practiced the moral ideal which he considered appropriate for the realization of truth. Moreover, pursuing truth is not here due to any hidden motive of attaining divine bliss but for the well being of the entire humanity. The ideal of truth was pursued only when Gandhi course it may be appoint of discussion as to how far Gandhi's viewpoint on this topic is rational, but that is another matter.

Even though Gandhi placed more reliance on "Individuals than on groups" ⁷ He believed that duties to self family country and the world were all very important. He says: "We must die that the



family may live, the family must die that the country may live, and the country must die that the world may live".⁸ The point is, Gandhi is not interested in the betterment of some. His well known concept of Sarvodaya stands for welfare of all. In this sense he differs from Mill who holds the doctrine of the greatest good of the greatest number. He disapproves of the idea that "in order to achieve the supposed good of 51 per cent, the interest of 49 per cent should be sacrificed".⁹ He hated machinery and modern industrialization as they place the control of production in the hands of the few. Whatever cannot be shared by the masses is a tabu to him.¹⁰ If by some means the machinery is run by the nation, probably, then he would not object. Industry, if it brings good to all, then there is nothing wrong in carrying it. In fact, Gandhi once approved of the use of electricity that is nationalized. This almost sounds like a favorable attitude towards socialism. His appeal for cottage industry as against the heavy mechanical industry was only in the context of the then India. That measures and did not constitute one absolute method for attaining better standards of society. The aim was rather the attaining better standards of society. The aim was rather

the attainment of perfect socialism which could ensure the betterment of all.

In this context it would not be out of place to refer to Marx who also advocates classless society that brings equal opportunity to all. As Gandhi was keen to remove the practice of untouchability, so Marx was keenly interested in removing the miseries of the downtrodden people. But Marx did not hesitate to adopt violent means for bringing about change while Gandhi only clung to the non violent procedure.

To some, the socialistic reformative ideas of Gandhi seem to suffer from some internal inconsistencies. On the one hand he advocates nationalization of electricity and on the other he believes in the trusteeship of the owning class, whether land owners or capitalists. This trusteeship upsets the programme of classless society and with it the basic idea of sarvodaya too. While approving of the printing press and the sewing machine he disapproves of the locomotives. There are other similar instances.

But we think, the belief in trusteeship is not a permanent but a temporary measure just for introducing Socialism into the society (with particular reference to India) where the masses have



not adapted themselves to any change whatsoever. The advocacy of trusteeship is not to favor Feudalism as some have anticipated ¹¹ but rather to introduce Socialism by slow as well as steady procedures. His introduction of khadi and cottage industry is meant just to discourage foreign goods and diminish the influence of foreign markets. He persuaded Indians to be self-sufficient, to depend least on foreign goods, to go back to agriculture and not to be attracted to city industries. By all these measures the boycott of the English market can be actualized and the spirit of nationality can be well instilled into the Indian mind which might ensure the achievement of political independence. Gandhi was always eager to infuse the spirit of nationalism into the minds of the Indian people. It is, however, needless to say that the printing press is one of the surest means through which the masses rapidly, This idea of inculcating the spirit of nationalism, again, is not at all advocated by Gandhi from any limited again, is not at all advocated by Gandhi from any limited point of view of attaining political or territorial freedom but strictly for a humanitarian goal of reaching freedom from all kinds of injustice and inequality. Nationalism, for, Gandhi, is Not essentially a political concept but is rather

based on the humanistic feeling. it is only from the point of view of humanitarianism, that Gandhi warmly lent support to the idea of all nations being free and self-dependent. The disapproval of locomotive is, perhaps, mainly due to the fact that it did not prove adequately helpful in diminishing the unequal standard of the then masses of the country, if this observation is correct, then one can surely say that Gandhi was not absolutely opposed to industry or city civilization or to the introduction of modern equipments for agriculture. The apparent inconsistency which is found in his different plans and objectives can thus be avoided.

Let me conclude, then with Gandhi's attitude towards man which is absolutely humanistic. There can no argument against this. His humanism is not personalism but truly international in spirit which overcomes all barriers of caste, religion and culture. It is not based on any spiritual or mystical ideology but has a firm rational footing. Man is asked to be disciplined, moral and honest not at the cost society, not by withdrawing himself from society but by striving always for the well-being society. Humanism is linked up with the social concept of *Sarvodaya*. The adoption of

truth and non violence is highly effective and persuasive bringing about change in the order of society for reaching the goal. Though there may be further discussions about the rational basis of such procedures like truth and non-violence, yet there can be no doubt that in appropriate situations and favorable circumstances such means are most needed. In the modern world of chaos and confusion Gandhi's proposal for these means and procedures, which ensure peace on many occasions, will also continue to prove fruitful for similar situations in future. There is no doubt about it.

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THE STATUS OF WOMAN IN THE EYE OF *UPANICADS* AND *MAHÂBHÂRATA*

Buddhiswar Haldar

Modern world can be defined as an age of resounding with an explosion of ideas. Many changes and reforms have been witnessed on the Indian social scene during this period. The contemporary world of the middle class women is no exception in this respect. We have observed changes in her status in the domestic, the social and the professional areas. Although she performs a number of small and big job and shoulders innumerable responsibilities at home and outside, her role are still not well-defined. In spite of playing the role of a wife, she occupied a role of a mother and a career woman simultaneously. She feels least recognition and not amply rewarded. I would, therefore, share my views at this point on women's development and her status in our society as well as our country.

We get a glowing picture of women's education in the Vedic literature. Though there is no definite mention of the existence of educational institution in Vedic time, the high standard of woman's education can easily be inferred. It has

been stated in the *Vanaparva* of the *Mahâbhârata* that a Brahmin has initiated Kuntî, the mother of the *Pânava*s, with *Gâyatrî* mantra of the *Atharvaveda* sacred thread. The *Āloka* of *Mahâbhârata* runs as follows: *TatastâA anavadyângîA grâhayâmâsa sa dvija mantragrâmam tadârâjan atharvaûirasi ûrutaA*.¹

PâGini has explained the term *patnî* according to his aphorism '*patyurGa yajñasaAyoge*' i.e. the suffix '*na*' is to be added to the term '*pati*' to make it feminine if she associates her husband with the performance of the ritualistic activities. A lady who is co-operating her husband in performing sacrificial rites is called *patnî* in the true sense of the term. A man having no wife is not allowed to perform such activities. It has been stated in the *RâmâyaGa* that Râma being desirous of performing *Râjasûya* sacrifice has to build an artificial golden image of *Sîtâ* to acquire the right of the performance of sacrifice.² Thus women are well conversant with Vedic literature is known from the terms



– *Kamhî*, *Kalâpî*, *Vahv[cî* as mentioned by PâGini. A woman well conversant with the Kamha branch of Vedic literature is called *Kamhî*. In the same way, a woman expert in the *Vahv[c* branch of the same is called *Vahv[cî*.

It is well known to us that Gârgi is immortal in the Vedic Literature as a great woman of substance, educated, wise and pious. Among the educated woman in the Vedic time Gârgi is the pioneer. In the court of the King Janaka there is an assembly of the meritorious and educated persons who use to argue or debate on the *Brahmavidyâ*. In this court a debate is held among the seers like Yâjñavalkya etc. When all other renowned seers were defeated by Yâjñavalkya in the battle of debate, Gârgi challenges him. In the *B[hadâraGyaka Upanicad*³ we find a great dialogue on the nature of self between Gârgi and Yâjñavalkya. In this debate no one is defeated and hence both of them are declared as equally expert in the field of philosophical debate. In the same *Upanicad* there is a beautiful discourse between Yâjñavalkya and his wife Maitreyî (6. 2-4). Yâjñavalkya has two wives – Maitreyî and Kâtyâyanî. The former is spiritualist and hence called *Brahmavâdinî* (realiser of Brahman),

while the latter belongs to transmigratory state. Yâjñavalkya, being desirous of leaving this world, wants to divide his property between them. Maitreyî asked him a very pertinent question- 'If my family becomes full of wealth, shall I attain Immortality?' Yâjñavalkya had replied that wealth is the cause of the destruction of Immortality (*Am[atasya tu nâûâsti bittena*). On hearing this Maitreyî has said- What can I do with those which cannot provide me the Immortality (*YenâhâA nâm[tâ syâA kimahaA tena kuryâma*).⁴

It is mentioned in the *B[hadâra Gyaka Upanicad* that the parents in the Vedic time use to pray for having an educated girl but not only sons. The parents usually arrange the religious ceremony to get an educated daughter having long life. From this it is proved that it is not correct assessment that people always long for an educated son (*Atha ya icchet duhitâ me pan itâ jâyeta*).⁵ In the *Mahâbhârata* the spiritual discussion between seer-king Janaka and Sulabha, the dedicated lady, is worth-referring. The *Mahâbhârata* also mentioned the political and spiritual excellence of Draupadî. Megasthenis in his *VivaraGa* has said that there are many educated women like educated men who,



taking the vow of celibacy, involve themselves in the reading the *Uâstras* and in the debate concerning the subject-matter of the *Uâstras* (Fragment 40).

The *Upanicad* in general speaks nature neither of women nor of the women separately but of human beings. It speaks of the problems of their solutions regarding humanity in general. The solutions are based on the principle, which is liberation-centric (i.e., centered on the spiritual freedom). In *Upanicad* the path from the physical to the spiritual, from the mundane to the divine has been prescribed. All human beings are taken as the spiritual principle or spirit, but not the aggregate of body, mind etc. Men and women should realize the self existing in them. Human beings irrespective of their gender are taken as basically spirit or self, but the body, mind sense-organ etc. are the instruments. In the *Kathopanicad* the body is described as the chariot, the mind as the reins and self or *âtman* as the driver.⁶

In the *Upanicad* a clear distinction is made between pleasant (*preya*) and good (*æreya*). The former is controlled by the narrow outlook, which gives prominence to the individual interest while the latter is possible through broader outlook, which gives rise to

intellectual or mental satisfaction over and above the physical one. That which is associated with the social welfare is called good or *æreya*. The social welfare is connected with the upliftment of all as a whole, but not with an individual. If some one is conjoined with good, he is associated with welfare. If not, he is banished from the world of welfare.⁷ Such 'welfarism' (*ûeyavâda*) is the main objective of the *Upanicads*. If it is so, only men will not come under such welfare, but women also. Because one self covers the whole world. That is why; one enjoys pleasure through renunciation as mentioned in the introductory *mantra* of the *Îûopanicad*- *ÎûâvâyamidaA sarvaA yat kiñca jagatyâm jagat/ Tena tyaktena bhuñjîhâ mâ g[dha% kasyasviddhanaA*(Mantra-1).

If human beings remain under the banner of self, everyone irrespective male or female would be honored. All human beings including women would equally be respected without considering their quality, caste, creed etc. All are one from the stand point of self (*Yastu sarvâGi bhûtâni âtmanyevânupaæyati/ sarvabhûtecu câmanaA tato na vijugupsate*).⁸ For this reason all beings, male or female, are our 'relative' (*âtmîya*) in the true sense of term, as



we feel the existence of an undivided self to them. It is said in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* that a husband becomes dear to his wife not for the husband's sake, but for the sake of the self. In this way, each and everything of the world would seem to be dearer to us due to the love of the self (*âtmanastu kâmya bhûtâni priyâni bhavanti*).⁹ In the same way the welfare of the whole world is possible, not to speak of the welfare of woman and children. If there is an outlook through which whole human race as well as environment is conjoined with the well-being, the welfare of a specific class like woman-welfare etc. would automatically come under this. Hence, the development of spiritual outlook as prescribed in the *Upaniṣad* is a precondition for any type of social welfare. If it is done, women also are conjoined with their well-being automatically.

In present day society an individual forgets or is going to forget such an image of woman. An individual's ignorance and lust has made him blind and hence he cannot see woman in the form of mother (i.e., either Mother goddess or my ordinary mother) as both are respectable in our society. Such a picture of ignorance is beautifully painted

in a Hindi film recently released called *Bhavandar*. It is shown that there some of the persons ignorant about real status of woman have raped a village girl who has raised her voice against their evil deeds. Among the rapists there is a priest of a temple who is found to utter mantra- '*Yâ devî sarvabhûtecû mât[rûpeGa saAsthitâ*' in front of the goddess while worshipping just after the rape is performed by him. The priest who is one of the rapists has no right to utter this *mantra* giving great honor to women. In this context the Director of the film has shown the level of ignorance of ordinary man about great position of woman as depicted in our scriptures and maintained by our ancestors. Such type of incidents like killing of brides, torture in connection with the non-payment of dowry etc. can be reduced if the attitude of man towards woman is changed through the light of some metaphysical presupposition as found in our scriptures like *MârkaneyapurâGa*, *Upaniṣad* etc. An individual being should be convinced that woman is not an object of enjoyment, but there is motherliness also, which is inevitable for all-round development of a human being including his personality. Such an attitude towards woman can be developed through mass awareness.



In Indian tradition woman is treated as Universal Mother. That is why, it is advised to become deity in the form of mother (*mât[devo bhava]*). After being a householder she becomes mother capable of being worshiped by the world and becomes greater than heaven (*svargâdapi garîyasî*). In India only a woman is worshipped as Mother Goddess. In this context the virgin-worship (*kumâripûjâ*) performed at the time of *Durgâpûjâ* may be mentioned. Rabindranath has emphasized on the harmonized character of woman where there should be a combination of both affectionate motherly heart and vigor of a male. A perfect woman should be mother so far as her affection is concerned and ruler so far as her vigor of the arm is concerned (*'snehabala mâtâ, vâhuvalê tîni râjâ*). A woman is not an 'extremist' in the true sense of the term-and hence there we find the combination of feminine and masculine qualities (*'snehe se nârî vîroye se puruca...ekâdhâre milita puruca nârî*). Womanly qualities are to be supplemented by the manly ones. Otherwise there should be the lack of balance.

From the above discussion it is shown that in our Indian tradition women are not merely honored but literally worshipped. In spite of this we find in

modern times a large number of cases like rape, bride-burning, woman-torture etc. Do the people realize them as Divinity? If not, why are such compliments given to the ladies? It may be said that there is a gulf of difference between Indian tradition and what people are doing at present. There is no transparency between what is said in our tradition and what is done. Hence, one finds hypocrisy in an individual, which is also not a good practice. In response to this it can be said that there is no transparency between what is said in our tradition and what is practiced due to the lack of mass awareness and lack of proper education. All forms of torture on woman are done either due to bad education (*kuæikcâ*) or uneducation (*ææikcâ*). When something is prescribed in our Indian tradition, some means of its performance are also prescribed. Both the end and means are prescribed at the same time in our scripture. In order to achieve this end we have to follow the prescribed means also. For this we need proper education in a systematic manner from the genuine preceptor. If there is some wrong in the education, an individual cannot adopt the means leading to the non-attainment of the end. If showing due to honor to the ladies is an end, we have to follow the proper means



through proper education. If it is not done, all the efforts would be ended in smoke. Such is the case in modern times. Still we have enough time and scope to educate them properly. If it is done, they will be free from lust; anger etc. will be able to look at the woman as Divine Mother. People will think twice before torturing her. In fact, persons without proper education are breasts- they are the devilish persons who can go to any extent while torturing. Such type of people is described Bhrt[hari as *Mānavarākcakā* (devilsh men). The *ælokaruns* as follows: 'Temî mānavarākcakā% parahitaA svārthāya nighnanti ye'10 i.e., there are those others, *Mānavarākcakās*, devilish men, who sacrifice the good of others to gain their own selfish ends. As these people are devils in distinguish of human beings, they cannot see the real feminine character. If they are transformed to humanity from devilishness, they can get back their own nature. It is possible through proper education as desired by our ancient seers.

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- 3 *B[hadāraGyakopanicad*, 3/6-8.

- 4 Ibid., 2/4.
- 5 Ibid., 6-4-18.
- 6 *ĀtmānaArathinaA viddhi æarîraA rathameva tu/ BuddhiA tu sārathiA viddhi mana% pragrahameva ca// Kathopanicad*, 1-3-3.
- 7 *Tayo% æereya adadānasya sādhu bhavati/ Hīyate' rthād ya u preyo v[Gîte. Ibid. 1/2. /1.*
- 8 *Îūoponicad*, 6.
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HUMANISTIC ELEMENTS IN ANCIENT INDIAN THOUGHT

Syamala.K and P.I.Devaraj

Today, the world is facing a challenge which affects its very survival. Nuclear weapons and other powerful instruments of mass destruction are creating threatening moments to the life of mankind. The situation is as Dr.S.Radhakrishnan says, "Either we live together or die together." There was never in man's history more knowledge, especially in science and technology, than that is available today. Yet, man has not been able to reduce the amount of evils such as tyranny, social injustice, distrust and rampant violence affecting almost every aspect of human life and relationships. There is so much of knowledge and yet so much violence because we have failed to give serious attention to the question of human values.

Science and humanism are two complementary aspects of human endeavour for the fulfilment of human aspirations. Hence an attempt for their proper integration is the most urgent need of mankind together. But we have been trying to pursue science, ignoring its linkage with humanism. Human values are to be given enough importance.

The popular concept of humanism is that it is an outlook which elevates man above everything else and demonstrates his supremacy over the rest of the creation. It recognises the infinite potentialities and possibilities of man. It may be defined as an attempt to explore the ways and means to bring about common welfare and progress of mankind through all-round development and enrichment of individual lives. The word 'humanism' has been derived from the Latin term 'humanus' which means 'human being.' Thus literally speaking humanism is a philosophy in which man occupies the central place.

The Sophists and Epicureans of Greece were perhaps the first known humanists in history. Protagoras, a Greek philosopher of 5th century B.C is considered as one of the earliest humanists of the West, if not the father of humanism. He proclaimed that 'Man is the measure of all things.' His dictum has been considered as the watchword of humanism by a number of humanistic thinkers. But humanism was not confined to the Western thought. It had its impact,



very deeply in the Indian thought also. Though we can find a definite awakening of the spirit of humanism only in the contemporary Indian thought, we can see traces of humanistic elements in ancient Indian systems also. Supremacy of man can be seen asserted in a number of instances in the ancient literature. Our attempt in this paper is to highlight that traces of humanistic ideas present in Indian thought from its early days.

The essence of Indian humanism is the proclamation '*Ayam Atma Brahman*' (I am Brahman). It is nothing but the recognition of the identity between the limited self and all pervading cosmic spirit, bringing an end to the suffering of humanity. This is the basis of humanistic implications in many systems of Indian philosophy. Now let us have a brief look through these different systems commencing from the Vedic and Upanishadic literature and try to trace out those humanistic elements.

Humanistic elements in Vedas and Upanishads:-

The origin of Indian wisdom can be traced to the Vedas and Upanishads are the concluding portions of Vedas. The ancient Upanishadic equation of the self and the absolute raises man to the pedestal of highest dignity. The unity of

atman and Brahman preached by almost all the ancient Indian thinkers never meant the eclipse of the individual.

The humanistic view point of the Upanishads can be seen in the concept soul and Brahman being identical. This view is implicit in such aphoristic sentences as *Aham Brahmasmi*, *Tattvamasi* etc- which seeks to establish that whatever exists in the Universe also exists in man. The element which motivates the universe or from which the universe springs is also inherent in man. Hence, man is intimately linked with Nature and God. The same element works in all the three. In this way, integration has been established in the Upanishads.

Another aspect from which the humanistic element is visualised in the Upanishads is that of *Saccidananda*, which is the most significant conception of Brahman in the Upanishads. Brahman is both real and conscious which implies that Brahman exists wherever there is existence and consciousness. By saying Brahman is *ananda*, the Upanishads seeks to clarify that everything in the Universe functions according to its nature, since the secret of contentment lies in functioning according to nature. By referring to Brahman as *Saccidananda*, the Upanishads make Brahman the prime



reality of the three spheres-existence, consciousness and values. In this way the three elements of existence, knowledge and value are harmonised. On the basis of this synthesis, Indian thinkers establish the important principle that the problems of man's existence, knowledge and value are neither discrete nor separable, they are mutually inter-dependent. In fact, they are basically identical. This is the highest form of integral philosophy.

The spiritualism contained in the Upanishad is unquestionably humanistic in the sense that it assumes the same element to be underlying both in Man and Nature. The central purpose of the Upanishads crystallises as the uplift of human life from the level of mere biological existence to the status of self conscious spiritual being. Thus the Indian seers were able to expound a marvellous vision on the nature and destiny of man's being.

Bhagavad Gita:-

The Bhagavad Gita constitutes the third pillar of classical Vedanta, the other two being the Upanishads and the Brahmasutra. The central issue of Gita is the development of the self of man and its realisation of the Divine. Its emphasis was on work without concern for the fruit or reward.

The Bhagavad Gita laid the norm of Indian humanism through its concept of the fusion of the empirical self with the Divine self, Divine or *Paramatman*. Indian humanism best embodied in the Gita, stands for dynamic progress and universalisation of the spirit of every human individual and illumination and freedom of the entire realm of life, *jivaloka*. Supreme knowledge in India is self-realisation and self-transcendence. It also implies a faith in unity and interconnectedness of cosmic life grounded in the supreme, and has as its goal, the liberation of all beings in the cosmos or *Sarvamukti*. Another great concept, *Lokasangraha* or protection and organisation of mankind and cosmos also obtain great emphasis in the Gita. This was made clear by Chandradhar Sharma when he stated that, "The perfect man has no axe of his own to grind. He simply acts for the good of the people. The lord Himself though He has nothing to accomplish for Himself, acts for the benefit of humanity. The perfect man also has to work for the benefit of humanity (loka-Sangraha), in the spirit of perfect detachment, disinterest, selflessness, with no desire to reap the fruit. He alone is capable of doing so."¹ Thus in Gita, we see that humanism embraces not only certain particular people, religion or



culture, but the mankind as a whole. It is universal humanism unprecedented in its sweep, depth and intensity.

Humanism in heterodox system:-

Carvaka, Jainism and Buddhism constitute the heterodox system of Indian thought.

Carvaka, the ancient school of Indian materialism arose as a protest against the idealist and the spiritualist tradition. Carvakas were humanists in the sense that they were thinkers who were exclusively concerned about man's life here and now. For them, pleasure was the ultimate aim of life. They denied the existence of God, soul, life after death etc, and advocated a hedonistic way of life. Their concern was limited to the enjoyment of pleasure and satisfaction in this life. The Carvaka's thus confined their attention to the problems of immediate life and this can be considered as a humanistic element in their philosophy.

According to Jainism, the value of human life is evident from the fact that even Gods cannot directly attain liberation unless they are born as human beings. The three jewels of Right faith, Right knowledge and Right conduct has been prescribed by Jainism as means to right living leading to liberation. Jainas also had firm faith in man and his powers

and asserted that man can work out his own way to the final bliss. Following the three fold path, the individual is freed from karmas but may live in this world actively engaged in the service of humanity. Thus Jainism prescribes a way of liberation that is completely dependent upon man and his powers without any supernatural assistance. This was stated by Sri. Puligandla, "That is each man must work out of his own salvation. Meditation on the perfections of the free souls only serves to remind one of one's own potential for perfection, thereby inspiring one to tread the path. Reliance on one's own efforts to the exclusion of grace, divine or human, in one's own struggle for perfection and freedom renders Jainism a religion fit only for the courageous...."² Discarding the dogmas of the certain and dissolution of the world and the related doctrine of a creator God, the Jainas maintain that the liberated soul itself attains omniscience and omnipotence and this constitutes the essence of humanism in Jaina philosophy.

The humanistic ideals became more prominent in Buddhism. As Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has rightly observed "more than 2000 years before Marx, there was another great moralist who had dedicated his life to the cause of human



suffering and its removal. He was Gautama, the Buddha."³ It is humanistic because it believes in the ability of the individual to realise human values without supra human aid. The very starting point of Buddhist philosophy consists in the discovery of origin and removal of suffering. Buddha's chief concern was man. He refused to accept the concept of human soul as an eternal entity. Instead, he envisaged a theory of self in terms of a stream of consciousness. *Pratityasamutpadavada* and *Kshanikavada* of Buddhism can be considered as the basic principles of humanism that we can discover in the teachings of Buddha.

Buddhism gave due attention to the life of man in this world. He prescribed a threefold ideal for man consisting of *Buddhahood*, *Dharma* and *Sangha*. A concern for the wholesome development of human personality in the context of social existence is quite clear in these ideals.

Even the idea of *Arhathood*/*Arhanhood* of Buddhism has a distinctive value from the humanistic viewpoint. The attainment of *arhanhood* can be accomplished under ordinary conditions in this very life. The eight fold path prescribed by Buddha for the eradication

of suffering is based on self discipline and contemplation.

Buddha rejected all kinds of distinctions based upon caste and sex and proclaimed that every human being is eligible for the status of *Arhanhood*. Here again, we see the humanistic outlook of Buddha, who upheld the cause of equality of all beings. The message of Buddha was open to all. This fact attains significance only when we see that it was during the ancient period when the philosophical system builders used to under estimate the nature and role of women and other downtrodden sections of society, that Buddha proclaimed this principle of equality. Thus Buddha's ideals were extremely revolutionary which affected a constructive upheaval in the socio-cultural situations of his time.

Humanistic elements in the Orthodox systems:-

The orthodox system includes the systems of *Nyaya Vaisesika*, *Samkhya Yoga*, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta*. All of them stress the importance of knowledge for the attainment of liberation and recognised perception, inference and testimony as the basis of knowledge. These were considered as simple ways of approach to the central question relating to the nature and destiny of man.



These systems gave primary importance to the question of removal of man's sufferings prescribing a way of life which would lead him to the goal without any necessary involvement of God.

According to the orthodox systems in general, ignorance is the cause of bondage and suffering. While the systems of *Nyaya Vaisesika* and *Samkhya-Yoga* consider bondage to be real, the *Advaita* consider it to be illusory. However, all of them stress the importance of knowledge for the attainment of liberation. A strict adherence to the moral and spiritual discipline is a pre requisite for the attainment of this liberating knowledge.

Nyaya Vaisesika systems are committed to the belief in a creator God. But it is interesting to note that according to these systems soul's liberation does not consists in its association with God or Brahman. The *Samkhya-Yoga* system deals with man and his problems with a greater inclination than *Nyaya* School. Complete cessation of suffering resulting from the attainment of discriminative knowledge/*vivekajnana* is declared to be the goal of life in Samkhya system. Only through right knowledge which arises from right discrimination between *purusa* and *prakrti*, one can eliminate

pain. Such discriminative knowledge can be acquired by the practice of yoga. It prescribes self discipline and exercises leading to the realisation of one's essential self. The aim of Yoga system is to free individual from the clutches of matter. By withdrawing the mind from the natural functions and conflicts through the practice of *Astangayoga* eight fold path one can attain *moksa* or *kaivalya*.

Samkhya system finds no place for a God in the universe which came into being through the principles of *prakrti* and *purusa*. According to Datta and Chatterjee, ".....God does not exist and that *prakrti* is the sufficient reason for there being a world of objects. *Prakrti* creates the world unconsciously for the good of the individual selves (*purusa*) in the same way in which the milk of the cow flows unconsciously through her udder for the nourishment of the calf."⁴ Liberation is attained when *purusa* is completely disassociated from *prakrti*, the physical reality. Yoga system assigns a place for God, but his role is limited to the removal of obstacles from the way to liberation. Thus these systems give primary importance to the question of the removal of man's sufferings prescribing a way of life which would lead him to the



goal without any necessary involvement of God.

The Mimamsa is a system which holds the performance of dharma as the way to attain the goal of life. Dharma is described as the scheme of right living. As it is stated by Puligandla, "....dharma is the duties and obligations of the individual toward himself and the society as well as those of the society toward the individual. Thus it is dharma which makes it possible for men to live and function harmoniously in their society by fulfilling themselves and at the same time contributing to the well-being of the society at large."⁵ This system gives supreme importance to Vedas and Vedic rituals and hold that Vedas alone can guide us in determining what is right and what is wrong. The Vedic injunctions lay down the details of dharma. Virtuous life is according to what is prescribed by the Vedas.

According to Kumarila, release is attained through the performance of duties combined with *jnana*. But mere knowledge cannot give us freedom. Knowledge prevents further accumulation of merit and demerit. Actions are also insufficient for effecting release. Liberation is the cessation of pleasure as well as pain. It is not a state of bliss, but

simply the restoration of the natural form of the soul. Thus it may be seen that Mimamsa is a system which lays emphasis upon right living and final release.

The humanistic side of Upanishadic metaphysics finds clearest expression in Sankara and his followers. Its humanistic core consists in the inspiration to man to qualify him to become 'the man of realisation.' According to Vedanta, the supreme reality is Brahman. Brahman alone is true. He is infinite, eternal, omnipotent and pure consciousness. He is the soul of all, which means that He is the human element existing in all human beings. He is the basis lying at the root of the substance existing in the universe. His various powers function in nature. Man's soul is that element which establishes a relationship between man, nature and god. Thus this philosophy is humanistic because in it the same element is inherent in man, nature and God and this element forms the basis of all thoughts. Realisation of this element or Brahman is the ultimate goal of life. In this way integration is established in Vedantic thought also and this can be considered as an implication of humanism in it.



The six *darshanas* of India thus treat the problem of man's spiritual realisation as central to all philosophical speculations and it is in this sense we say that they are all humanistic.

It is evident from the above account that humanistic elements were very much present in the Vedas, Upanishads, and Orthodox as well as Heterodox systems of Indian thought. These traces of humanism in the traditional Indian thought formed the basis of contemporary Indian philosophy and in it we see a definite awakening of the spirit of humanism in a more explicit and comprehensive manner.

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UPAVÂSA IN HINDUISM

Padma S Kalyani

Almost all religions prescribe goals whose realization transcends the material world. These goals are variously known as salvation, transmigration and rebirth, etc. In the Hindu religion these goals are elevated to a still higher pedestal. Hinduism prescribes that; pursuit of goals whose realisation is beyond our existence in the palpable world around us should be made an organic part of our activities while we are still living. Further, that each and every thing that we do here (*Karma*) is accounted for by the celestial accountant (*chitragupta*) and has implications on our next life as per the theory of re-birth (*punarjanma*). The Hindu is guided by rules and regulations prescribed by his religion. There is nothing that has to do with the whole life of a Hindu, and every possible detail thereof, from his cradle to his grave, which is not regulated by such rules.

According to Padfield:

"Many of these directions were originally the outcome of circumstances bearing upon the welfare of the individual or community. But they have gradually

become absorbed in the religious administration and, at length, appear as sections of a divine code that must be observed, on pain of severe physical and spiritual penalties."¹

Hindu Diet (*Āhāra*):

The Institutes of *Manu*, clearly show that, with various restrictions, there was, practically, as much freedom in the choice of food to the good Hindu of those days as there is to men of the most civilized nations in these modern times. The ancient law-giver mentions various kinds of vegetables and animals that may not lawfully be eaten. According to *Manu Dharma-śāstra*:

"For the sustenance of the vital spirit, Brahma created all this animal and vegetable system; and all that is moveable and immoveable, that spirit devours."²

At the present day, all the higher classes abstain from animal food in every form and are rigid vegetarians. The lower classes are not so restricted in their diet. Indeed, as we go lower down in the scale



of caste we find the restrictions lessen, and the dietary scale expand, until it comes to include things considered by even the least fastidious of Europeans as altogether abominable. Animal food is largely consumed by the lowest classes, when they can get it, in any shape or form; but even in their case, it is a question whether without it they could not equally well endure the physical strain of labour, if they could afford to procure the good vegetable food of their betters.

There is amongst all classes, the lowest outcasts expected, the greatest doubt, what is now a deeply rooted idea was originally a merely economical arising out of the exigencies of the people but, in true accordance with Hindu things generally, what first arose as a necessary custom became petrified into a religious law, a law, the wisdom of which it is not difficult to see, and for the breach of which there does not seem in India any necessity. Monier Williams says:

"Happily for the Hindus, the cow which supplies them with their only animal food, milk and butter and the ox which helps to till their ground were declared sacred at an early period. Had it not been so, this useful animal might have been exterminated in times of famine.

What is now a superstition had its origin, like some other superstitions, in a wise fore thought."³

The Hindu law-giver, to over-indulgence, and also, perhaps, being personally acquainted with the highly spiced, appetizing dishes of the East is careful to say:

"Excessive eating is prejudicial to health, to health, to fame, and to future bliss in heaven; it is injurious to virtue and odious among men; he must for these reasons, avoid it."⁴

Upavâsa:

Upavâsa i.e. fasting is a social practice that can be taken on certain holy days. Fasting on festivals and other days of religious significance is not new to Indians. On certain occasions like thread ceremony, marriage or death in the family, an Indian shaves (tonsures) his head. This is even done while visiting an important shrine normally in fulfillment of a boon e.g. at the *Tirupati* shrine in Southern India. It may even surprise us to see people walking over hot coals, puncturing cheeks, ears and tongue, etc. That could be the origin of such strange practices which are a part of worship.⁵



Upavâsa is another name for fasting. *Upa* means near and *vâsa* mean to stay. So we can take it that it takes us to the proximity of God. On the days of fasting, we do not spend time and energy on cooking the food and related work. So the mind is comparatively alert and pure and entertains noble thoughts about God. Also our system gets a break and rest. This does a lot of good to the entire body and particularly the digestive system.⁶

Food (in Sanskrit, *anna*) plays a very important role in the social and ritual life of the Hindus. Food is mentioned in the early Hindu sacred writings known as the *Vedas*. In the *Taittiriya Upanisad* it is written, "Food is life, therefore one should give food; eating is the supreme sacrifice." Hindus have hundreds of traditional health rules, regarding food and the preparation of meals. A traditional Hindu housewife spends a large amount of time cooking. Religious books, such as the *Dharmaûâtras*, the ancient "law books" treat food and all that is related to eating extensively. Caste borders were sharpened by the many rules on eating, or rather not eating, together. In *Vedic* times, people ate everything, including beef, but in later times, probably under the influence of Buddhism, meat eating became a taboo, as was the killing of animals, either for

food or for a sacrifice. One could argue that many of these food taboos were instigated by climatic conditions and by ideas about hygiene. Different groups and castes developed their own food rules, although there were regional differences. The *Vaiùava* community classifies food according to the three qualities (*guòa*) of the *Sâmkhya* philosophy: *sattva* food, which is pure; *rajas* food, which is energetic or exciting; and *tamas* food, which is impure. Only *sattva* food is allowed, which means no meat and fish, onions, garlic, specific fruits, and sharp spices.⁷

Fasting in Hinduism indicates the denial of the physical needs of the body for the sake of spiritual gains. According to the scriptures, fasting helps create an attunement with the Absolute by establishing a harmonious relationship between the body and the soul. This is thought to be imperative for the well being of a human being as it nourishes both his/her physical and spiritual demands.

Fasting in the sense of not eating for a specific time (*upavâsa*), or abstaining from specific substances during certain periods, is a well-established part of all Hindu spiritual practices. In the early times it was related to *tapas*, ascetic practices, and it is still a major aspect of



the religious practices of many of the *sâdhus* or "holy men" in India. Also, many ordinary Indians fast on specific days during the year, either by taking no food at all or by restricting their diet. For instance, *Vaiûðavas* fast on the eleventh day of each half of the lunar month (*ekâdaûî*), when they are only allowed to eat what has grown below the ground, along with dairy products. Before and during rituals, like sacrifices, but also before going on a pilgrimage, fasting and abstinence from certain food items are part of the practice of Hindus.

Hindus believe it is not easy to unceasingly pursue the path of spirituality in one's daily life. We are harangued by a lot of considerations, and worldly indulgences do not allow us to concentrate on spiritual attainment. Therefore a worshipper must strive to impose restraints on him/her to get his mind focused. And one form of restraint is fasting. While appealing to people to fast and pray, Gandhi points out:

"This is a hoary institution. A genuine fast cleanses body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extent sets the soul free. A sincere prayer can work wonders. It is an intense longing of the soul for its even greater purity. Purity

thus gained when it is utilized for a noble purpose becomes a prayer."⁸

According to Ramakrishna Rao:

The earliest reported *Dhârmic* or purificatory fasting was by *Ranti Deva*, the ancestor of Lord *Rama*, who fasted for 48 days in a spirit of atonement. His sole life principle was giving relief to the suffering people (*artinâ°sanam*). *Swamy Ayyappa* Devotees follow some austerities for 40 days. They carry rice, ghee and coconuts on their heads and tread long distances. All such practices have to be directed towards purposeful public service apart from the spiritual merit one may acquire in the process.⁹

Fasting is not only a part of worship, but a great instrument for self-discipline too. It is a training of the mind and the body to endure and harden up against all hardships, to persevere under difficulties and not give up. According to Hindu philosophy, food means gratification of the senses and to starve the senses is to elevate them to contemplation.

Different Kinds of Fasting:¹⁰

- Hindus fast on certain days of the month such as *pûrôîma* (full moon)



and *ekâdæi* (the 11th day of the fortnight).

- Certain days of the week is also marked for fasting, depending on individual choices and on one's favorite god and goddess. On Saturday, people fast to appease the god of that day, *Æani* or *Saturn*. Some fast on Tuesdays the auspicious day for *Hanumân*, the monkey God. On Fridays devotees of the goddess *Santo°i Mâta* abstain from taking anything citric.
- Fasting at festivals is common. Hindus all over India observe fast on festivals like Navarâtri, Æivrâtri and Karwa Chauth. *Navarâtri* is a festival when people fast for nine days. Hindus in West Bengal fast on *A°tami*, the eighth day of the festival of Durga Puja.
- Fasting can also mean abstaining from taking certain things, either for religious reason or for the sake of good health. For instance, some people refrain from taking salt on particular days. It is common knowledge that excess salt and sodium causes hypertension or elevation of blood pressure.
- Another common kind of fast is to forego taking cereals when only

fruits are eaten. Such a diet is known as *phalahâr*.

A Non-Violent Protest:

From a matter of dietary control, fasting has come to be a handy tool of societal control. It is a non-violent form of protest. A hunger strike can draw attention to a grievance and can bring about an emendation or redress. It is interesting to note that it was Mahatma Gandhi who used fasting to capture people's attention. Gandhi said:

"As I think over the past, I am not sorry for having taken the fast. Though I suffered bodily pain and discomfort, there was indescribable peace within. I have enjoyed peace during all my fasts but never so much as in this. Perhaps, the reason was that there was nothing to look forward to."¹¹

The pangs of hunger that one experience during fasting make one think and extend one's sympathy towards the destitute who often go without food. In this context, fasting functions as a societal gain wherein people share with each other a fellow feeling. Fasting provides an opportunity for the privileged to give food-grains to the less privileged and alleviate their distress, at least for the moment.



In its most radical form complete fasting can be pursued until death, in which case it is called *prāyopavista* ("one who sits down and quietly awaits the approach of death" by not eating). Suicide through starvation has been well documented in Jainism, a religion that originated in the sixth century B.C but Jain customs regarding this kind of suicide may be based on Hindu practices from around the fourth century B.C. Elderly people, who feel they are of no use any more to the community or feel they are a burden to the family, can choose this way of ending their lives. Suicide by ending the cycle of rebirth (*samsāra*) through not eating is beyond mainstream Hinduism, which sees it as another attachment that will even bring a worse rebirth unless the person has already been detached of all worldly concerns. A person can fast for a specific period to attain some goal, thereby pressuring family or community members, as exemplified by the fasting of Mahātmā Gandhi for political and humanitarian ends.¹²

All of us know that we are taught to pray to the Almighty. The term almighty itself speaks for our concept of divinity. Something that is supreme, all-powerful can be looked upon as God. Fear, need and helplessness evoke awe and respect followed by worship. This is why,

natural phenomena like, thunder, lightning, a mighty river especially one causing floods, etc. were objects of worship in ancient times. Ignorance about the nature of a thing along with its determining influence on human lives has been reasons for such things being elevated to the status of a deity. According to S.B. Roy:

"The word for fasting i.e. *Upavāsa* itself means to move near (to the Supreme) and by implication to overcome helplessness. A calamity has always been an occasion for prayer. But in normal times we pray for a positive reason like asking for a boon. Appeasement of an anger deity has also been a cause for prayer. But whatever the reason for prayer a common feature is; the offerings that are made. No prayer can be complete unless accompanied by an offering."¹³

In earlier times, sacrifices of animals and human beings were offered to propitiate the Gods. In the present day the items we offer have changed but the practice remains, We never go to temples or churches empty-handed, coconuts, flowers, sweets, candle-sticks, etc., are items that we take along as offerings. Thus the concept of give and take during



worship has existed since ancient times till today.

The origin of customs like fasting must lie nearby this nature of worship. Human society has always had haves and have-nots. During worship the haves had something to offer, but the have-nots did not.

The practices of fasting, tonsuring the head, puncturing parts of the body and other forms of self torture could have originated in the section of have-nots as they had nothing else to offer when asking for a boon. Even today, practices like puncturing the tongue, ears, etc. are prevalent mainly among backward tribals living on the margin of subsistence. Another possible reason which universalised some of these practices, fasting for instance; could be that fasting and other forms of penance was undertaken when normal offerings failed in getting a boon fulfilled.¹⁴

Penance itself is of two types. Penance which is undertaken before the boon is fulfilled and that which is undertaken after its fulfillment. Penance before a boon is fulfilled is in the nature of a price paid in advance for something to be received in the future. Penance after fulfillment of a boon asked for an

undertaken as a price for something already received.

But in both forms the penance has the nature of a price arising out of a mutual obligation between the devotee and his deity. There is no penance in which the devotee does not seek a boon or a favour and there is no boon that can be had without penance or offerings. These two elements are inseparable in worship. Worship and prayer become purposeless if the aspect of a boon or favour is removed from it. While praying we seek something. This something could be a definite object or it may be mental peace and protection from calamities.

A prayer, without the asking of a favour does not exist. Hence, normally religions activities cannot be considered to have been undertaken with a selfless motive. A conditional exception can be made about hermits and ascetics (*sanyâsis*) who roam all over or retire to forests or the snow clad Himalayas in search of peace of mind or universal truth. But the fact remains that they also are seeking something and so strictly speaking their activities cannot be termed as self-renouncing.

Bhakti and *Bhik°a* are the two essential elements of worship. While *Bhakti* i.e. invocation is the method of prayer,

Bhikṣā i.e. the asking for a boon is the motive behind prayer. Incidentally the Sanskrit word for God is *Iṣvara*, which could be an amalgam of the two words '*iṣā*' and '*vara*'. *Iṣā* means to wish for something and *vara* means a boon or gift. Hence it may not be accidental that the name for God means to 'wish for a boon'.¹⁵

The self and individual oriented nature of any prayer is perceivable in our act of praying. Prayer is normally a link between an individual and the supreme. What an individual asks during a prayer is his or her private affair which is normally not shared with others. Two or more individuals do not pray collectively unless they are meant for a common objective e.g. soldiers praying for victory in war, business partners praying for prosperity of their firm, etc.

A point may be raised about the public prayers during which participants pray for world peace, relief for victims of flood or famines. It can be said that such prayers are for others and not for ourselves, thus the motive is charity. It is true that such prayers have a charitable and selfless character but even here we pray as humans for other humans. We are selfless individually but are not so collectively as the motive for prayer

remains that of asking something from the supreme, which we expect it to grant us.

The essence to self motive in worship is visibly demonstrated in our idea of looking upon a particular shrine or deity as more alive to the prayers of devotees (*Jagrut Deva*) as compared to other shrines or deities. This is further demonstrated by our flocking to the shrine of such a Deity to pray for the granting of our innumerable boons.

The differences in individual faiths aside, many believe that self-sacrifice shows commitment while strengthening individuals of all faiths. In many faiths, "people are giving up food and some of the other necessities and luxuries of life in an attempt to try to symbolize their commitment to God in some form or the other. Several religious leaders believe that the commonality of fasting is symptomatic of the connection between different cultures throughout the world. Though there are different reasons behind religious practices, these similarities show that even if we think we are different, we are all connected.

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