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EDITORIAL

Mihaela GLIGOR
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> India is seen as a country of immense diversity, of distinct hopes, of vast and disparate beliefs, of extraordinary customs and a genuine feast of opinions.
> The cultural heritage of contemporary India combines the Islamic influences with the Hindu ones, as well as those pertaining to other traditions, and the outcome of the interaction among different religious communities can be fully seen in literature, music, painting, architecture and many other fields.
>
> (Amartya Sen, Nobel prize laureate).

India is a mixture of emotions, colours, feelings, music, happiness, sorrow, life and death, gods and people. India is an endless puzzle which each soul that meets its mystery tries to solve. India is infinite, just as untrammelled as the fascination that it produces in the others

India is an incredible rich culture, with a history of thousands of years. It saw the rise of various civilizations, religions, dynasties, human groups, cultures and arts. India has been presented and represented in many forms in literary discourses, arts and heritage

symbols. But the country is so vast that there always remains an area to be explored. Moreover, there are many new things to be interpreted and established. Any discussion on anything belonging to India and its culture is incomplete without interdisciplinary dialogue between various cultural aspects and elements.

Through its stories, India has always attracted people of distant places from archeologists, travelers, merchants, artists to scientists and academic researchers. Its rich diversity and its myths, legends, arts or music fascinated and allured many minds. The languages of India, from Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Tamil, the regional languages from the ancient times, to Persian and Urdu from the medieval times and English from the modern period, were and still are fascinating for linguists and researchers.

The *Romanian Journal of Indian Studies* encourages interdisciplinary approaches in linguistics, literature and literary studies, Indian philosophy, history of religions, political philosophy, history of ideas, science, anthropology, sociology, education, communications theory and performing arts. One of its primary aims is the integration of the results of the several disciplines of the humanities so that its articles will have a synthetic character in order to acquaint the reader with the progress being made in the general area of Indian Studies.

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Writing about the Partition Riots of India

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Abstract: This essay is concerned with the dilemma in which any historian is caught whenever trying to address a traumatic historical issue which continues to be hotly debated in contemporary society. How can he/she justify opening up old wounds? Referring to the long-running debate about the foundation of historical research, it attempts to find a more satisfactory answer to the vexed question.

Keywords: partition of India, communalism, violence and memories, historian's dilemma, historical truthfulness.

1. A Vicious Circle

Whenever confronted with a flare-up involving bitter religious strife, many people of India no doubt recall the partition riots of the late 1940s and look into their images reflected in mirrors of the past and present set facing one another. When colonial India gained independence and was partitioned into India and Pakistan in 1947, massive clashes took place between

Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in Bengal, Bihar, the United Provinces, the Punjab, Sind and the NWFP. This man-made disaster was of such an enormous scale and created such a chaotic situation that it is impossible to arrive at even a rough estimation of the number of casualties, the number being guessed at anywhere between 200,000 and two million deaths. Moreover, somewhere around ten million people were displaced as refugees between India and Pakistan.[1]

The partition of India was meant to be a surgical solution to the political, religious and economic antagonism between Hindus and Muslims which was taking on menacing dimensions during the final few years of British rule. However, it dismally failed in settling the communal problems of South Asia and exacted an enormous sacrifice on the masses of the region. It is in the midst of major outbreaks of communal violence that occurred in India in 1950, 1962, 1970, 1983, 1984, 1989, 1992 and 2002[2] that the haunting memory of the partition riots resurfaces in the mind of the people, who say "this is like Partition again"[3], while the media drag out their favorite cliché, "perhaps the worst since 1947".[4]

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[1] Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 68.

[2] Asghar Ali Engineer, "The Causes of Communal Riots in the Post Partition Period in India", *Communal Riots in Post-Independence India*, 2nd ed., Hyderabad, Sangam Books, 1991, chap. 3; Ashutosh Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India*, 2nd ed., New Haven, Yale University Press, 2002, chap. 4.

[3] Urvashi Butalia, *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India,* Durham, Duke University Press, 2000, p. 4.

[4] Gyanendra Pandey, "In Defense of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-

To those who believe that various religious communities can and should live together peacefully in India, the memory of partition riots will form a mirror reflecting their moral failure to live up to that social ideal, forcing some to ponder why they have been unable to prevent "fratricide" from recurring in their motherland since independence. Such an introspective mental attitude may occasionally lead to an excessive internalization of the communal problem, which in reality is basically a political and social issue. On the contrary, to those who believe that India should become a monolithic religious state, it will furnish a mirror reflecting their political failure to realize their ideological goals, some renewing their vow to settle old scores with blood.[5]

In either case, such states of mind suggest that the memory of the partition riots still forms part of the master narrative of India's political community, not only because the horrible experiences of 1946 and 1947 have had a tremendous impact on the collective memory of the people, but also because the memory itself has been refreshed, reinforced and reshaped every time a serious riot breaks out in their society. However, it is disquieting to see that the partition riots are treated like an absolute, immovable reference point in history whenever communal issues are debated in earnest, although, in reality, the position they take in modern history is constantly changing in response to India's present. It appears that a sort of reciprocal relationship has been forged between the memory of the riots and the contemporary

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Muslim Riots in India Today", *Representations* 37, 1992, p. 33.

[5] Of course, there are subtle and endless gradations between these two poles.

controversy over communal problems, in which deep sentiments like moral despair and communal hatred on the one hand, and the stylized, congealed narrative of the riots, on the other, reinforce each other, forming a vicious circle.

Such a state of affairs poses a difficult problem for the historian, in that if one naïvely pursues one's study of the riots and gives a simplistic account of the violence, one may unwittingly assist in making the vicious circle even more vicious, no matter how objective and well-documented one considers his research to be.[6] For example, I am now engaged in a study of the Calcutta communal riots of August 1946, in which Hindus and Muslims violently clashed over the founding of Pakistan, causing the death of more than 4,000 people.[7] If I quote from the

[6] Paul R. Brass's sharp criticism may be recalled here. He holds that academic studies of violence, which are utilized for the struggle to control the interpretation of violence, form an integral part of what he calls institutionalized riot systems. Paul R. Brass, "Introduction: Discourses of Ethnicity, Communalism, and Violence", *Riots and Pogroms,* Houndmills, Macmillan Press, 1996, pp. 45-46.

[7] Nariaki Nakazato, "The Politics of a Partition Riot: Calcutta in August 1946", *Muslim Societies: Historical and Comparative Aspects*, ed. Tsugitaka Sato, London, Routledge Curzon, 2004, p. 109. See also Suranjan Das, *Communal Riots in Bengal, 1905-1947,* Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1991, chap. 6; Max Jean Zins, "The 1947 Vivisection of India: The Political Usage of a Carnage in the Era of Citizen-Massacres", *The Unfinished Agenda: Nation-building in South Asia*, eds. Mushirul Hasan and Nariaki Nakazato, New Delhi, Manohar Publishers, 2001; Nariaki Nakazato, "The Role of Colonial Administration, 'Riot Systems', and Local Networks during the Calcutta Disturbances of August 1946", *Calcutta: The Stormy Decades*, eds. Tanika Sarkar and Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, New Delhi, Social Science Press, 2015; Abingdon, Routledge, 2017.

historical documents I have collected so far in India and Britain, like a letter which reads,

> both sides seem to have set out to cause as many deaths as possible [...] they were not content with drawing blood or causing serious injuries [...] they went on to crush and mutilate even an already lifeless body,[8]

it is almost certain that the text will cause readers deep emotional reaction irrespective of my real intention or the context in which I chose to use the quote as "evidence". What is more, I might be confronted with the question of whether I am morally entitled to open up old wounds in the name of science. Admittedly, this is a common dilemma any historian faces whenever attempting to address a traumatic historical issue which continues to be hotly debated in contemporary society; however, the partition riots in particular provide us with a remarkably acute case with respect to both the magnitude of events and the intensity of emotions.

Historians appear to approach the dilemma posed by what I have called the vicious circle by taking, broadly, three different postures. Some will explain that their research aim is to provide the public with a true, objective picture of what happened in the past. A good many others will maintain that their research furnishes lessons for the future and bears relevance for policy making in the hope of preventing future riots. A few others may commit themselves to a social or political movement to

[8] Tyson to Folk, No. 370, 29 Sep. 1946, Tyson Collection, MSS Eur E341, India Office Records and Oriental Collection, The British Library, London.

demonstrate their intellectual integrity before the skeptical eyes of the victims. The first position is becoming increasingly hard to maintain in the light of recent research trends, in which postmodern theorists have raised radical questions about the epistemological foundation of historical "facts".[9] By contrast, the latter two positions are attempts to confirm the legitimacy of historical research on the ground of social ethics, although it must be pointed out that they are not taken from the point of view of historiography *per se*, so that methodological problems specific to historical study persist.

The basic question thus boils down to whether a historian can justify his research before the skeptic and critical eyes of the public, without taking shelter in positivistic "truth", and sticking to a logic intrinsic to historical research itself. It is almost impossible to solve this problem as long as we try to address it in the abstract, for such a purely theoretical approach will only bring us back to the whole range of difficult philosophical problems concerning historiography that have been debated for the last four decades without arriving at any consensus.[10] It does not seem to

[9] However, it remains a big question whether the problem of "actual fact" or historical "truth", can be completely shelved, especially when we take into account the cynical strategy of "revisionists" who deny the importance, or even the existence, of such traumatic historical events as the Nanking massacre. In this respect, see, for example, Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pallauer, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2004, pt. 2, chap. 3.

[10] Animated debate continued from the 1970s to the 90s over the postmodernist and postcolonial theory of history, which sharply criticized modern historiography, employing the literary-critical and linguistic approach.

be particularly rewarding for a historian to raise such abstract questions as whether there exists such things as historical "truth" and "actual fact", or whether history is merely "fiction" (or "narrative") or not. The answer will vary according to the scope and direction of the question; that is, the gaze with which we look back upon the past. Thus, if I were asked whether it is "true" that the Calcutta disturbances broke out on the morning of 16th August 1946, I would answer "true", while if questioned whether it is "true" that they were caused by the Muslim League, I would reply that such a point remains "controversial", because the

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It was Hayden White that touched off the discussion with his influential book *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe,* Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973. For a survey of the debate from a postmodernist point of view, see Lloyd S. Kramer, "Literature, Criticism, and Historical Imagination: The Literary Challenge of Hayden White and Dominick LaCapra", *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989. A survey from a critical standpoint may be found in Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages", *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography,* Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997. Carlo Ginzburg also actively participated in the controversy to argue against White. See, for example, Carlo Ginzburg, *Rapporti di Forza: Storia, Retorica, Prova* (History, Rhetoric and Proof; Rekishi, Retorikku, Rissho in Japanese), Milano, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Edotore, 2000; Japanese ed., Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 2001.

At the root of these controversies is the profound difference in the views among contemporary philosophers and linguists. Part of this complex problem is deftly sorted out for laymen by Martin Jay in his "Should Intellectual History Take a Linguistic Turn? Reflections on the Habermas-Gadamer Debate", *Modern European Intellectual History: Reappraisals and New Perspective,* eds. Dominick LaCapra and Steven L. Kaplan, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982.

Indian National Congress and the British were also involved.[11] A real problem for the historian appears to be concerned more with interactions between the past and the present and the changing patterns of such interactions than with the dichotomy between "truth" and "falsity" or the binary of "reality" or "fiction".

It is obvious that the wider the scope of the gaze, the more qualifications will be required for furnishing a satisfactory answer to a question put to the historian. In other words, it will be easier for him to address the historiographical problems if he confines himself to a more specific, empirical problem of manageable size, by raising, as it were, a "question of the middle range" rather than a general question at the highest level of abstraction.[12] To illustrate this point with the case from the Calcutta communal riots, one should consider taking into account the changing relationship between the past and the present, focusing on what manner the historian should approach and discuss such a traumatic historical event like the partition riots, rather than asking whether it is possible at all to paint a "true" picture of them. Admittedly, one will never be able to arrive at the "true" theory or philosophy of history by aggregating the results of

[11] For further discussion, see Nakazato, "Politics" and Nakazato, "Role of Colonial Administration".

[12] It will be evident that I draw here on Merton's theory of the middle range. Robert K. Merton, "On Sociological Theories of the Middle Range", *On Theoretical Sociology: Five Essays Old and New,* Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1967. Criticizing the grand theories built up by Max Weber and other great sociologists as speculative, Merton advocated this theory to lay a foundation for sociology based on empirical research.

specific research on a particular problem within the "middle range". Nor will it provide anyone with a path to historical "truth". However, one should be reminded that, as Tessa Morris-Suzuki once remarked, "truthfulness" matters more than "truth" in history-writing.[13] Reflecting upon problems of the "middle range" bearing directly on one's particular topic of research, the historian should try to be "truthful" to history rather than pursue absolute historical "truth" and "reality".

2. Little Memories

It is argued by some philosophers and historians that history is a conversation between the past and the present.[14] Seen from this angle, the vicious circle referred to above may be taken as a case of dysfunction of the basic human ability to converse. In appearance, a kind of conversation takes place in this case, too. In

[13] Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Hihanteki Sozoryoku no tameni: Gurobaruka Jidai no Nihon* (Toward a Critical Imagination: Japan in the Age of Globalisation), Tokyo, Heibonsha, 2002, pp. 82-88; Morris-Suzuki, *Kako-wa Shinanai: Media, Kioku, Rekishi* (The Past within Us: Media, Memory, History), Tokyo, Iwanami-shoten, 2004, pp. 12-18, 282-295. It is now widely known that postmodern theory is made the most of by the "revisionists" in their attempts to deny the existence of such significant historical facts as Auschwitz and Nanking. Morris-Suzuki proposes a new concept of "historical truthfulness" to tackle this dilemma.

[14] Edward Hallett Carr, *What is History?* 2nd ed. (first published in 1961), Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1987, chap. 1. Here Carr draws on Croce who holds that all history possesses the character of "contemporary history", Benedetto Croce, *History and the Story of Liberty* (La storia come pensierco e come azione), trans. Sylvia Sprigge, Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2000 (first published in Italian in 1938), p. 8.

substance, however, what happens here is not a dialogue in the proper sense of the word, but a monologue in which a conversation congeals and does not develop into a higher, pluralistic ("polyphonic" if we borrow Bakhtin's terminology) unity.[15] Broadly, three questions arise with regard to this problem. 1) Under what conditions does the dialogic relationship between the past and the present develop into a vicious circle, or a virtually monologic relationship? 2) Who judges whether it is vicious or not; namely, monologic or dialogic? 3) And how do we free ourselves from the monologic relationship?

As to the first question, as the case of the partition riots clearly shows, current social tensions and conflicts tend to form a backdrop for the congealing of a creative dialogue in historical time and space and passage into the monologic relationship.[16]

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[15] As to the binary concepts of monologue/monologic and dialogue/dialogic, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problemy poétiki Dostoevskogo* (Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics; Dosutoehusuki no Shigaku in Japanese), Moscow, 1963; Japanese ed., Tokyo, Chikuma Shobo, 1995, chap. 1. See also Tzevetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtine: Le Principe Diologique survi des Écrits du Cercle de Bakhtine* (Mikhail Bakhtin: Taiwa no Genri in Japanese), Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1981; Japanese ed., Tokyo, Hoseidaigaku Shuppankyoku, 2001.

[16] However, it must be recalled that social conflicts do not always cause the monologic situation. For example, a particular type of social conflict (what is called the revolutionary situation) occasionally brings about lively dialogic, polyphonic circumstances. Among influential thinkers of today, Walter Benjamin is well known for his Messianic vision of the "rupture", i.e. revolution, in history. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" (Geschichtsphilosophischhe Thesen; Rekshi Tetsugaku Teze in Japanese), in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Volume 4, 1938-1940*, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press, 2003; Japanese ed., Tokyo, Shobunsha, 1969, pp. 389-400. For a creative

The second question is concerned with the perplexing problem of moral and political judgment by consensus in the community, which has been hotly debated among political philosophers and social theorists. The third question is an equally difficult problem of ethics and political philosophy. I suspect, however, the historian might be able to contribute to solving the third one with his knowledge of and skills in historical research.

From my point of view, the historian's task is not to collect "true" or "genuine" objects and display them in a cabinet, like an antique collector. On the contrary, we use our craft to shake and refresh the gaze with which we look back upon the past, in order to re-create our dialogic, "truthful" relationship with it, which is prone to congeal with the passage of time or in a certain tense situation. To paraphrase this point in the context of the widely-accepted view of Benedict Anderson that historical time has been "homogenised" and "emptied" with the rise of nationalism in modern times,[17] we try to recover and reactivate "heterogeneous" time. Historical "truthfulness" thus does not preclude diversity in

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interpretation of Benjamin's philosophy of history, see Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism,* London, Verso, 1981.

[17] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (first published in 1983), New York, Verso, 1991, chap. 2. Anderson borrows this concept from Benjamin's "On the Concept of History", in which "the homogeneous, empty time' is set against "a Messianic cessation of happenings", that is, revolution. As to "heterogeneous" time, see Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World,* New York, Columbia University Press, 2004; Indian ed., Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004, chap. 1. However, I use the term "heterogeneous" here in a slightly different way.

the way we look at past events. Far from it, for it seeks to enrich the potential of our gaze cast over the past.

Indian scholars of the partition riots have mainly attempted to carry out this task by critically examining the collective memory of them, which in the preceding section was likened to a mirror of contemporary South Asia. Let me point to the attempts made by two illustrious Indian scholars to refresh our gaze on the riots through a critique of the collective memory held by the great majority of the people.[18]

Sudhir Kakar, a well-known psychoanalyst, begins his attempt by comparing between what he personally witnessed in a town near Delhi in 1947 and the chilling stories about violence in the Punjab that he heard from his relatives in post-partition days, stories which had gradually crystallized into the "family oral history".[19] A son of an Indian high official, Kakar was able to accompany his father when he inspected the bazaar area of the town immediately after a three-day riot was brought under

[18] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1992; Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, "Introduction [to the special issue on memory and counter-memory]", *Representation*, 26, 1989; Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. Important works on the memories of India's partition include Butalia, *Silence*; Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin, eds., *Borders & Boundaries: Women in India's Partition,* New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1998; Nonica Datta, *Violence, Martyrdom and Partition: A Daughter's Testimony,* New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2009; and Tarun K. Saint, *Witnessing Partition: Memory, History, Fiction,* New Delhi and Abingdon, Routledge, 2010.

[19] Sudhir Kakar, *The Colors of Violence: Cultural Identities, Religion, and Conflict,* Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, chap. 2.

control. To his surprise, he found the local people leading a normal life as if nothing had happened, whereas the family stories centered on cold-blooded atrocities like the throwing of infants onto bonfires and the cutting off of women's breasts and men's penises. He does not claim that his personal memory is absolutely correct. He only utilizes it to draw our attention to the significant fact that normal time and space could exist amid serious disturbances, and in this sense, that the riotous time and space was too complex and heterogeneous to allow easy, sweeping generalizations. He then proceeds to analyze the psychological reasons why a stereotyped, but emotionally charged, narration of sexual atrocities has come to occupy the central place in the collective memory of the partition riots in South Asia.

Gyanendra Pandey, a distinguished historian, lays special emphasis on a local violent incident that took place in certain villages of the Punjab in 1946-47.[20] His main concern is to study the way the local discourse/memory of the riots was folded into the national discourse/memory. Drawing upon Ranajit Guha's work,[21] he sets up a distinction between the three levels of historical discourse/memory: primary (the first official reports, survivor's testimony, local rumors, etc.), secondary (political commentaries, memoirs, etc.), and tertiary (national history). He shows that the primary discourse/memory gets more homogenized as it passes to the secondary then on to the tertiary

[20] Pandey, *Remembering Partition*, chaps. 4 to 8.
[21] Ranajit Guha, "Prose of Counter-Insurgency", *Subaltern Studies II: Writing on South Asian History and Society*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1983.

level. Gradually shorn of its individuality and particularity, it finally comes to form part of the abstract master narrative at the national level, which utilizes the traumatic memory of violence to draw a sharp line between "us" and "them", "friend" and "foe", etc. Also, according to Pandey, it is not rare that when interviewed by a thoughtful scholar, the survivor's memory, a primary memory, turns out to be full of contradictions and inconsistencies. Put simply, it is a combination of memory and forgetfulness, because the survivor quite often finds it psychologically impossible to face squarely the painful experiences of overwhelming violence. It is important to note, however, that this memory is, with all its limitations, "malleable", unlike the master narrative or the authenticated collective memory, which is "fixed" and tailored to the needs of nationalist ideology. Here historical research is a critique of uniform nationalist ideology from the viewpoint of the local, the fragmental, and the heterogeneous.

It is in this way that both Kakar and Pandey turn to small events in the countryside and the little memories of weak individuals in order to begin to address the problems of the partition riots, which are without a doubt counted among the largest historical events in South Asia. "Smallness" here does not necessarily mean limitations in scope and implication;[22] rather, small things are vessels of "malleable" human experiences

[22] Ranajit Guha, "The Small Voice of History", *The Small Voice of History: Collected Essays,* Ranikhet, Permanent Black, 2009.

acquired from face-to-face specific relations in the "lifeworld",[23] and, as such, have the potential to enable us to shake up the official collective memory, to transform the monologic, congealed relations between the past and the present, and thereby to break what I have called the vicious circle. Moreover, it appears to me that, for some scholars like Pandey, writing a history of partition riots means a conscious effort to move backward from the tertiary level that is generally known as "history" to the primary level which is fragmental and heterogeneous but "malleable", and then to look back from this small, inconspicuous site at the whole structure of official history for the purpose of creating the vision of "truthful" history.

Bio-Note: Nariaki Nakazato, presently Emeritus Professor at the University of Tokyo, earned BA and MA degrees in Asian History from the University of Tokyo, before successfully defending his PhD dissertation at Calcutta University. He was appointed professor of South Asian history at the University of Tokyo Institute of Oriental Culture in 1994, officially retired in 2010 and then granted emeritus status. His major fields of research are the social and economic history of modern Bengal, Indian society and economy during the 1940s, and modern Indo-Japanese relations.

[23] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, Boston, Beacon Press, 1987, chap. 6.

He has written extensively in both Japanese and English, the latter titles of which include *The Agrarian System in Eastern Bengal c.1870-1910* (Calcutta, K. P. Bagchi, 1994), *The Unfinished Agenda: Nation-building in South Asia* (New Delhi, Manohar, 2001; jointly edited with Mushirul Hasan), "Harish Chandra Mukherjee: Profile of a 'Patriotic' Journalist in an Age of Social Transition," *South Asia* 31, no. 2, 2008, and *Neonationalist Mythology in Postwar Japan: Pal's Dissenting Judgment at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal* (Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2016). *The Agrarian System in Eastern Bengal c.1870-1910* has been translated into Bengali as *Purba Banglar Bhumibyabastha, 1870-1910* (Dhaka, University Press, 2004).

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Europe Seen through the Eyes of a Hindu[*]

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Abstract. In his way from London to South Africa, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi committed to paper one of his most important and certainly most controversial writings. The book written in 1908 and entitled *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*, is a harsh and explicit, outright criticism of the "modern civilization" considered by the Mahatma to be embodied by Europe. What Gandhi is trying to show us in his book is the picture of Europe seen from India, from a different cultural space. He is calling into question the superiority of the European civilization and is trying to stress the risks which are implied in this Western world.

The main goal of the paper is to present the Gandhian way of thinking about the European civilization and try to give an answer to the question as to whether all these ideas written more than 100 years ago have got any relevance for Westerners, for the European man of the 21st century.

[*] The paper was presented at the 7th EUROACADEMIA International Conference entitled *Europe Inside-Out: Europe and Europeanness Exposed to Plural Observers* held in Porto, Portugal on 28th and 29th of April 2017.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, *Swaraj*, Western civilization, Europe, Indian culture.

Short Introduction

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the Mahatma, the Father of India, Gandhiji, Bapu, etc. – a plethora of names pointing at one and the same person, the unmistakable sign of high respect and appreciation in India. Many tend to see the successful lawyer in his person, while many others the freedom fighter. There are some who prefer to highlight his political career. Still others seem to recognize the holy man in Gandhi. Though not large in number, there are some who think of him as Gandhi, the economist. And there persists the view according to which the Great Soul is, above all, a philosopher.

As a matter of fact, it would be quite difficult to argue against any of the observations listed above. All these statements can be easily confirmed if we glance through the almost 50,000-page-long life-work of Gandhi, collected in 100 volumes altogether. And whatever his oeuvre might fail to disclose, history stands witness to it.

A fundamental piece of Gandhi's life-work is his book entitled *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*. In and of itself, this is an essential work from several aspects. Above all, it is an important creation since this is Gandhi's very first writing that, on the one hand, outlines the Mahatma's ideas about how the

British colonial rule could be overthrown in India and, on the other hand, provides a clear picture of the kind of India the Mahatma would definitely like to avoid following the declaration of independence. It can be considered kind of guide for the political emancipation of the Indian people and at the same time a political program of the India's emancipation. The lengthy and detailed description of the new India oftentimes reveals a shocking criticism of the Western civilization embodied in the eyes of Gandhi by Europe. As Anthony J. Parel remarks on his *Editor's Introduction* to the centenary edition of the book, "*Hind Swaraj* is the seed from which the tree of Gandhian thought has grown to its full stature." (Parel 2009, xiii)

The importance of the book and its contexts

According to the above mentioned facts, there is no doubt that the book was a very important text in those times when it was written, and I hope that at the end of this paper I will be able to show that actually it remains important in our times too.

But even before getting wrapped up in analyzing Gandhi's thoughts, I deem necessary to introduce the work itself alongside the circumstances and the contexts of its creation. In the year 1908, the Mahatma leaves for London with a view to entering into negotiations with the British Government in behalf of the Indians living in the Republic of South Africa. We should know that following his years spent in London, where he was reading law, Gandhi returns to India for a little while, where he quickly realizes that he cannot earn his living as a lawyer for a number of

reasons. Therefore, at the earliest opportunity, he signs on for a lawyer's job in South Africa, where he is responsible for managing the legal affairs of a company. This South African "intermezzo", initially planned as a one-year absence, eventually lasted on and on off for twenty years (1893–1914). In a very short period of time, the 24-year-old young lawyer becomes the advocate and (human rights) defender of Indians living and working in the Republic of South Africa – he travels to London in this capacity.

One of the most important questions we can formulate is why he wrote this book? And the answer gave us the Mahatma in the foreword of the Hind Swaraj: "I have written because I could not restrain myself." (Gandhi 1963b, 6)

Committing the book to paper takes place during his ten days' voyage from London to Cape Town, written in Gujarati language, what he would later also translate into English. As he himself relates, during his London stay, he gets into touch with Indians living there, who, being admittedly anarchists, considered violence as the only path of liberating India and putting an end to the British colonial rule. The book itself can be interpreted as a response to this idea. This is how he writes about it:

> I came in contact with every known Indian anarchist in London. Their bravery impressed me, but I felt that their zeal was misguided. I felt that violence was no remedy for India's ills, and that her civilization required the use of a different and higher weapon for self-protection. The *Satyagraha* of South Africa was still an infant hardly two years old. But it had

> developed sufficiently to permit me to write of it with some degree of confidence. (Gandhi 2010, 33)

But the *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* is much more than a simple response to those people attracted to terrorist attacks and political violence. It is a statement concerning his Swaraj-theory. He wanted to stress that for him the Swaraj is much more than self-government (request for home rule), it means self-rule or in other words the quest for self-improvement. (Parel 2009, xv)

The form and genre of this masterpiece also deserve attention. While glancing through the twenty chapters of the book, one cannot help but recall to mind the Platonic dialogues, which, I must remark, is no accident. Searching through Gandhi's works, we can see that one year before writing his book entitled *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* he was already familiar with the Platonic dialogues. These dialogues appear in many of his writings that antedate his works on India's self-governance. Additionally, in his 1924 article published in *Young India* and reporting on the books and authors he had consulted during his terms of imprisonment, Plato's name comes up again.

In the chapters of *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule*, the interlocutors are the "Reader" and the "Editor". It is important to note that it is not accidental that the dialogue doesn't happen between a "Guru" and a "Disciple", as we could expect from a Hindu. By the role of the "Reader" and the "Editor" he wants to stress that all the ideas and thoughts stated are open for further discussions. Gandhi states that he was chosen this genre because it considers "the best method of treating difficult subjects."

(Gandhi 1963b, 188) While the "Reader" always represents and takes the view of the Indian anarchists met by Gandhi in London, the "Editor" is in fact no one else but the Mahatma himself. Should we group the twenty chapters thematically, it might not be an exaggeration to claim that a significant portion of the chapters deals with the past and present state of affairs in India, numerically followed by the chapters on India's liberation and future. If I had to give a very brief description of the book, I would use the following two statements:

1) In and of itself, the work is a harsh criticism, so to say, an all-out condemnation and rejection of civilization in the modern and Western sense[1].

2) On the other hand, it is perfectly safe to say that the Mahatma was right when recommending his own work as the gospel of love to those interested.

[1] When Gandhi talks about the modern or Western civilization (for Gandhi these terms are synonyms in the most cases), he refers to a "mode of conduct" which has its roots in the Industrial Revolution (Parel 2009, xviii). The Mahatma wrote in 1908: "Let it be remembered that western civilization is only a hundred years old, or to be more precise, fifty." (Gandhi 1962, 374) For him the Industrial Revolution wasn't a simple change in the production processes. He considers that this process generated a new lifestyle (liberalism) which has definitely changed the relationship between the individual and nature, between the man and religion, man and ethics or man and politics. In this new vision the nature is considered an autonomous entity which has its own rules and which has to be conquered by the man in order to be able to satisfy his own needs, desires and political ambitions. The declared goal of the politics could be considered the economic prosperity and the welfare of the society. In this secularized world the religion has lost his importance and became secondary.

For a proper interpretation and understanding of those described and suggested in the book, a brief digression must be made to touch upon some of the wordings used therein as well as Gandhi's two fundamental postulates.

In Gandhi's life, truth (*satya*) and the love of neighbor play a paramount role. Throughout his teachings, he proclaimed that human life represents a value only if that is entirely built upon truth. And whenever Gandhi speaks of truth, he does not refer to its everyday sense, which is veracity or truthfulness. The Gandhian concept of truth includes true thoughts, speaking the truth, and righteous deeds at the same time (Gandhi 1971, 41-42). He declared with strong conviction that man can only live in harmony with God and himself if there are no contradictions whatsoever between his thoughts, words, and actions. At the same time, he would persistently call attention to the fact that the only path leading to truth, and thus to god, is the one of love. And one of the finest examples in support of his serious intentions behind these statements is related to his very years spent in South Africa. In 1896, following a brief Indian detour, he returns to South Africa alongside his family. Since during his Indian stay he had launched a major propaganda in behalf of the Indian population in South Africa, an enraged company was awaiting him at the port, and the fired up crowd erupted into violence, beating up Gandhi within an inch of his life. Even so, Gandhi decided not to report anyone as he was convinced that the incensed mob had been misled, and once their high mood ebbed away and they came to their senses, their sense of justice would

urge them to regret (Gandhi 1970). His position and consistent behavior did not only have a considerable response among the people but also greatly contributed to his increased prestige and acceptance. In fact, these events can be considered the Mahatma's very first moral victory in his fights against the colonial rule.

Just as in the case of truth (*satya*), non-violence (*ahimsa*) also plays a central role in the Mahatma's life. This category is closely linked with one of Gandhi's fundamental postulates, which says that the liberty of the oppressed must in no way be obtained through violence, by weapons, or by way of bloodshed. Achieving freedom for India can take place in one way only, which is absolute non-violence, the path of peaceful solutions (strikes, protests, hunger-strikes, refusal to cooperate with those in power, boycotts, imprisonments, etc.). It also needs to be stressed that Gandhi thought much more highly of moral fiber as opposed to physical strength. He could accept the use of physical force in one case only: if we are faced with the choice between violence and cowardice.

The other pivotal Gandhian postulate goes into the future of India liberated from the colonial yoke. According to the Mahatma, there is an absolute need for the Indian society to undergo a moral-ethical transformation, an overall process of renewal. This second principle in fact assumes that Gandhi – well acquainted with the Western civilization, way of life, expectations, etc. – actually finds wrong and rejects the traditions thereof, and for a free India he envisages a new society built on

religion and morals. It is also important to underline here that if we come upon the terms *Hind Swaraj* or home rule in the Mahatma's writings, these do not refer to self-governance in the European sense, the expulsion of the colonial British Empire, or India's independence, but his references go far beyond them, pointing towards a morally regenerated society made up of spiritually renewed individuals. The constructive agenda set forth by Gandhi was meant to lay the foundations for and build up such a new society (Gandhi 1979).

Concerning the historical and spiritual contexts of the book, it is important to stress that there are several influences to which Gandhi was exposed during his life. First of all we have to mention the years spent in London during his law studies. In these three years the Mahatma get in contact with the Western civilization and way of thought, starts to study the major religions (especially Hinduism, Christianity and Islam) and discovers the writings of Tolstoy[2], Ruskin[3] or Thoreau[4], authors who had a tremendous influence on his way of thinking.

[2] Lev Tolstoy (1828–1910), Russian writer, thinker. Thanks to Tolstoy's "The Kingdom of God is Within You" Gandhi refers to the Christian religion as an ethical system which is built on the "Sermon on the Mount". According to Tolstoy's interpretation, the "Sermon on the Mount" could be considered the "doctrine of the non-violence and the ultimacy of the conscience" (Parel 2009, xxxvi). Even his opposition to the Western civilization and anti-colonial behavior can be traced back to Tolstoy. According to him, the Western world can be described by the exploitation of the working class, the contempt of the ploughman and an increasing consumer behavior, which are considered the signs and traits of modernism. And do not forget that in his letter addressed to Gandhi, Tolstoy emphasizes that India was not colonized by the British, but

But at the same time we have to take into account the years Gandhi spent in South Africa which had also a significant impact on his spiritual development. During this period he realize that there is a tight relationship between the colonialism and the modern

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the Indians themselves when they "recognized, and still recognize, force as the fundamental principle of social order" (Parel 2009, xxxix).

[3] John Ruskin (1819–1900), English art critique, social thinker and philanthropist. For Gandhi Ruskin's most influential work was "Unto This Last". In his autobiography, he confess as follows:

"The teachings of Unto This Last I understood to be:

1. That the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.

2. That a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's inasmuch as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work.

3. That a life of labor, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living. The first of these I knew. The second I had dimly realized. The third had never occurred to me. Unto This Last made it as clear as daylight for me that the second and the third were contained in the first. I arose with the dawn, ready to reduce these principles to practice" (Gandhi 1970, 239).

Ruskin considers that the fundamental doctrine of the new political economy is wrong when it considers that it is more important the luxury of the few than the basic needs of the masses. As Parel quotes Ruskin, "(…) as long as as long as there are cold and nakedness in the land around you, so long there can be no question at all but that splendor of dress is a crime. In due time, when we have nothing better to set people to work at, it may be right to let them make lace and cut jewels; but as long as there are any who have no blankets for their beds, and no rags for their bodies, so long it is blanket-making and tailoring we must set people to work at - not lace" (Parel 2009, xl).

[4] Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862), American essayist, historian and philosopher. In a lecture delivered in 1847, Thoreau said that the best government is which governs least and the ideal government will be which not governs at all. (Thoreau 2008, 5). These ideas were used by Gandhi in his constructive programme when he tried to draw up the basics of his economic philosophy called *sarvodaya*.

civilization, that the colonialism could be considered one of the results of modernism. In 1908 in a speech delivered at Johannesburg the Mahatma emphasize for the first time the differences he perceive between Christianity and Western civilization, which can be considered the central thought of *Hind Swaraj*.

> I do not mix up or confuse western civilization with Christian progress. I decline to believe that it is a symbol of Christian progress that we have covered a large part of the globe with the telegraph system, that we have got telephones and ocean greyhounds, and that we have trains running at a velocity of 50 or even 60 miles per hour. I refuse to believe that all this activity connotes Christian progress, but it does connote western civilization. I think western civilization also represents tremendous activity, eastern civilization represents contemplativeness, but it also sometimes represents lethargy. (Gandhi 1962, 244)

And finally, we must also speak about the Indian influences on Gandhi, of which the one of the most important could be considered the Surat split of the Indian National Congress in 1907. This controversy was caused by the extreme wing of the Congress becoming stronger and loud and demanding for the achievement of the *Swaraj* by non-constitutional and non-peaceful means. This ambition was not acceptable by the Apostle of Nonviolence. Achieving the *Swaraj* by brute force and blood was unimaginable to Gandhi, because for him the real *Swaraj* was much more than simple political power and economic

prosperity, for him it meant a necessary moral progression, an ethical evolution among the Indians.

The Fundamental Ideas of the Book and the Criticism of the Western Civilization

Now let us pass on to the book and the fundamental ideas expounded therein. The first three chapters of *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* have perhaps the least relevance to our topic, as they touch upon the historical past and clarify the place and role of certain actors (the Indian National Congress and its prominent personalities, representatives of the colonial government, etc.). The first discussion relevant to our topic can be found in the fourth chapter, entitled "What is *Swaraj*?" – in fact, this is also the point where the dialogue between the "Reader" and the "Editor" becomes interesting.

In this chapter, Gandhi makes it clear that merely expelling the British from India and doing away with colonial rule will not bring along *Swaraj* for the people of India. If they only expel the British population, the representatives of colonial rule from India, then they have actually done nothing else but give birth to a power without the British, which would further westernize and civilize India. This way, as a direct future consequence, in a few years' time, there will not be any mention of Hindustan, but instead Englistan will be the new name given to the country. And this is not the kind of self-governance Gandhi has meant to attain. Therefore, he considers extremely important that, besides the English, their exported political, economic, and social forms,

institutions, and services be done away with as well, such as the Parliament, large factories, modern medical services of the western type, the British administration of justice and all of its pertaining institutions, etc. (Gandhi 2010).

This latter statement actually launches forth Gandhi's criticism of the West. First of all, he puts the Parliament under a microscope, and considers it an unnecessary institution whose members are usually voted by constituents who in most cases do not make decisions based on their knowledge of a given political agenda but their ideological and party preferences are the major guidelines in casting their votes. At the same time, Gandhi also calls attention to the fact that the members of the Parliament are selfish and they pursue individual interests. In the Parliament, public welfare never emerges a winner but majority party interests always come in first. Gandhi regards the institution itself as "the talking shop of the world" (Gandhi 1963b, 17), "a costly toy of the nation" (Gandhi 1963b: 17).

According to Gandhi, all of these can be attributed to modern civilization, which he considers merely a nominal civilization, as we can see that the peoples and "nations of Europe are becoming degraded and ruined day by day" under its influence (Gandhi 1963b, 18). It is Gandhi's strong belief that what we view today as European/Western civilization has entirely detached itself from morality and religion (we must note that these are tightly connected in the Gandhian sense, functioning as quasi-interchangeable terms), and its sole purpose is to provide full-scale services improving people's physical well-being. And while

enjoying a sense of freedom within the confines of modern civilization, they do not even realize that somewhere along the way they have actually become enslaved to money and whatever luxury items money can buy. According to Gandhi, "[t]his civilization is such that one has only to be patient and it will be self-destroyed. (Gandhi 1963b, 21).

Gandhi has been careful to point out as well that the British colonial rule is not so much the real danger for India but rather the modern civilization it has brought along. To his mind, the biggest threat to India is that its nations will turn away from God, and it will lose its religion(s). While every religion teaches us that all worldly things are transient and they deserve no attention, thus curbing our worldly ambitions, the emergence of the Western civilization's achievements yields quite opposite results. The advent of the railway has greatly contributed to the desecration of holy sites in India and the perpetuation of the British rule. Whereas in olden times the visiting of shrines amounted to a veritable ordeal, this poses no particular challenge anymore, and so, besides the flood of pilgrims, these sacred places have gradually started to lure pickpockets and bandits. By the same token, railways have put an end to natural isolation, a factor making its contribution to the spread of famine. The onetime small self-sustaining communities underlying society have become almost unheard-of in today's India. Now if someone produces excess, he will try to convert it into money at the best price possible, in which the seller is largely helped by the

convenience of this new means of transport to get his commodities to more remote markets.

He takes a similar view of the British administration of justice, which he holds to be teaching immorality and exposing people to temptations difficult to get rid of. The ultimate purpose of a lawyer is their client's patronage, for which they are willing to take the path of immorality if their clients' interest dictates so. Furthermore, Gandhi does not fail to draw attention to the fact that while, on the face of it, lawyers make every effort to help someone out of misery, they are in fact busy getting rich themselves. There is no other reasonable way to account for the lawyers' higher salaries compared to other segments and professions of society. Taking full advantage of their special status created by the Western civilization, they exploit it for their personal enrichment.

Upon perusing the lines criticizing modern jurisdiction, these fragments of the work under our analysis give us the impression that Gandhi was an advocate of direct negotiation and mediation, even if we cannot find this explicitly mentioned. He was fully convinced that any conflict can be truly and definitely resolved only if the people involved are trying to resolve it among themselves. Any decision imposed on the conflicting parties may serve as the starting-point of further conflicts.

In his criticism of the West, the Mahatma does not forget to include doctors and medical science. He believes that modern medicine has paid an enormous contribution to people becoming excessive in many ways. Gandhi sets out from the assumption that the majority of diseases are the outcomes of our negligence and

that we do not pay proper attention to our way of life and dietary habits, disrupting the internal harmony of the body. If, for instance, someone spoils his digestion as a consequence of malnutrition, the doctor will prescribe certain medications to heal the stomach. In this way, however, the person will end up again being careless about what and how much he eats as he is confident that the same medication will help him recover several times if necessary. Whereas if this convenient solution were not within our grasp, we would probably pay a lot more attention to our eating habits.

Reading these lines from Gandhi might even sound ridiculous at first, but if we examine them in the context of Gandhian thinking all of it will become much clearer right away. Indeed, since the Mahatma strongly believed in the utmost importance of curbing the senses, fasting, and allegiance to the purity pledge known as the *brahmacharya*[5] vow, as all these contribute to people getting to know themselves and their limits while also helping them build character. This is how he speaks of this matter in his autobiography: "*Brahmacharya* means control of the senses in thought, word and deed" (Gandhi 1970, 170).

[5] Strictly speaking and taken literally, the term is to be understood as "a lifestyle, or attitude that is conducive to finding god". In Hinduism, however, according to the Vedic traditions, it is a term adopted to denominate a Hindu man's first stage of life. As per the Vedic traditions, a young Hindu man's first stage of life has to be about their preparation for adult life, thus having to abstain from any kind of sexual activity. In present-day India, this term is used in a much broader sense, including everyone who lives a continent way of life, regardless of age or gender.

Machines could not be excluded either from his list of criticized Western achievements and (side-)effects. If Gandhi has ever been criticized for any of his ideas, then it happened most of all owing to his anti-machine views outlined in his book. Gandhi claims that machines are to be held responsible for India having been driven into deep poverty and the very same machines will make Europe, too, a bleak place, a workaday world to live in. Machines, one of the greatest achievements and symbols of modern civilization, do not impress Gandhi at all, which I think has basically three reasons. First, these inventions make respect and recognition of physical work disappear, leading again to the devaluation of man himself. Further, the Second Industrial Revolution taking place at the end of the 18th century completely brought to its knees the Indian manufactories, the craft sector and significantly affected the cultivation of industrial crops as well. Finally, Gandhi could aptly anticipate the enhanced market competition and the polarization of society, both driven by the emergence of machines, a condition that makes for the fast-paced appearance of an economic elite able and ready to rise above the other sections of society, considering their more expanded range of financial possibilities at hand. But this is in full contradiction with the *sarvodaya* propagated by Gandhi, which is universal human well-being. As the Mahatma set out: "It would be folly to assume that an Indian Rockefeller would be better than the American Rockefeller" (Gandhi 1963b, 58).

At the same time, Gandhi is fully aware that the already existing factories cannot be destroyed or pulled down, and not all

the machines have negative effects, and so he has found a reasonable middle ground in urging India to keep their numbers as low as possible. In a discussion with Gandhi, Ramachandran is asking him that is he against all the machinery. In his reply, Bapu highlights that he does not raise his voice against machines, but opposes excessive and unconditional insistence to machines.

> How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning-wheel itself is a machine; a little tooth-pick is a machine. What I object to, is the *craze* for machinery, not machinery as such. The craze is for what they call labor-saving machinery. Men go on "saving labor" till thousands are without work and thrown on the open streets to die of starvation. I want to save time and labor, not for a fraction of mankind, but for all. I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions. The impetus behind it all is not the philanthropy to save labor, but greed. It is against this constitution of things that I am fighting with all my might. (Gandhi 1967, 250–251)

Simultaneously to his fight against the abuse of the machines, he launches the "*Charkha* Movement" (spinning wheel) conveying a double message: let us give up on the textile goods and articles of clothing coming from Great Britain, and let every household in India have a spinning wheel the family will use to produce the textile materials necessary for their own clothing. He himself has set a good example, manufacturing the necessary material for his garment on his own charkha. The movement

turned into such a success that the spinning wheel has become one of the national symbols of India, even making its way to the national flag between 1921 and 1947.

Following a considerably harsh criticism of the Western civilization, Gandhi goes on to speak of the real civilization too. He considers Indian civilization as the only true civilization in the world since this is the sole remaining pre-civilization. Rome and the Greek civilization are long gone, the civilization of the pharaonic Egypt survives in museums and artifacts alone, and China is apparently on its way to break with its thousand-year-old culture. And amidst all this the Indian civilization is thriving, which in Gandhi's interpretation means that it has a raison d'être.

Now let us have a look at what Gandhi actually means by civilization. In his view, civilization is nothing else but "that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty" (Gandhi 1963b, 37; Gandhi 2010, 104). And a man's duty cannot be other than maintaining morality, that is to say, to be in control of his intellect and bridle his passions. This is the surest way to self-exploration. However, the Gandhian perception of civilization reserves no place for well-being and living standards. Gandhi truly believed that happiness is a mental state, which also implies that it is not dependent on the circumstances but is rather the outcome of man's inner harmony. "A man is not necessarily happy because he is rich, or unhappy because he is poor. The rich are often seen to be unhappy, the poor to be happy", Gandhi argues (Gandhi 1963b, 37; Gandhi 2010, 104).

The Mahatma has taken great care to underline that although the majority of Indian people do not lead a life of luxury and do not live hedonistic life, this does not presuppose an unhappy existence. Indeed, the fact that till British colonization came along India could settle for a lower level of advanced civilization in the Western sense, with no large cities, market competition, machines, and factories, does not mean that the people of India had not been happy. India had agronomists and craftsmen, artisans, courts and doctors, who were all well aware that these professions are not superior to the rest and their duty is to be at the people's service.

Although no civilization in our world has ever reached perfection, there is a fundamental difference between the Western and the Indian civilization: while the Indian civilization makes every effort to lift up the moral being, the Western one appears to consider the promotion of immorality as one of its top priorities, Gandhi contends (Gandhi 2009).

Conclusions

I believe it has become clear from the above lines that Gandhi's criticism of the West is in tight connection with the concept and idea of morality. For him, morality is the only consideration – as he admits it in his writings: he is a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian, and a Jew at the same time because there is only one religion in his eyes, the religion of morality (Gandhi 1983a, 41; Gandhi 1983b, 180). In Gandhi's perception, morality overwrites everything else.

With reference to morals and immorality as well as God and Mammon, he speaks his mind on several occasions about the relationship between Jesus' teaching and the Western civilization, and observes that the Western man has left the straight and narrow path of the Christian teachings, and placed his whole life under money, wealth, and power, acting totally oblivious of Christ's principles and living a life unworthy of a Christian (Gandhi 1963a, 160; Gandhi 1965, 235; Gandhi 1969, 248).

Despite that his criticism of the West put forward in his book entitled *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* might come across as naïve or, in many cases, utopian, I believe that Gandhi was one of the prominent thinkers of his time. It is essential to bear in mind that when reading through these lines in the book we should place his ideas into the socio-political and historical context where they belong, interpret them accordingly, and do not tear them away from the cultural setting Gandhi himself was part of. If this is how we read and interpret the Mahatma's lines committed to paper, they will convey an entirely different message rather than when looking at them through the glasses of the Western historiography and civilization. In this case we will realize that simplifying the book's message to the conclusion that Gandhi was a major opponent of Western civilization with its all advantages and disadvantages, it is simply false. It is much more appropriate to say that the Mahatma opposed to those "achievements", tendencies and trends of the Western civilization which are incompatible and irreconcilable with the values of traditional Indian civilization.

"We must have industry, but of the right kind", declares Gandhi in one of his writings. (Gandhi 1962, 374)

Regarding his criticism it is important to emphasize that its background is free of religious doctrines or political ideologies, has nothing to do with early anti-colonial or nationalist movements. His position concerning the Western civilization stands above all these, and can be perceived as the phrasing of the highest moral value.

It is, however, common ground that in some cases the ideas outlined by Gandhi are very much forward-looking. As already mentioned, instead of the European jurisdiction, he looked at mediation as an efficient tool of conflict management, which would later on enter a new golden age in Europe too. Also, in the Gandhian thinking, we can find concrete – even if not literal – references to sustainable development and ecological footprint. When Gandhi is speaking of self-sustainable society and universal well-being (*sarvodaya*), he somewhat foreshadows the issues of sustainable development and sustainable land (swadeshi as home economy), though, of course, using the knowledge and terminology of the early 1900s. If we investigate the concept and relationship of self-governance (*swaraj)* and universal well-being (*sarvodaya*) or study Gandhi's theory on the role of the state and the relations between state and citizen, then we will come across the today so trendy "good governance", i.e. his ideas on the state as provider, a very hot research topic at the turn of the 21st century.

Finally, let me conclude my paper with a plastic image: it is my firm belief that even though many of us may find the ideas

unveiled by Gandhi a distorting mirror, it is still worthwhile to look into this slightly distorting mirror, and draw whatever conclusions are appropriate, as I am rather sure that some of his critical views are well worth considering in the 21st century too, and taken to heart for the sake of our own future.

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Human Affliction *(kleśa)* as the Karmic Nourishment of the Universe, in Yogācāra Buddhism

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Abstract: At least in its mystical traditions, Indian philosophy tends to "look down" at human condition, considering it either illusory *(māyā)* either "accidental" *(āgantuka)* and seeing its suppression as the soteriological goal. The present paper tries to "redeem" human experience showing how, in Yogācāra Buddhism, it represents the condition for the perpetuity of the cosmic manifestation. Human drama, through the karmic impressions it lives within the cosmic consciousness *(ālayavijñāna)*, represents the condition for the perpetuity of the Universe. The existence of the cosmic manifestation is thus somehow subordinated to human affliction. Yogācāra Buddhism distinguishes two major types of "obstructions" *(āvaraṇa)* specific to human condition: the obstructions of the afflictions *kleśāvaraṇa)* and the obstructions of the knowable (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). Both of them are necessarily involved in the production of new karmic impressions, hence the faults of human beings representing conditions for the continuity of the universal manifestation.

The second part of the paper discusses the two major processes undergone by the cosmic consciousness, the outflow *(niṣyanda)* and

karmic maturation *(vipāka)*, showing that the outflow can't ensure more than a limited continuity of a particular manifestation of the store-house consciousness. The perpetuity of cosmic consciousness necessarily requires the karmic maturation processes which always involve human affliction.

Therefore, human drama is not something "accidental" in the Universe, is not something which only happens to be, but is the reason to be of the Universe. Human beings and the Universe are in an intrinsic relation of mutual conditioning, the Universe not being the "place" where human experiences happen but rather the cosmic outreach of human drama.

Keywords: Buddhism, Yogācāra, Vijñānavāda, *ālayavijñāna*, obstructions *(āvaraṇa)*, karmic maturation *(vipāka)*, outflow *(niṣyanda)*.

I. The dependence of the Universal Consciousness *(ālayavijñāna)* on Human Obstructions *(āvaraṇa)*

I.1. The Dependence of the Content of Ālaya-Vijñāna on the Karmic Seeds *(karmabīja, karmavāsanā)*

The most specific activity of the store-house consciousness is the maturation *(vipāka)* of the karmic impressions *(karmavāsanā)* produced as a result of the afflicted processes that take place on the level of the individual beings *(pudgala, ātman)*, on the level of the operational consciousnesses *(pravṛttivijñāna)*. The content of the store-house consciousness consists exactly in these

impressions left by the afflicted individual experience, thus being entirely determined by human experiences.[1]

> [the store-house consciousness] owns its being to karmic maturation *(vipāka)*, since it is always imprinted *(bhāvita)* with the seeds of all experiences.[2]

Therefore, the continuity of the content of the store-house consciousness is possible only through the continuous deposition, within it, of new karmic impressions that prevent the exhaustion of its series. Any of the already existing impressions, when the conditions become favorable, gets matured and is actualized as a particular experience, thus being consumed. Nevertheless, all individual conditions and experiences engendered by Karma involve appropriation *(upādāna)*, volition *(cetanā)* and hence, at their turn, through their afflicted experiences, they produce new karmic impressions, thus ensuring the continuity of the content of Ālaya-vijñāna.[3] The perpetuity of the store-house consciousness is possible only as a result of the afflicted mechanisms pertaining to the individual condition.

> Karmic impresssions *(karmaṇavāsanā),* along *(saha)* with the impressions of dual perceptions *(grāhadvaya)*, engender *(jan)*

[1] The dependence of the store-house consciousness on human conditions, in Wu 2014, p. 422. Ālaya-vijñāna as the "stored one", as the effect of the other seven consciousnesses, in Shun'ei 2009, pp. 36-37.
[2] Vasubandhu, *Mahāyānasaṃgrahabhāṣya*, ad. *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, ad.II.II.5, Lamotte 1934-35, p. 237. Translation after Lamotte's French translation.
[3] The process of "perfuming" *(vāsanā)* the store-house consciousness, in Verdu, 1981, pp. 10-11; Shun'ei 2009, pp. 32-33.

other *(anya)* maturations *(vipāka)* [of the seeds] when the previous *(pūrva)* maturations *(vipāka)* are exhausted *(kṣīṇa)*.[4]

The dependence of the content of the store-house consciousness on the afflicted individual condition also results from its frequently ascribed statute, of a "collection" *(saṃcaya)* of seeds *(bīja)*.[5] As a mere collection of seeds, the store-house consciousness consists of the impressions left by the so-called "afflicted factors" *(sāṃkleśikadharma)*.

Generally, Yogācāra philosophy identified two types of obstructions *(āvaraṇa)* characterizing human condition: the so called "obstructions of the afflictions" *(kleśāvaraṇa)* and the "obstructions of the knowable" (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). Both of them play a decisive role in the production of karmic impressions.

I.2. Karmic Impressions *(karmavāsanā)* and the Obstructions of the Afflictions *(kleśāvaraṇa)*

The seeds involved in the process of "maturation" *(vipāka)* are the karmic impressions. Most commonly, they are called "*karmavāsanā"* or simply "*karma"*; however, they can be named

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[4] "*karmaṇo vāsanā grāhadvayavāsanayā saha /*
kṣīṇe pūrvavipāke'nyad vipākaṃ janayanti tat //", Vasubandhu, Triṃśikākārikā, 19, Anacker 1998, pp. 188, 423.

[5] Consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna, citta*) as a "collection" of seeds, in classical Yogācāra, in Verdu 1981, pp. 20-21; Schmithausen 2014, pp. 337-339; Jiang 2006, p. 64. The centrality of the "seeds" in the accounts of Ālaya-vijñāna, in Jiang 2005, pp. 256-257, 261-263. The interpretation of "consciousness" *(citta)* as related to the act of "accumulating" *(ci)* Karma, in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, in Suzuki 1998, p. 249. Suzuki's view of "*citta"* as "colection", critically discussed in Giripescu-Sutton 1991, pp. 174-175.

in various other ways throughout Vijñānavāda literature (*"vipākavāsanā"*, *"vipākabīja"* etc.).[6] "Karma", usually translated as "deed", refers more exactly to an act embedding volition, active and passionate involvement in experience.[7] All the attitudes of this kind, which take place at the level of the individual being, imprint within the store-house consciousness seeds that, when the conditions become favorable, at the so called "occasion of maturation" *(vipākāvasthā)*, will be matured *(vi-pac)* and will engender the so-called "effects of maturation" *(vipākaphala)*.

> Karma is the volition *(cetanā)*, virtuous *(puṇya)*, non-virtuous *(apuṇya)* or indifferent *(aneñja)*. The capacity *(sāmarthya)* placed by this Karma within the store-house consciousness, which will engender a future individual condition *(anāgatātmabhāva)*, that is the karmic impression *(karmavāsanā)*.[8]

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[6] A discussion on the terms *"karma"*, *"vāsanā"*, *"saṃskāra"*, *"bīja"*, in Kritzer 1999, pp. 97, 99-102; Jiang 2006, p. 61. Accounts of the concept of *"Vāsanā"*, both in Buddhism and in non-Buddhist schools of thought, in Tripathi 1972, pp. 22-23; Tola&Dragonetti 2005, pp. 456-457; Wu 2014, p. 423. The concept of *"bīja"*, in Yogācāra Buddhism, discussed in Lusthaus 2002, pp. 193-194; in the *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, discussed in Jiang 2005, pp. 257-259; Jiang 2006, p. 60. The Sautrāntika origins of *"bīja"*, along with references to *Abhidharmakośa*, in Jiang 2006, pp. 39-40. The *"bījas"* and karmic maturation *(vipāka)*, in Sautrāntika, in Matilal 1990, pp. 338-340.

[7] The connection between Karma and intentional action, in Lusthaus 2002, pp. 171-172; acc. to *Abhidharmakośa*, in Gold 2015, pp. 189-192, 196; Jiang 2006, p. 28. The characteristics of karmic causation *(vipākahetu)* and for a discussion about the experiences which engender karmic traces, in Chaudhury 1983, pp. 111, 113.

[8] "puṇyāpuṇyāneñjacetanā karma / tena karmaṇā yadanāgatātmabhāvābhinirvṛttaye ālayavijñāne sāmarthyamāhitaṃ sā karmavāsanā", Sthiramati, Triṃśikābhāṣya, ad. 19, Chatterjee 1980, p. 107.

The only experiences that engender new karmic imprints are those activities of the operational consciousnesses which are intrinsically tainted by appropriation *(upādāna)*, by the tendency towards proliferation *(sāsrava)* and, consequently, by affliction *(kleśa)*. Some texts even utterly state that the experiences that imprint new karmic traces within the store-house consciousness are the specific activities of the operational consciousnesses *(pravṛttivijñāna)*, consisting of actions *(karma)*, based on the clinging to erroneous discriminations *(vikalpa)*, the most important of them being the one between self and other *(sva-para)*, between subject and object *(grāhaka-grāhya)*.[9]

> Ālayavijñāna [which is] the fundamental element of a living being *(maulaṃ sattva-dravya)*, consisting in [the Result-of]-Maturation *(vipākātmaka)*, produced by the Impression *(vāsanā)* of previous good and bad *(kuśalākuśala)* deeds *(karma)* and by Clinging *(abhiniveśa)* to the concepts *(vikalpa)* of object *(grāhya)* and subject *(grāhaka)*.[10]
>
> In case of the apparition *(utpādana)* of the individual condition *(ātmabhāva)* projected *(ākṣipta)* by the totality of the Karmic imprints *(karmavāsanā)* of the operational [consciousnesses],

[9] See Kochumuttom 1999, pp. 150-151. For a discussion on the ways karmic traces are engendered based on the discriminations of consciousness, see Waldron 2003, pp. 31-33. Also, see Waldron 2003, p. 122, for an account of how the impressions of conceptual proliferation are responsible of the production of karmic traces.

[10] pūrvakuśalākuśalakarmavāsanāgrāhyagrāhakavikalpābhiniveśanirvartitam – reconstruction by Schmithausen. Asvabhāva, Upanibandhana, Schmithausen, 1987, p. 328, note 367. Schleiermacher's translation, with some Sanskrit equivalents added.

> the impressions of dual perceptions *(grāhadvayavāsanā)* function as an auxiliary cause *(sahakāritva)*, just as water [functions] in case of the apparition of the sprout. Therefore, it is said that karmic impressions *(karmavāsanā)* produce the maturation *(vipāka)* not by themselves, but along with the impressions of dual perceptions *(grāhadvayavāsanā)*.[11]
>
> Initially, in dependence upon two types of appropriation – the appropriation of the physical sense powers associated with a support and the appropriation of predispositions which proliferate conventional designations with respect to signs, names, and concepts – the mind which has all seeds ripens; it develops, increases, and expands in its operations.[12]

Vijñānavāda literature doesn't offer a very thorough account of the way karmic traces are produced. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that they are brought forth as a result of the cooperation between the passionate afflicted *(kliṣṭa)* experience of the mind *(manas)* and those experiences focused upon a defined object, projected by the operational consciousnesses. Karmic impressions are produced when there is a passionate, volitional attitude towards a defined object. Karma is engendered by the individual operational consciousnesses but not by any activity

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[11] "grāhadvayavāsanāyāstu sarvakarmavāsanānām yathāsvaṃ ākṣiptātmabhāvotpādane pravṛttānām sahakāritvaṃ pratipadyate / tadyathā apādayo 'ṅkurasyotpattāviti / evaṃ ca na kevalāḥ karmavāsanā grāhadvayavāsanānugṛhītā vipāka janayantītyuktaṃ bhavati /", Sthiramati, Triṃśikābhāṣya, ad. 19, Chatterjee 1980, p. 107.

[12] *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*, V.2, Powers 1995, pp. 70-71. Lamotte 1935, p. 184 has "En s'appuyant sur cette double appropriation, la pensée mûrit, grandit, prend de l'ampleur et du dévelopements."

performed by them; only those experiences which involve clinging *(upādāna)*, volition *(cetanā)* have karmic potencies.

Generally, Vijñānavāda texts link the production of the karmic traces to those experiences which involve the so-called "tendency towards proliferation" *(sāsrava)*. "*Sāsrava"* refers to the tendency towards maintaining individual life, towards perpetuating individual condition *(ātmabhāva)* and to all attitudes subsequently deriving from this. It is closely related to the preservation instinct or to the clinging to life *(abhiniveśa)* from Yoga and Vedānta. The association between the tendency towards proliferation and the production of karmic impressions is sometimes utterly stated by saying that the six operational consciousnesses, whether beneficent or non-beneficent, will engender karmic traces only when they are characterized by the tendency towards proliferation *(sāsravakuśalākuśalavijñānaṣaṭkad)*.[13]

Other times, the association is rather implied, the texts stating that the six operational consciousnesses engender karmic traces only when they are non-beneficent *(akuśala)* or when, being beneficent *(kuśala)*, they are nevertheless characterized by clinging, by the tendency towards proliferation *(sāsrava)*. But, even in case of such statements, the tendency towards proliferation *(sāsrava)* is given the main role since, according to the psychology of Vijñānavāda, all maleficent *(akuśala)* experiences inherently involve this tendency which accounts for its "maleficence".

[13] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1928, p. 91.

The connection between the tendency towards proliferation and the production of karmic traces also results from the statement that the experiences which don't engender such traces are either those explicitly devoid of the tendency towards proliferation *(anāsrava)* either those which are morally non-determined *(avyākṛta)*; in their case, the absence of this tendency is also involved.

The mere ideations engendered by the operational consciousnesses, all by themselves, don't bear any karmic load; they receive a karmic value only when they become associated with the afflicted experiences of the mind *(manas)*.

I.3. Karmic Impressions *(karmavāsanā)* and the Obstructions of the Knowable *(jñeyāvaraṇa)*

Nevertheless, the mind *(manas)* alone, unassisted by the operational consciousnesses and deprived of the constructed *(parikalpita)* object projected by them, which could represent its focus, its appropriated *(upātta)* object, fails to produce karmic traces, leaving only impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)*.

> The mind *(manas)*, being afflicted *(kliṣṭa)* and non-determined *(avyākṛta)*, [produces] only impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)*.[14]

It is only when, under the influence exerted by the mind *(manas)*, the experiences constructed *(parikalpita)* by the operational consciousnesses acquire a passionate character through

[14] "avyākṛtaṃ kliṣṭaṃ ca mano niṣyandavāsanāmeva", Sthiramati, Triṃśikābhāṣya, ad. 1d, Chatterjee 1980, p. 30.

the tendency towards proliferation *(sāsrava)* which is associated to them – namely in case of all the non-beneficent *(akuśala)* experiences which, intrinsically, are characterized by clinging, by the tendency to proliferation, or in case of the beneficent *(kuśala)* but characterized by proliferation *(sāsrava)* experiences – karmic traces are also produced. Therefore, any act of desire, any intention focused upon a determined object, any conceptually determined experience which is not neutrally experienced but along with clinging, with desire, engenders karmic impressions.[15] The sole experience of non-determined clinging, specific to the mind *(manas)* unassisted by the operational consciousnesses or the sole experience of the operational consciousnesses devoid of the passionate and afflicted experience of the mind, do not produce any karmic impression.

The dependence of the karmic impressions on the constructed own-being *(parikalpitasvabhāva)* is frequently presented by stating that the production of the seeds depends on the clinging *(abhiniveśa)* to the constructed own-being *(parikalpita svabhāva)*. Frequently, seeds are referred to through terms such as "*nimittanāmavikalpavyavahāraprapañcavāsanā*" ("the imprints of the conventional practice of discriminating names and characteristics"), "*parikalpitavāsanā"* ("the imprints of the constructed [nature]"), "*prapañcavāsanā"* ("the imprints of the conceptual proliferation"), all these terms suggesting the

[15] The role of the linguistic dual discriminations in the creation of Vāsanā-s, in Wu 2014, pp. 424-425. Saṃsāra as being moved forward by desire along with dual perceptions *(grāha)*, in Jiang 2006, p. 61.

dependence of the seeds on the clinging to the constructed own-being which, through its own nature, involves error and the affliction of the ego.

> Those impressions *(vāsanā, bīja)* originated in a consciousness which clings to the constructed own-being *(parikalpitasvabhāva)* represent the dependent own-being *(paratantra)*.[16]

> First, there are the following three components to its objective support: [...] the residual impression *(vāsanā)* [left] by settling on the thoroughly imagined nature *(parikalpitasvabhāva)* of persons and dharmas.[17]

In terms of Vijñānavāda ontology, the perpetuation, the "increase" *(samutthāna)* of the dependent own-being *(paratantra svabhāva)* is determined by the constructed own-being *(parikalpita svabhāva)*, through the imprints *(vāsanā)* it leaves. Otherwise stated, the conditional flux *(pratītyasamutpāda)* is "fuelled", "nourished" by the afflicted experience of the individual being living in bondage. [18]

> The dependent own-being *(paratantra)* is produced *(upalabh)* based on *(samāśritya)* the constructed own-being *(parikalpita)*.[19]

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[16] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1929, p. 544. Translation after Poussin's French translation.

[17] Tsong-Khapa, *Yid dang kun gzhi dka'ba'i gnas rgya cher'grel pa legs par bshad pa'rgya mtsho*, Sparham 1995, p. 51.

[18] The functions of the afflicted experiences in the perpetuation of the store-house consciousness are studied in Waldron 2003, pp. 113-116.

[19] "parikalpitaṃ samāśritya paratantropalabhyate /", Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra, chap. II, verse 193, Nanjio 1956, p. 131.

I.4. The Mutual Conditioning Relation between the Store-house Consciousness *(ālayavijñāna)* and the Afflicted *(kliṣṭa)* Individual Being *(ātmabhāva)*

Any of the individual conditions, although occurring at the level of the actual state of the store-house consciousness, thus having the store-house consciousness as its condition or support *(āśraya)*, also, at its turn, represents the condition/support for the future states of the store-house consciousness. Therefore, there is a double conditioning relation between the store-house consciousness and the afflicted individual condition; on one hand, the actual condition of the store-house consciousness represents a condition for the occurrence of the individual being, but, on the other hand, the individual being, determining the production of karmic impressions and, consequently, of the future states of the store-house consciousness, represents the condition of the perpetuation of the Ālaya-vijñāna.[20]

> Regarding the eighth consciousness, it has as its simultaneous support the seventh consciousness; it cannot exist without having this as its support. *Yogaśāstra*[21] states: "Ālaya always functions *(saṃpravartate)* along with the mind *(manas)*"; in

[20] The way operational consciousnesses are born of seeds but, at their turn, are engendering new seeds, in Jiang 2005, pp. 266-267. Ālaya-vijñāna as both cause and effect, in Jiang 2006, pp. 64, 69. The mutual conditioning between Ālaya-vijñāna and the afflicted experiences *(sāṃkleśikadharma)*, in Yamabe 2017, pp. 20-22.

[21] *Yogācārabhūmi*, 63, 11.

other places, [it states]: "The store-house consciousness *(ālayavijñāna)* is always established in affliction."[22]

The store-consciousness and the afflicted factors (*sāṃkleśika*) are simultaneously *(samakāle)* mutual causes (*anyonyahetuka*). [...] In the same way, here too it is a matter of mutual causes: the store-consciousness is the cause (*hetu*) of the afflicted factors; in the same way, the afflicted factors are the cause of the store-consciousness. [23]

One of the consequences incurred by this view is that it makes impossible to dissociate the store-house consciousness from the afflicted *(kliṣṭa)* individual condition *(ātmabhāva)*, to find a condition of the store-house consciousness which would be free from affliction, from bondage.[24] Apparently, the store-house consciousness seems to be ontologically prior to the human afflicted condition and, therefore, it seems to be possible to have a "pure" store-house consciousness, free from human drama.

Nevertheless, according to Vijñānavāda, the store-house consciousness (the Universe) and the afflicted human condition are rather in a relation of mutual conditioning than in one of ontological hierarchy. In this situation, the existence of a "pure"

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[22] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin, 1928, p. 240. Translation after Poussin's French translation.

[23] Asaṅga, *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, I.17, Lamotte 1973, pp. 34-35.

[24] The Ālaya-vijñāna as the "perfumable" which is "perfumed" by the mind *(manas)*, the mental consciousness *(manovijñāna)* and five sense-consciousnesses, in Brown 1991, pp. 207-208. The dependence of the causal flow *(pratītyasamutpāda)* on the karmic impressions *(vāsanā)*, in Tola&Dragonetti 2005, pp. 456-457.

store-house consciousness, of a pure Universe, free from human affliction, becomes impossible, the Universe being intrinsically related to human drama.

I.5. The Impossibility to Dissociate the Ultimate Reality *(pariniṣpannasvabhāva)* from Human Affliction *(kleśa)*

Such an approach sanctions the "impurity" of the ultimate reality, already exposed by Vijñānavāda philosophers which, in some developments of the school, claimed that the conditional flow (or, in terms of Vijñānavāda ontology, the dependent own-being, the store-house consciousness) represents a natural adjunct of the ultimate reality. Moreover, the necessary connection between the store-house consciousness and the afflicted human condition binds the absolute reality to human affliction itself.

Hence, human affliction is somehow considered as "normal", as a natural aspect of reality. In spite of its drama and tragedy, human condition does not seem to be a merely accidental *(āgantuka)* occurrence but rather the manifestation of a natural function, of a potency of the ultimate reality. Even if the individual human condition involves ignorance *(ajñāna)* and a certain cleavage from the reality, falling into this unfortunate condition does not seem to be a mere accident but rather the manifestation of an intrinsic tendency of the reality itself. Reality itself seems to be characterized by such a tendency of self-deceit, of self-obstruction. Human condition can no longer be considered as something alien to reality but which, out of hard to fathom reasons, nevertheless occurs, becoming rather a "natural" aspect of reality.

The natural relation between the absolute reality and human drama induces an element of impurity to the absolute reality, "tainting" it somehow. Even if any particular human drama can be terminated, the potency towards the occurrence of such dramas is always present within the absolute reality.

II. The Perpetuation of the Store-house Consciousness through the Processes of Karmic Maturation *(vipāka)* and Outflow *(niṣyanda)*

II.1. Karmic Maturation *(vipāka)*

In its classical forms, Vijñānavāda explains the dynamics of the store-house consciousness as a combination of two major processes: the "[Karmic] maturation" *(vipāka)* and the "flux", the "outflow" *(niṣyanda)*.[25]

What is important in respect of these two processes is that only karmic maturation creates novel experiences; the outflow only maintains, to a certain extent and for a certain duration, the experiences already produced by karmic maturation.

Karmic maturation *(vipāka)* represents the most specific process of the store-house consciousness; this process takes place solely within it, the other seven consciousnesses being only

[25] The approach seems to be the simplified form of a Sautrāntika scheme, to be found in *Abhidharmakośa* (II. 55-60), which identified not only two processes, but five; along with "Karmic maturation" *(vipāka)* and "outflow" *(niṣyanda)*, the text also mentions *Visaṃyoga* ("release", "liberation"), Puruṣakāra ("the making of the human") and Adhipati ("domination", "regency"). See Chaudhury 1983, pp. 112-113.

effects of maturation (*vipākaja* – "born of maturation"), without performing the maturation itself.[26] Karmic maturation means transforming the seeds *(bīja)* imprinted within the series of the store-house consciousness as a result of the experiences of the individual consciousnesses into a new individual destiny, into a new "appropriation" *(upādāna)*, when the actual life comes to an end.[27] More broadly speaking, maturation is the process of karmic retribution, through which the acts, the volitions of an actual life, determine, through the karmic seeds they leave, a new reincarnation.

> The impressions of maturation *(vipākavāsanā)* are those which, due to the obtaining of [their] activity *(vṛtti)*, the projection *(ākṣepa)* [performed] by the old Karma of store-house consciousness is fully accomplished.[28]

The karmic seeds are accumulated within the store-house consciousness, representing its "stuff", its "content". The continuity of the series of the store-house consciousness is ensured through the continuous accumulation, within it, of new karmic seeds. Within the series of the store-house consciousness, karmic impressions

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[26] Karma and karmic maturation, in Verdu 1981, pp. 12-13. Ālayavijñāna as Vipākavijñāna, acc. to *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, in Jiang 2006, p. 59. See also Wu 2014, p. 422.

[27] Personal condition *(ātmabhāva)* as the reification of karmic energy, in Berger 2015, 97-99. The process of karmic maturation, discussed in Verdu 1981, pp. 9-13, 15, 22-23; as the "projector" *(ākṣepaka)* of new individual conditions, in Brown 1991, p. 210.

[28] "vipākavāsanāvṛttilābhādālayavijñānasya pūrvakarmākṣepaparisamāptau yā", Sthiramati, Triṃśikābhāṣya, ad. 1d, Chatterjee 1980, p. 30.

exist in a latent condition, of mere potencies *(śaktirūpa)*; when the conditions become favorable, they are actualized, being turned into actual factors *(dharma)*. Karmic impressions project a new appropriation *(upādāna)*, a new "basis of an individual being" *(ātmabhāvāśraya)*, a new "destiny" *(gati)* or "birth" *(yoni, jāti)*. Once actualized, they are consumed; nevertheless, the individual condition newly "projected" *(ā-kṣip)* by them will engender new karmic impressions, hence continuously "nourishing" the series of the store-house consciousness.

> The eighth consciousness *(vijñāna)* is born having karmic *(vipākavāsanā)* as its dominating condition *(adhipatipratyaya)*. It is called «maturation» *(vipāka)* since it is the one which «projects» *(ākṣepaka)*.[29]

II.2. The Distinction between the Nature of the Cause and the Nature of the Effect, in case of Karmic Maturation

What is specific to the results of karmic maturation *(karmavipākaphala)* is that they are of a different nature than their causes *(hetu)*.[30] Karmic maturation is produced by the seeds imprinted within the store-house consciousness by the afflicted *(kliṣṭa)* experiences involving volition *(cetanā)* of the six operational consciousnesses *(pravṛttivijñāna)*. Since the experiences that leave karmic impressions are characterized by

[29] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1928, pp. 91-92. Translation after Poussin's French translation.

[30] For a study on the heterogeneity between cause and effect, in case of karmic processes, see Waldron 2003, pp. 64-65.

affliction, by clinging, they are always morally determined *(vyākṛta)*. On the other hand, the effects of maturation consist of the projected *(ākṣipta)* individual conditions *(ātmabhāva)*, of the neutral and yet indeterminate *(avyākṛta)* acts of appropriation *(upādāna)*, and not of subjective and morally determined experiences, as their causes. In case of karmic processes, the cause is the afflicted subjective experience, while the effect is the morally indeterminate birth, in future, of a new individual being, of a new subject. This newly born individual being will engender new afflicted experiences and so the cycle keeps on repeating. "The effect of maturation is not of the same nature as its cause."[31]

In a text belonging to his Abhidharma period, Vasubandhu gives an example of this situation, showing that an individual and morally determined *(vyākṛta)* act, such as the will to kill, will engender the effect of a future birth in a hell; this birth, this new appropriation of an individual condition is, in itself, a morally indeterminate *(avyākṛta)* experience.[32]

What is really important for the dynamics of the store-house consciousness is that the cycle: afflicted experience → a new birth → afflicted experience keeps on going on indefinitely, hence the store-house consciousness being unceasingly perpetuated.[33]

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[31] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1929, p. 477. Translation after Poussin's French translation.

[32] *Abhidharmakośa*, I.25; Vasubandhu's example is discussed in Gold 2015, 52-53. The way mental events, such as volition, are materialized through karmic processes, acc. to *Abhidharmakośa*, in Bronkhorst 2000, pp. 67, 70-71.

[33] The continuity of the store-house consciousness, through the series *dharmas* → *bījas* → *dharmas*, in Shun'ei 2009, pp. 45-47; Lusthaus 2002, p. 193;

Another important particularity of karmic maturation is that, unlike the outflow process *(niṣyanda)*, between the cause *(hetu)* and the effect *(phala)* there can be a temporary gap; throughout this gap, the continuity between cause and effect is ensured by the presence, within the store-house consciousness, of the karmic seeds *(karmabīja)*, of the latent potencies *(śakti)* imprinted in the store-house consciousness by the cause.[34] Generally, the effects of karmic maturation are actualized in a future life, in a life succeeding the one of the cause.

II.3. The Outflow *(niṣyanda)*

According to classical Vijñānavāda, along with karmic maturation *(karmavipāka)*, the other major kind of process taking place in the Universe is the outflow *(niṣyanda)*.[35] The outflow is characteristic to the individual consciousnesses, namely mind *(manas)* and the six operational consciousnesses *(pravṛttivijñāna)*,

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Matilal 1990, pp. 340-342; Jiang 2006, pp. 59, 69-72. The "restoration" of the karmic impressions representing the stuff of the store-house consciousness by cyclical causation, in Tola&Dragonetti 2005, pp. 460-462. On the various ways the causal relation between factors *(dharma)* and seeds *(bīja)* was understood along the various developments of Yogācāra, especially in China, see Yamabe 2017, pp. 21-23.

[34] A discussion on the temporal gap between cause and effect, in case of karmic processes, in Waldron 2003, p. 65. The ways the two major schools of Abhidharma dealt with the problem of continuity, through the concepts of *"prāpti"* (in Vaibhāṣika) and *"bīja"* (in Sautrāntika), and how the problems involved in their approaches determined the novel approach of Yogācāra, in Matilal 1990, pp. 336-337; Griffiths 1999, p. 93. The theories of temporal continuity of the Dharmas, acc. to Sautrāntika, Sarvāstivāda and Yogācāra, in Jiang 2006, pp. 33, 36-37.

[35] The two process comparatively analyzed in Tripathi 1972, pp. 343-344.

the specific dynamics of the store-house consciousness being not the outflow, but rather karmic maturation.[36]

The main difference between karmic maturation *(vipāka)* and outflow *(niṣyanda)* is that the outflow *(niṣyanda)* represents a continuous series of experiences of a certain kind, where there is no possibility of change in the typology of the experience in cause. The outflow *(niṣyanda)* simply means the continuous and automatic reiteration of a certain experience, its repeated "flow". Though consisting of momentary *(kṣāṇika)* occurrences, human experiences have continuity, duration, since any instance of them leaves impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)* which will engender new instances of the same type *(sabhāga)*. This process keeps on going on indefinitely, thus ensuring the continuity of individual experiences.

> A previous seed engenders a future seed of the same type; this means the homogeneity *(sabhāga)* of the causes engendering an effect of outflow *(niṣyandaphala)*.[37]
>
> Virtuous, nonvirtuous, and neutral engaging consciousnesses which are simultaneous with the ālaya-vijñāna – one coming into being as the other is going out of existence – leave a seed that will, in future, give rise to an engaging consciousness of a similar type;[38]

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[36] The dynamism of outflow, studied in Brown 1991, pp. 208-209.

[37] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1928, p. 123. Translation after Poussin's French translation.

[38] Tsong-Khapa, *Yid dang kun gzhi dka'ba'i gnas rgya cher'grel pa legs par bshad pa'rgya mtsho*, Sparham 1995, p. 88.

> A repeated experience *(abhyāsa)* determines a cause of the same type *(sabhāgahetu)*, which will be associated to an effect of outflow *(niṣyandaphala)*.[39]

The process of karmic maturation *(vipāka)* is specific to the experiences *(upādāna)* involving appropriation, to the experiences of an individual subject, while those of outflow *(niṣyanda)* are common both to appropriated subjective experiences and to neutral, un-appropriated experiences. Karmic maturation is specific to human afflicted experience, while the outflow takes place also in case of non-afflicted experiences, its principle being mechanical continuity. A certain mechanical continuity is to be found also in case of subjective experiences, along with karmic maturation, which is restricted to appropriated experiences.

The main differences between the outflow *(niṣyanda)* and karmic maturation *(vipāka)* are, firstly, that the outflow processes, while passing from cause to effect, preserve the typology of the experience *(sabhāga)* involved and, secondly, the continuous and repeated occurrence of the outflow transformations. In case of karmic maturation, the transformation of the seeds into a "destiny" *(gati)*, into a "birth" *(jāti)*, takes place only once, without the possibility of reiterating this transformation. New karmic seeds will be produced by the individual being thus born, but these new seeds are not

[39] Asvabhāva, *Upanibandhana*, ad. *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, X.29, Lamotte 1973, p. 315. Lamotte's French translation is: "Un acte répété *(abhyāsa)* détermine une cause pareille *(sabhāgahetu)*, nécessairement associée à un fruit d'écoulement *(niṣyandaphala)*."

necessarily similar to those that projected the individual being in cause; therefore, in case of Karmic maturation, we can no longer speak of a continuous reiterating series of transformations,.

Unlike the outflow *(niṣyanda)*, karmic maturation displays a certain heterogeneity between cause and effect. The cause is a volitional act, consisting in the afflicted experience of an individual being, while the effect is the trans-subjective experience of projecting a new "destiny", the experience of creating a yet non-existing subject.

On the other hand, in case of the outflow *(niṣyanda)*, a certain type of seeds *(bīja)* engenders a certain type of actual factors *(dharma)*, which, at their turn, will engender the same type of seeds; this cyclical process keeps going on indefinitely, without any change in the typology of the series. Thus it is accounted for the fact that generally experiences have a certain continuity, in spite of them consisting of mere momentary flashes *(kṣaṇa)*. The preservation of the typology of the flashes, through the outflow dynamics, makes the process a continuous series.[40]

> Certainly, the seeds originating in the dual perceptions engender uncountable effects of outflow *(niṣyanda)*. On the other hand, karmic seeds are exhausted when they bring forth their effect, which is an effect of maturation *(vipāka)*.[41]

The perpetuity of experience, provided by the outflow dynamism, is not absolute; any apparition maintains its being for a

[40] The outflow and its homogeneity *(sabhāgatā)*, in Verdu 1981, pp. 14-15, 22-23.
[41] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1929, p. 477.

while, through the outflow processes, but, at one point of time, it is necessarily annihilated. The outflow processes are responsible for maintaining any apparition in a relatively continuous form, between its birth and its destruction. Generally, Vijñānavāda texts describe this dynamism as the "causation of the preservance/maintenance of the species" *(sabhāgahetuka)*. Whatever, in ordinary experience, appears as the perpetuation of an entity, according to the theory of momentariness *(kṣaṇikavāda)*, is nothing but the serial occurrence of several momentary discrete apparitions, all of them sharing a common typology.

> The impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)* are those which, due to the obtaining *(lābha)* of [their] activity *(vṛtti)*, a similarity of category *(nikāyasabhāga)* among the different *(antara)* [factors of a series] takes place.[42]

The outflow can ensure the continuity of the apparitions only because the outflow seeds *(niṣyandabīja)* are actualized immediately, in the very next moment *(kṣaṇa)*, without any gap between cause and effect, as it happens in case of the process of karmic maturation.

> The effect of maturation [...] is not born immediately but in another life. The effect of outflow is of the same type as its cause and is immediately born.[43]

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[42] "nikāyasabhāgāntareṣvabhinirvṛttiḥ niṣyandavāsanāvṛttilābhācca yā", Sthiramati, Triṃśikābhāṣya, ad.1d, Chatterjee 1980, p. 30.

[43] Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1929, p. 477. Translation after Poussin's French translation.

II.4. The Entire Individual Experience as Characterized by Outflow

The entire sphere of individual experience has a certain degree of continuity; any human experience leaves impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)* which ensure the continuity of that experience. Even the morally non-determined *(avyākṛta)* experiences and those non-afflicted *(akliṣṭa)*, devoid of the tendency to proliferation *(anāsrava)*, which fail to leave karmic traces within the store-house consciousness, nevertheless impregnate it with outflow seeds *(niṣyandabīja)*.

As stated before, the mind *(manas)*, all by itself, unassisted by the operational consciousnesses and thus devoid of a definite focus, also does not engender any karmic impressions, its sole dynamism being the outflow.

> There, the operational consciousnesses *(pravṛttivijñāna)*, beneficent *(kuśala)* or non-beneficent *(akuśala)*, place in the store-house consciousness *(ālayavijñāna)* impressions of maturation *(vipākavāsanā)* and impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)*. The indeterminate *(avyākṛta)* [operational consciousnesses] and the afflicted mind *(kliṣṭamanas)* [place] only impressions of outflow *(niṣyandavāsanā)*.[44]
>
> Thus, under the determination *(adhipatya)* of beneficent *(kuśala)* and non-beneficent *(akuśala)* factors *(dharma)*, the store-house consciousness gathers *(pari-gṛh)* impressions *(vāsanā)*

[44] "tatra pravṛttivijñānam kuśalākuśalam ālayavijñāne vipākavāsanām niḥṣyandavāsanāṃ cādhante / avyākṛtaṃ kliṣṭam ca mano niḥṣyandavāsanāmeva /", Sthiramati, Triṃśikābhāṣya, ad. 1d, Chatterjee 1980, p. 30.

[producing] both effects *(phala)* of maturation *(vipāka)* and of outflow *(niṣyanda)*. Under the determination *(adhipatya)* of indeterminate *(avyākṛta)* factors, it [gathers] only impressions [producing] effects of outflow *(niṣyandaphala)*.[45]

II.5. The limitations of the continuity provided by the outflow *(niṣyanda)* and Karmic maturation *(vipāka)* as the only process creator of novel experiences

Operational consciousnesses *(pravṛttivijñāna)* and mind *(manas)* are characterized solely by outflow processes. Karmic processes, though determined be the seeds imprinted within the store-house consciousness by the operational consciousnesses assisted by mind, take place only at the cosmic level of the store-house consciousness. It is also noteworthy that the continuity ensured by the outflow processes is not absolute, but only a limited one. Any experience which is preserved for a while through the outflow processes nevertheless ceases at a moment of time. Hence, the outflow processes, by themselves, cannot ensure the perpetuity of the Universe. The outflow can only provide a limited continuity to an already existing apparition, without being able to engender novel apparitions.

Karmic maturation *(vipāka)* is the only process efficient in bringing forth novel contents within the store-house

[45] "tathā hi kuśalākuśaladharmādhipatyādālayavijñānaṃ vipākaniṣyandaphalavāsanāṃ parigṛhṇāti / avyākṛtadharmādhipatyācca niṣyandaphalavāsanāmeveti /", Sthiramati, Madhyāntavibhāgabhāṣyaṭīkā, ad. I.9 (I.10), Pandeya 1999, p. 28.

consciousness and hence able to perpetuate the cosmic manifestation. Karmic maturation repeatedly creates novel apparitions, under the determination of the impressions *(vāsanā)* left in the store-house consciousness by the existing afflicted experiences. The outflow *(niṣyanda)* restrictively applies to the effects of karmic maturation, to whatever is "born of maturation" *(vipākaja)*.[46] Only karmic maturation is truly creative, in the sense of bringing forth novel apparitions. The outflow *(niṣyanda)* does nothing but ensures the continuity, the "flow" of what is born as a result of karmic maturation *(vipākaja)*.

For our discussion, it is important that, only by itself, the outflow can not ensure the perpetuity of the store-house consciousness. The dependence of the store-house consciousness on karmic maturation means nothing but the dependence of cosmic manifestation on human affliction. The store-house consciousness can never be reduced to a set of "pure" experiences, characterized only by outflow *(niṣyanda)* since, as we have already shown, these transformations can ensure only the limited continuity of some already existing apparitions. The outflow is somehow subordinated to karmic maturation since the outflow does nothing else but to perpetuate an apparition born as a result of karmic maturation *(vipāka)*.

[46] See Hiuan-Tsang, *Ch'eng-wei-shih-lun*, Poussin 1928, p. 92. Karmic dynamism and the "growth" of Ālaya-vijñāna, in Brown 1991, p. 210.

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Reality in *Advaita Vedānta*: *pāramārthika*, *vyāvahārika*, *prātibhāsika*. A Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract. The aim of our study is to decipher the significance of *reality* at three levels (*pāramārthika*, *vyāvahārika*, *prātibhāsika*) in one of the six *darśana,* which constitute the systematic philosophical framework of Hinduism: *Nyāya*, *Vaiśeṣika, Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Mimāmsā,* and *Vedānta*. Therefore, our research will explore the ontological dimension of the *real/reality* in *Advaita Vedānta,* the system formulated by Śaṅkara (788-820), which suggests the *non-dualism* as a fundamental metaphysical principle.

The Vedantic *non-dualism* can be synthesized to three essential but distinct coordinates which, however, complete reciprocally: 1) The inner I, *Ātman*, is identical with *Brahman*, the non-dual *Reality*; 2) *Brahman* is the only and true unchangeable *Reality*; 3) All dualities within the phenomenal sphere are illusory. The term *advaita* does not try as much to define *Brahman*, but rather to correct the misunderstanding of reality. Along this line of thoughts, *Advaita Vedānta* presents itself as a metaphysical, trans-empirical explanation whose rational comprehension is, under certain circumstances, impossible.

Keywords: *Advaita Vedanta*, reality, *Sat*, *pāramārthika*, *vyāvahārika*, *prātibhāsika*.

Introduction

It is a real challenge to tackle today's existential (philosophical-religious) issues within the space of a pragmatic, consumerist and secular societies, but it is all the more challenging to place yourself within the horizon of another religious culture than your own in order to identify specific paradigms of thinking, reflecting and understanding of these existential issues. The entire Hindu philosophical and religious culture fascinates the western world through its subtleness as well as its high theological speculation. As an expression of an authentic millenary tradition, the Indian religious thinking submits itself to the attention of the western researchers due to a constant element of novelty and, at the same time, inexhaustible in terms of metaphysical interpretation.

1. Vedantic Non-dualism – a Specific Eastern/Oriental Way to Think and Know *Reality*

No concept is more important in the Asian philosophies and religious thinking than *non-dualism* (*non-duality*) (the Sanskrit *advaita*, the Tibetan *gṅiṣmed*, the Chinese *pu-erh,* the Japanese *fu-ni*), and none is more ambiguous. The term has been employed in many different and contingent ways but the distinctions among

these meanings have never been fully clarified. These meanings are distinct, although they overlap in some special cases. The paradigm of *non*-dualism does not belong exclusively to the *Vedānta* school. David Loy[1] makes it clear that non-duality, even though the researcher avoids using the actual term *non-dualism*, it is the main theme of some important oriental philosophies such as Daoism and *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. David Loy discusses the following types of *non-dualisms* (*non-dualities*) present in Asian philosophies: (1) the denial of dualist thinking (*Mahāyāna* Buddhism), (2) the non-plurality of the world (Daoism) and (3) the non-difference between *subject-object*, the last one, specific to the *Advaita*, generating the premises of a *mystical* identity of the individual self with *Brahman.*[2] The first *non-duality* is the criticism of *dualist thinking*, which defines a thinking that differentiates *what-is-thought-about* into two opposite categories: being and non-being, success and failure, life and death, enlightenment and illusion, etc. Although, differences are usually made in order to choose one or the other, the problem of such thinking is that we cannot take one without the other since they are interdependent.

The fact that we experience the world as a multiplicity, as a sum of things, as a collection of diversified objects (one of them being *I*) which interact in time and space is due to dualist thinking. The negation of the *dualist thinking* leads us to the negation of the

[1] David Loy, "How many nondualities are there?", *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, No. 4, 1983, p. 413.

[2] Cf. Stephen H. Phillips, "Could there be a mystical evidence for a nondual Brahman? A causal objection", *Philosophy East & West*, Vol. LI, No. 4, 2001, pp. 492-493.

manner of experiencing the world in this way, fact which generates the second meaning of non-duality: the world is non-plural because all the objects *in* the world are not really distinct from one another, and together they constitute an integral unit. However, something is still missing in this utterance which is incomplete in itself because it leaves unexplained the relation between the *subject* and the world experienced by the subject.

In reality, the world is not experienced as a whole if the subject experiencing is still separated by through observing it. Therefore, the second meaning of *non-duality*, conceived objectively, is unstable and tends naturally to evolve into a third meaning. This third meaning of *non-duality*, like the other two, must be understood as a negation and *Advaita Vedānta* explores *non-duality* in this sense, turning this into the central principle of its philosophy[3]:

[3] Leesa S. Davis (in *Advaita Vedānta and Zen Buddhism. Deconstructive Modes of Spiritual Inquiry*, Continuum International Publishing Group, London, New York, 2010, p. 5), when writing about the manner in which *non-duality* is understood in *Advaita Vedānta* and *Mādhyamika*, notices that *Advaita* is described as *advaitavāda*, and *Mādhyamika* as *advayavāda*: *advaitavāda* as the theory of non-difference, i.e. non-or the identity of the subject with the object and *advayavāda* as the theory of non-*two*, i.e. none of the two extreme points of view. T. V. R. Murti pinpoints thus the distinction between *advaya* and *advaita*: "A distinction has to be made between *advaya* in *Mādhyamika* and *advaita* in *Vedānta*, although in the end this distinction is related to the approach angle. *Advaya* is the knowledge free of the duality of the extremes (*anta* or *dṛṣṭi*), of «is» and «is not», «Being» and «Becoming» etc. It is the *knowledge freed* from conceptual distinctions. *Advaita* is the knowledge of the undifferentiated entity - *Brahman* (Pure Being)." (T. V. R. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, Allen & Unwin, London, 1955, p. 217).

> The dualism denied is our usual distinction between subject and object, an experiencing self that is distinct from what is experienced, be it sense-object, physical action, or mental event. The corresponding nonduality is experience in which there is no such distinction between subject and object.[4]

In *Advaita Vedānta*, Brahman is non-dual, laying at the origin of all that exists, unitary, lacking any differentiation, the only real existence; however, the common perception seems to indicate the existence of a reality characterized by multiplicity, i.e. the universe that we acknowledge through experience. Apparently, the manifestation of multiplicity denies the immutability of Brahman, denies its non-duality and non-alterity. Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara's precursor in terms of Advaita thinking, saves the absolute non-dualism, claiming the illusory nature of multiplicity, its appearance as an illusion generated by māyā in the *Pure Consciousness* (*Cīt*), which is Brahman. Multiplicity being illusory, its birth is also an illusion and, thus, Brahman's non-alterity is saved because the transformation that Brahman suffered through the act of creating the world of phenomena is just an illusion which lasts as long as *avidyā* (ignorance) persists. The illusion does not mean non-reality or inexistence, but a certain level of reality: *yo`sti kalpitasaṃvṛtyā paramārthena nāsty asau | paratantrābhisaṃvṛtyā syān nāsti paramārthataḥ*.[5]

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[4] D. Loy, *Nonduality. A Study in Comparative Philosophy*, Yale University Press, 1988, pp. 25-26.

[5] *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad and Gaudāpaḍa-Kārikā* IV.73: "That which exists because of a fancied empirical outlook, does not do so from the standpoint of

Duality, multiplicity, is nothing else but the perception of a pseudo-reality in the state of ignorance (*avidyā*) or, in Advaita terms, the valorization as reality of the domain of the non-Self (non-*Ātman*). *Duality*, in Śaṅkara's opinion, means to presuppose the existence of *another* as being real next to *Brahman*, who is by excellence *ekamevādvitīyam*[6] ("one-without-the-second").

2. The Real (*Sat*) and the Appearance (*Vivarta*) in *Advaita* Metaphysics: Evaluation Criteria of the World's Reality Level

Under these circumstances we are trying to answer the following question: is the world that we experience through our senses *real*? What is its level of reality? The Sanskrit term that corresponds to the western term "world" is *jagat*. In J. G. Arapura's opinion[7], etymologically, *jagat* denotes what is related to the nature of movement. The world is, metaphysically speaking, a constant and unstable movement between the two poles of *is* and *is not*. In *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* 20 it is written: *brahma satyaṃ jaganmithyety* ("Brahman is real, the universe is unreal"). A first reading might lead us to the conclusion that the universe is

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absolute Reality. Anything that may exist on the strength of the empirical." (translated by S. Gambhirananda in *Eight Upaniṣads. Volume II (Aitareya, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya & Kārikā and Praśna)*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1973, pp. 379-380).

[6] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VI.2.1-2: *sad eva somyedam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam* ("At the beginning, my dear, This was only Being (*sat*), a single one, without a second one"; translated by Patrick Olivelle, *Upaniṣads. A new translation,* Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 149).

[7] J. G. Arapura, *Hermeneutical Essays on Vedāntic Topics*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1986, p. 52.

entirely *unreal*. However, the world cannot obviously be totally *unreal* in terms of fictitious existence or non-existence because we perceive it through our senses. *Falsity*, although excluding *reality* (*sat*), does not imply *unreality* (*asat*) and this fact defines world as an *appearance*. Even though an *appearance* has a special ontological status, it is not a *non-being* or *non-existence*.

Before giving a definition to the *real* within the *Advaita* parameters, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the term *real* in western semantics where we notice that it is not used with only one meaning but with a set of different meanings, the most important of which are "non-illusory" and "non-imaginary". Richard Brooks[8] states that *real* means: 1) "authentic", as opposed to false; 2) "natural", as opposed to artificial; 3) "non-imaginary" or "non-illusory"; 4) "permanent", which lasts; 5) "existent".

In the *Advaita* logic, when *sat* is used in common speaking (*vyāvahara*), it applies to all existing things.[9] All existing things are relative, phenomenal and finite. They are not real and true. C. Sharma stipulates from this perspective that:

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[8] Richard Brooks, "The meaning of *Real* in Advaita Vedānta", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1969, p. 386.

[9] R. DeSmet ("Spiritual values of Advaita Vedānta and social life", *Indian Philosophical Annual,* XVIII, 1985-1986, p. 14) presents five interpretative valences of the Sanskrit term *sat*: (1) *Sat* = "Being" - *Brahman*; (2) *Asat* = "Non-Being"; (3) *sat* = "being", every finite being; 94) *a-Sat* = "non-Being", the same finite being, when properly known as ingrained in its cause, *Sat*, it turns out to be unequal to it (*a-Sat*), manifesting itself only as an extrinsic denominator (*upādhi*); (5) *asat* = any delimiter to *sat* by alterity (*anyattva*).

> When the *reality* that is denied to these words means *reality for all times*, then the *unreality* that is attributed to them means *non-eternity*[10].

Moreover, *sat* may be used with its supreme meaning (*parāmartha*), when it applies only to *Brahman*. From this perspective, *reality* is something that cannot be annulled or denied by any other experience, according to the truth criterion *Abādhitatva* (non-contradiction). This is the atemporal, unconditional and undifferentiated unity of *to be* and it applies exclusively to *Brahman*.

Based on the ideas so far mentioned, the *Advaita* adepts use the word *real* in a combination of the meanings 3, 4 5 suggested above. In order to apply the word *real* to a thing, in their perspective, this *thing* has to be: (1) experienceable, (2) no illusory or no imaginary, and (3) stable, lasting, or permanent. The three criteria for reality will, correspondingly, be (1) "being the subject of a valid means of knowledge" (*pramāṇa*), (2) "possessing practical efficacy" (*arthakriyātva*), and (3) "being unsuitable throughout the three times" (*trikālābhādhyatva*).[11]

Thus, in the strict sense, we may say that reality is (1) independent, insofar as Brahman is the stable end of the only significant dependence relation; (2) unlimited by anything else, insofar as it is independent of anything else, therefore related to

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[10] C. Sharma, *A critical survey of Indian Philosophy*, Rider & Company, London, 1960, p. 279.

[11] R. Brooks, "The meaning of *Real* in Advaita Vedānta", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1969, p. 398.

nothing that could limit it; (3) non partite; (4) unchanging, insofar as it is unlimited and unrelated; (5) indivisible, insofar as it is non partite, and (6) non acting, insofar as it is unchanging; (7) unitary, insofar as it is indivisible; (8) eternal, insofar as it is non partite and unchanging.[12] All these characteristics are preached by the *Advaita* adepts exclusively to *Brahman*.

As far as the term *unreal* (*a-sat*) is concerned, Śaṅkara employs it with three different meanings, corresponding to the contradictions of each of the three criteria that suggest the meaning of the term *real* (*sat*).

The *Advaita* metaphysics challenges the thesis according to which the *real* and the *unreal* are complementary sets. Reality (*Brahman*) is all-encompassing, the omnipresence that "consumes all possible limits of consciousness (existence)"[13]. The *Appearance* (*vivarta*[14]) has to be situated outside the

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 391. Swami Siddheswarananda (*Quelques aspects de la Philosophie Vedantique*, Adrien-Maisonneuve, Paris, 1945, p. 88) remarks three characteristics of *Reality* in Śaṅkara's thinking: (1) the universality, (2) the evidence in itself and from itself; (3) the freedom from all contradictions.

[13] R. Puligandla and D. Matesz, "Appearance and the laws of logic in Advaita Vedanta", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 26, March 1986, p. 82.

[14] *Vivarta* may be defined this way: (1) the appearance of a supreme reality as an inferior one, when Brahman, the transcendent reality(*pāramārthika*), appears as an empirical reality (*vyāvāhārika*) or when the rope appears as the apparent reality (*prātibhāsika*) of the snake; (2) the appearance of *Cīt* as *jaḍa* (non-consciousness); (3) that state of the cause, known as effect, which is neither different from nor identical with the cause and thus inexplicable. The effect has no existence independently from the cause and what does not have an existence in its own cannot be affirmed as having reality in the true meaning of the word. *Cf.* S. Lokeswarananda, *Aspects of Vedānta*, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1995, pp. 74-75.

exhaustive dichotomy of *real* and *unreal*. Thus, on the one hand, the *appearance* cannot be *real* because *appearance* is always capable of being denied, annulled both in principle and in fact, being our experience of the phenomenal world, which is characterized by the *subject-object* distinction and, not in the least, susceptible of being devalued and contradicted by new experiences.[15] *Reality*, which includes only the state without the objects, the non-dual *Consciousness*, is never denied either in fact or in principle.[16] *Appearance* and *reality* are entirely unmeasurable. Yet, one needs to mention the fact that if *appearance* is not real, it does not mean that it is *non-existence*:

> There could be no non-existence (of external entities) because external entities are actually perceived. It is not possible to understand that there could be non-existence of external entities. Why so? Because (they are) actually perceived.[17]

Similar to Indian philosopher, Karl H. Potter mentions:

> At any rate, all Advaitins agree that the world must be placed on a lower level of reality than Brahman, the ultimately real. What, one might ask, is the status of this lower level? Is it a complete negation, a nothing? If so, the Advaitin would be committing the howler of positing a relation which lacks a

[15] F. F. Fost, "Playful illusion: The making of worlds in Advaita Vedānta", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 1998, p. 388.
[16] E. Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*, University of Hawai`i Press, Honolulu, 1969, pp. 15, 88.
[17] *Brahma-Sūtra-Bhāṣya* II.2.28 (translated by V. M. Apte in *Brahma-Sūtra-Shānkara-Bhāshya. Bādarāyaṇā`s Brahma-Sūtras with Shankarāchāryā`s Commentary*, Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1960, p. 397).

> term, i.e., of reifying Nothing. A relation between Brahman and nothing is no relation at all but a verbal confusion. Therefore the Advaitin must endow empirical unreality with more being than nothing, and less being than Brahman.[18]

Appearance exists in a certain way but it is not *real*; however, *appearance* cannot be *unreal* either because in *Advaita* the *unreal* refers to the logical impossibilities, such as a square circle, the rabbit's horns or the son of an infertile woman. The *unreal* is thus void, everything that is contradiction in itself and cannot possibly exist. The *unreal* is not complementary to *reality* but the contradiction of *reality*. Only the *reality* is exhaustive[19].

The *Advaita* adepts following Śaṅkara developed this perspective upon reality and tried to limit the ontological status of the world and restricted the meaning of the *unreal* to the imaginary objects. Their usual term for the world of appearance was *mithyā* (false).

The word *mithyā* is a contradiction of the term *mithūyā* which is derived from the root *mith* which means either: 1) "unity" or "couple", 2) "to meet" or "to hire" or 3) "alternative". The word *mithyā* derives from the third meaning and it is used adverbially with the meaning of "unsuitable", "contrary" or "incorrect". This meaning is extended to the nominal form meaning "false". In

[18] K. H. Potter, *Presuppositions of Indian`s Philosophies*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1999, p. 163.
[19] R. Puligandla and D. Matesz, "Appearance and the laws of logic in Advaita Vedanta", *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 26, 1986, p. 80.

fact, as Richard Brooks[20] underlines, it would seem much more literal to extend it to "error", which is "incorrectly taken or perceived", even if this translation cannot be rendered very precisely in the European languages.

In addition, such a translation would bring more clarity to the position of *Advaita*, i.e. the judgments that we normally make about the world, on the basis of our senses and our perception of it, are wrong. Naturally, provided *reality* is unitary, then the plurality of the world cannot be real; if we perceive the world erroneously, then we judge it wrongly on the basis of our *ignorance*.[21]

The question "How *real* are things?" can be answered that they are *real* as long as the empirical world lasts:

> Thus the distinction of reality and unreality depends on our consciousness. Now in all our experience, twofold consciousness arises with reference to one and the same substratum, as a cloth existent, a pot existent, an elephant existent – not as in the expression a blue lotus and so on everywhere. Of the two, the consciousness of pot, etc., is temporary as was already pointed out, but not the consciousness of existence. Thus, the object corresponding to our consciousness of pot, etc., is unreal, because the consciousness is temporary; but what corresponds to our

[20] R. Brooks, "The meaning of *Real* in Advaita Vedānta", op. cit., p. 386.

[21] M. Comans, *The method of early Advaita Vedānta. A Study of Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara, Sureśvara and Padmapāda*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2000, pp. 260-261.

> consciousness of existence is not unreal, because the consciousness is unfailing.[22]

One should notice that the expression like "absolutely real" are just contextual, being used only in contrast with everything that is not real. There is no other meaning in which *Brahman* cannot be called real. Empirically speaking, such expressions are full of sense but, once the truth is realized, these expressions lose their significance. According to Śaṅkara, real is what lasts, what does not suffer any contradiction or denial, what is eternal[23]:

> The whole phenomenal world is wholly illusory. Prior to the realization of Brahma, the entire phenomenal world, such as the Akasha etc., stands as it is, in a valid form and is said to be relatively true[24].

Things in the world are real until they suffer the operation of denial in the act of true knowledge; this is why they are called "something else than real and unreal" (*sadasatvilakṣana*), illusory (*mithyā*). But *Brahman* is not the subject of contradiction.[25]

In conclusion, we can speak about the ontology of the universe from three different angles: from the empirical perspective, the world is *real*, from the transcendental

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[22] *Bhagavad-Gītā-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya* II.16, translated by A. Mahādeva Śāstri, *The Bhagavad-Gītā with the commentary of Śrī Śaṅkarāchārya*, Samata Books, Madras, 1977, pp. 35-36.

[23] *Cf.* S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1948, p. 501.

[24] *Brahma-Sūtra-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya* III.2.4 (translated by V. M. Apte, p. 567).

[25] J. Grimes, *Śaṅkara and Heidegger. Being, Truth, Freedom*, Indica Books, Varanasi, 2007, p. 59.

perspective, the world is *unreal*, and from a philosophical and logical perspective, the world is *undeterminable*.[26] To put it differently, without being wrong, we could say that the universe perceived by senses is undeterminable:

> The world of appearance is not absolutely unreal *(atyantam asat)*, for it is cognized and has existence. It is not real *(Sat),* for it is not undeniable in all the three times (past, present and future). It is not a combination of the real and the unreal, for this description violates the law of contradiction. Nor is it the continuation of the negation of the real and the unreal. Hence it is described as *anirvacaniya.* It cannot be classified as real or unreal. This does not mean that it does not exist nor that it has no practical efficiency[27].

3. Three Levels of Reality: *Pāramārthika, Vyāvahārika, Prātibhāsika*

The Śaṅkarian *Advaita* distinguishes three levels of *reality*:

1) *paramārthika* – the *Pure Being* or the *Ultimate Reality*, the Absolute Real - *Brahman*, which is beyond the empirical experience, beyond senses, thought and language;

2) *vyavahārika* – the empirical world, valid for the senses, thought and language, valid for all empirical experiences, but not real in itself. This is the sphere of "becoming" or "belonging", of

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[26] See A. D. Vallooran, *In search of the absolute. A critical study of the Advaitic Philosophy of Religion as interpreted by T.M.P. Mahadevan*, Vendrame Institute, Shilong, 1988, pp. 143-154.

[27] R. Karunakaran, *The concept of sat in Advaita Vedānta*, Sri Śaṅkara Sanscrit Vidyapeetham Edakkadom, Quilon, 1980, pp. 191-192.

space-time-causality, the phenomenal world. *Brahman* is the reality of this world, and its phenomenal character is a superimposition on *Brahman* and, therefore, false;

3) *pratibhāsika*, the empirical illusion, which is taken as real as long as it lasts and, then, rejected as unreal through knowledge.[28]

In T. M. P. Mahadevan's opinion[29], *pāramārthika-sattā* is *Brahman* or the *absolute* reality, *vyāvahārika-sattā* is the empirical reality conditioned by *māyā*, and *prātibhāsika-sattā* is the apparent reality, conditioned by *avidyā*. When talking about these three levels, most researchers share the opinion that *vyāvahārika* and *prātibhāsika* belong to the relative level of *reality*.[30]

Brahman is *real* in the absolute sense of the term (*pāramārthika*). Objects, like the rope in the metaphor of the illusion of a rope perceived as snake[31], are empirically real (*vyāvahārika*), because, although they are not permanent, they are preserved in a certain form (for instance, as fibre if not as rope) for as long as we see them from the perspective of common

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[28] C. Sharma, *The Advaita tradition in Indian philosophy. A study of Advaita in Buddhism, Vedānta and Kāshmīra Shaivism,* Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2007, p. 179.

[29] T. M. P. Mahadevan, *The Philosophy of Advaita. With special reference to Bhāratītīrtha-Vidyāranya*, Arnold-Heinemann, 1976, p. 65.

[30] See José Miguel Dias Costa, "Relatividade Do Real No Pensamento de Shankara", *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, Vol. 48, No. 3, *Existencia e Sentido,* 1992, pp. 487-488.

[31] The rope-snake metaphor is the most frequently used reference by the Advaita thinkers to explain the nature of reality. See Arvind Sharma, *The rope and the snake. A metaphorical exploration of Advaita Vedānta*, Manohar, 1997, pp. 46-57.

experience.[32] The being of the snake, seen when the rope exists, is described as illusory (*prātibhāsika*), and its distinctive mark is the fact that it disappears completely when the illusion is removed through knowledge.[33]

The distinction between *vyāvahārika* and *prātibhāsika* can also be explained in another way: the illusory object is given only in the individual experience. When somebody mistakes a rope for a snake, somebody else may see the rope as a rope. Thus, such objects can be described as "private". The empirical object, on the other hand, is "public" to the extent to which its existence is guaranteed by others as well."[34]

Consequently, Śaṅkara operates an obvious distinctions between the phenomenal reality (*vyāvahārika sattā*) and the illusory reality (*prātibhāsika sattā*). The phenomenal world is not

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[32] Arvind Sharma, *The philosophy of religion and Advaita Vedānta. A comparative study in religion and reason*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pennsylvania, 1995, p. 176.

[33] *Prātibhāṣika* comprises (1) the objects of the perceptual error – the snake in the example of the rope which is taken for a snake, (2) the magical illusions or hallucinations and (3) the objects experimented in our dreams. An object that exists at the *prātibhāṣika* level has the following two characteristics: it is denied or eliminated by a superior reality and it is temporary. See Craig Schroeder, "Levels of Truth and Reality in the Philosophies of Descartes and Sankara", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 35, No. 3, 1985, pp. 286-288; Bimal Matilal, "Error and truth: classical Indian theories", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1981, pp. 215-224.

[34] M. Hiriyanna, *The essentials of Indian philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 2005, p. 167.

reduced to unreality like the one of illusion or dream.[35] The phenomenal reality (*vyāvahārika sattā*) of the world is never rejected. The world is accepted as possibly real as long as the ultimate reality is not realized. As for the objects of dream, illusion and hallucination, although they are said to be real for as long as the illusory cognitions persist, they are all accepted as *unreal* from a phenomenal point of view. Whilst the illusory silver is *real* at the moment of illusion, the actual silver is *real* phenomenally. The actual silver is not rejected either. The phenomenal world is false only if its falsity is realized when the knowledge of *Brahman* is acquired.[36]

From the *parāmarthika* point of view, no difference is admissible between *vyāvahārika* and *prātibhāsika sattā*. If the *Advaita* philosophy is trying to establish *reality* as non-dual, then there is no point in talking about the three levels of reality. A distinction has to be made between *prātibhāsika sattā* and *tucca*. The former is a momentary existence while *tucca* is the absolute non-existence.[37] The fact needs to be underlined that momentary

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[35] See *Māṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad-Gaudapāda-Kārikā-Śaṅkara-Bhāṣya* II.1-18 (translated by S. Gambhirananda, pp. 232-248).

[36] B. Kar, *The theories of error in Indian philosophy. An analytical study*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1978, p. 106.

[37] Along this line of thoughts, P. T. Raju (*The Philosophical Traditions of India*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1971, p. 181) rightfully notices that Śaṅkara distinguishes four levels of the *being*: (1) the ultimate *Being* (*pāramārthika-sattā*) is the Being of *Brahman* only; (2) the pragmatic or empirical *Being* (*vyāvahārika-sattā*) that belongs to the world and individual selves; (3) the apparent *Being* (*prātibhāsikasattā*) belonging to the objects of illusions, hallucinations and dreams; (4) the insignificant *Being* (*tucca-sattā*),

existence of the illusory object is clearly rejected once the illusion is denied. When the erroneous perception of silver is replaced by the perception of the pearl, the pearl is treated as existence not only at the moment when it is actually perceived, but also when silver was previously perceived. In other words, the pearl is accepted to be real and the silver is completely denied.[38]

Conclusions

The universe has an *iva* ("as if"[39]) reality, situated between *sat* and *asat*, between *to be* and *not to be*, and this status of the phenomenal world is, ultimately, an inexplicable and incomprehensible mystery for he who is in a state of ignorance or *avidyā*.[40] Therefore, it is not wrong to say that the world has a phenomenal reality. The phenomenal opposes the *Being* but it is not its opposite. Stating the relative value of the reality of the world has a pedagogical purpose, given the impossibility of finding the feeling of plenitude in the experience of the world. What the world offers when it is experienced is a feeling of frustration, of unfulfillment and, fundamentally, of sufferance. This experience of the phenomenal has to be overcome because it

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that belongs to the imaginary, impossible objects that cannot be experienced (the son of an infertile woman; an infertile woman cannot have any baby therefore the existence of such a son is impossible and contradictory in itself).

[38] B. Kar, *The theories of error in Indian philosophy. An analytical study*, p. 107.

[39] Troy Wilson Organ, *The self in Indian philosophy*, Mounton & Co., Hague, 1964, p. 100.

[40] F. F. Fost, "Playful illusion: The making of worlds in Advaita Vedānta", *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 48, No. 3, 1998, p. 397.

does not offer the limit of the meaning of our existence. Within this context, knowledge, in its entire complexity, is the instrument of the ultimate realization.

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REVIEWS

Sunil KHILNANI, *Incarnations. A History of India in 50 Lives*, Penguin Books, 2017, 500 pp., ISBN: 978-0-141-98143-7.

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Most of the times, India's history is the enumerations of battles, riots, dynasties, religions, castes and influences. Not many individuals are evoked when presenting Indian history to the world. But they – important figures, from kings, to poets, priests, incredible women, social reformers or freedom fighters – made India so great. "*Incarnations* is an experiment in dispelling some of the fog by telling India's story through fifty remarkable lives" (p. xi).

Sunil Khilnani is a professor and the director of the India Institute at King's College London. In this wonderful book he provides a whirlwind tour of roughly 2500 years of Indian history in 50 chapters. Each is a biographical sketch of an important personality from Indian politics, art, culture and economics, starting with Buddha and ending with Dhirubhai Ambani, the son of a teacher who ended up building one of India's largest and

most successful corporation. Among these figures are the giants like Mahatma Gandhi whom many readers will be familiar with, or barely unknown figures for many of us, like artist Amrita Sher-Gil, who gained fame through her paintings of herself and everyday Indian life.

Sunil Khilnani has spent much of his career studying Indian culture. He is also the author of *The Idea of India*, published in 1997. In *Incarnations*, Khilnani draws on his prior scholarship but also on the work of numerous other scholars and journalists and primary sources. The book follows a BBC radio series, also wrote and narrated by Sunil Khilnani.

The book's writing is easy to read. The chapters are like bedtime stories, written with passion but also based on a very good documentation.

The volume starts with the story of Buddha, who "created a spiritual philosophy that has rightly been called one of the turning points in the history of civilization" (p. 2). Because of that, "the story of the Buddha was given permanence in painting and sculpture" (p. 3). Over time, Buddha inspired kings (like Ashoka, who established one of the largest empires in ancient India) and leaders (like B.R. Ambedkar, an architect of India's first Constitution after 1947 and one of the most prominent leaders of Dalits) and his legacy continues even today.

It continues with stories of Mahavira – who is very important in Jain tradition – a soldier of non-violence in 5th century BCE, taken as example by Mahatma Gandhi himself; Panini, the famous creator of the most complete linguistic system in history,

who lived around the fourth century BCE. His masterwork was *Ashtadhyayi*, a book that "helped make Sanskrit the lingua franca of the Asian world for more than a thousand years" (p. 16). "What Panini took apart and held up to the light of his mind was Sanskrit, the language of the Vedas. Transmitted by memorized recitation, the sounds and rhythms of these sacred hymns and incantations, and the language itself, were believed to reflect eternal truths about the universe. [...] Panini set out to capture in exacting detail how this sacred language worked" (p. 17). His legacy continues today. The Sanskrit word used to describe Panini's work is *vyakarana*, often translated as 'grammar'. "In modern linguistic, Panini's system is what's known as 'generative grammar'. The term was coined in the late 1950s, when contemporary research into language finally caught up with what Panini and his subsequent pandit commentators had been doing for 2500 years" (p. 19).

Kautilya, from the 1st century CE; Ashoka, the great emperor who came from India's first great empire, the Mauryan dynasty; Charaka, who is referred to in India as "the father of medicine"; Aryabhata, the mathematician and astronomer; Adi Shankara, a religious thinker who transformed Hindu beliefs and practices and many others are described and praised by Sunil Khilnani.

A series of poets, like Basava (from 12th century BE), Amir Khusrau, Mirabai, a mystic poet of spiritual love, or the 15th century Kabir, venerated in north India come next and show us the power of poetry in shaping a culture.

“Indian religions love their wandering heroes” (p. 95), writes Sunil Khilnani. The first one to share his story with us is Guru Nanak, the 15th century founder of the Sikh religion. “Nanak, like Kabir, believed in a universal God that was *nirankar*, without form. This formless divinity could nevertheless be discovered, almost like an inner voice, operating within us all” (pp. 97-98).

Akbar, the greatest of the Mughal emperors, is one of world's most admired figures. He stands out in the history of Islamic kingship. “He has become an icon for modern secularists and liberals. [...] He is incorporated into a lineage of Indians who advocate tolerance and diversity” (p. 117).

Sunil Khilnani is mentioning, of course, India’s sacred figures, people who need no further presentation, like Rabindranath Tagore, the poet, musician, pedagogue, the first Nobel laureate of Asia; Mahatma Gandhi, the pure soul who fought for India all his life; Swami Vivekananda, the monk who taught the West about the essence of Hinduism; Satyajit Ray, the Oscar laureate director, or Raj Kapoor, the icon of Indian cinema; Srinivasa Ramanujan, the genius mathematician who knew infinity.

But he is also mentioning some non-Indian figures, who came in India and significantly contribute to Indian culture. Among these, William Jones, who produced “a revolution in knowledge about language and history” (p. 153). He was the founder of the famous The Asiatic Society of Bengal, established in Calcutta, institution who keeps alive, even today, the spirit and legacy of Jones. As Khilnani writes, “nothing excited the West more about

the potential riches of Indian civilization than Jones's translation of Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*, one of the masterpieces of ancient Sanskrit literature" (p. 158).

Journeying across India in pursuit of their stories, Sunil Khilnani offers us amazing portraits of emperors, warriors, philosophers, artists, iconoclasts, and entrepreneurs. Some of these historical figures are famous. Some are unjustly forgotten. But all of them, as Khilnani convinces us, are deeply relevant today. *Incarnations* is an amazing introduction to India's mozaique of cultures.

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Aruna CHAKRAVARTI, *Daughters of Jorasanko*, HarperCollins India, 2016, 344 pp., ISBN: 978-9352640867.

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Twameva vidityaa timrityumeti,
Naanya panthaa vidyate ayanaaya
The devotee overcomes death by knowing Him,
He has no other way to salvation

The nature of the Bengali land and the Bengali people has never before mingled in such a way, as it did for Rabindranath Tagore. The description of Rabindranath Tagore as "a Man among men", "a citizen of the world", "a liberated spirit", "a universal man" and a "modern rishi" is the measure of his stature in the scale of human nobility and greatness. Rabindranath's fame and glory have succeeded to draw attention of his readers and people from all around the world, not only towards his literary writings, but also towards a better understanding of Rabindranath as a man, his life and his family.

Tagore's ancestral home, the house of Jorasanko, a neighborhood in Kolkata, West Bengal, India, was famed for its cultural and intellectual stature. It is not only the birthplace of Rabindranth Tagore, but also it is known for producing and nurturing the most liberated and free-thinking women of the time.

Aruna Chakravarti's *Jorasanko* was written for Tagore's 150th birth anniversary and it portrays the inner picture of the household of Jorasanko. By taking the existing documents and available data of the contemporary time and adding some imaginary elements to it, Chakravarti represents an interesting picture of the inner life of the Tagore household in the early years of Bengal Renaissance.

Jorasanko was published in 2013, and the author writes herself that "it chronicles the genesis of the Pirali stigma which Tagores carried from the sixteenth century onwards, leading to complicated family compulsions in matters of marriage. It also describes the advent of the Tagores in Kolkata and their meteoric rise to power and privilege under the British".

The book tells the story of Digambari, wife of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore, who banished her illustrious husband from her household because he went against the "dharma" of his ancestors by hosting receptions where meat and liquor were served. Characters like Jnanadanandini, Sarada Sundari, Kadambari, Mrinalini and so on are introduced in this book and it tries to capture the early influences of these women on Rabindranath Tagore's life and works.

Daughters of Jorasanko (2016) is a sequel to this book. As *Jorasanko* ends with the tragic death of Rabindranath's wife Mrinalini; the beginning of *Daughters of Jorasanko* portrays the poet's tragic condition for his loss. In this book the author tries to give us the picture of Tagore household from 1902 onwards and

traces the lives of Rabindranath's daughters, cousins and other female family members.

The first chapter of the book is titled as "1902-1905", which clearly suggests the time-period about which the author further illustrates. It begins by introducing the two houses: the Baithak-Khana house, where the Hindu branch of the Tagore family resides; and the Jorasanko house, which is the residence of the Brahmo branch of the family.

The Baithak-Khana house is described through the women of the household, their early-morning preparations for making food for the day, conversations and debates, sharing happiness and mourning for the tragic fate of their family members. The relationship between the two branches of the same family has also been addressed. Rabindranath Tagore, at first, is shown ill and worried about his daughter Rani's health, which in the course of time deteriorates and despite of Rabindranath's several efforts, he loses his daughter. From Soudamini's endless efforts for arranging a perfect marriage for her grandson, to Tripura Sundari's resentment and anger towards Debendranath Tagore; from Bibi's (Indira) dissatisfaction and complains about her mother's interfering nature to Sarala's rebellious attitude and immense urge of participating in something fruitful that will help her country to achieve freedom; the narration goes in a way, that one can relate to the ups and downs, the dilemmas and the complexities that are faced by the women of the Tagore family.

Apart from the Tagore women, the book also provides us with some insights about the emergence and influence of Swami

Vivekananda in Bengal and along with him his disciples, mostly Sister Nivedita. While enthusiastic and eager Sarala travels with Margaret Noble or Nivedita to meet the icon Swami Vivekananda, Chakravarti writes: "*How bold and confident western women are,* Sarala thought, her eyes fixed admiringly on Margaret's tall back. *They've been brought up that way. Our upbringing makes us, even forces us, to be nervous and cowardly*".

The contrast and the admiration is presented so efficiently that one can easily recognize how these two women bonded in course of time with a similar ideology, i.e. welfare of the nation.

The following chapters sketch Rabindranath's daughters and their nature: Beli (Madhurilata) was a patient and enduring girl, she never contradicted her husband but she was often appalled by his lack of empathy. Whereas Rani was whimsical and moody, Meera, the youngest one, had undergone a lot of pain in a very early age, losing her mother at six, and then her sister Rani.

In the book, Meera's marriage follows next and then Protima, the young widow, is shown to get married to Rabindranath's son Rathindranath. Many important letters are presented in the book, which help the readers to have the essence of the time. In the next chapters Rabindranath's pen friend Ranu Adhikari is introduced. Interesting events followed thereby and after Ranu returned, Rabindranath took the momentous decision of renouncing his knighthood, as an expression of protest. The next generation of the family have been introduced: on the one hand there is Meera and Nagendranath's daughter Nandita (Buri), and on the other

hand, Rathindranath and Protima's adopted daughter Poupey. Chakravarti beautifully sketches their relationship with their grandfather, the poet. The book also refers to Moitrayee Debi, who was an admirer of Rabindranath and a close family-friend.

Rabindranath's health kept deteriorating day by day and finally, on seventh August, in the night of Rakhi Purnima, the doctor declared that "Gurudev is no more". But the book does not end with this. Rather it takes into account the condition of one of the most strong and resourceful women of the Tagore family, Jnanadanandini Debi, wife of Satyendranath Tagore, who had immense aspiration to live and see the independence of India. Oblivion of Rabindranath's death, she died in the autumn of the same year and her last aspiration remained unfulfilled.

Possibly because of the vast cast, Chakravarti confines herself to the main branch of the Tagore family and defines the women's lives in the context of their husbands. In the beginning there is a list of the main characters appearing in the book. The author also gives us a chart or a family tree of the two branches of the Tagore family, which helps the reader to relate the characters.

Chakravarti through her narration provides insights into the contribution of the Tagore women in the poet's life and also in the society. The use of fragmented and multiple points-of-view, jumping from the perspective of one character in one section, to that of another in the next, provides the narrative the space to transit from one historical event to another.

The book has an exquisite style of narration, which makes the story easy to comprehend and the age represented in it becomes

alive. The characters appearing in the book are the result of the author's well research and great initiative to make them alive once again. The plot has utmost clarity and the fiction merges really well, that offers its readers a journey, which is illuminating, rich and satisfying at the same time.

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Hindol SENGUPTA, *The Modern Monk: What Vivekananda means to us today*, Penguin Books, India, 2017, 207 pp., ISBN 978-0143426646.

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The growing urgency to humanize the figure of Vivekananda through biographies pre-empt the possibility to neutralize the overtyped persona of the monk. The positioning of his ascetic ideals within the framework of modernity helps in the contextualization of his identity in a pre-defined template. The circulation of his religious and philosophical beliefs, through verbal and non-verbal mediums, further concretized his image in the different socio-cultural milieu. The entire process gradually creates a discourse of unqualified divinity and transfixes his image in the public domain. It not only enchants the masses into its mesmeric fold but also helps in creating the supra-sensual, awe-inspiring, mysterious and larger than life of the saint.

The discursive processes involved in the production, circulation and reception of his uncontested iconicity have resurfaced through multiple contemporary discourses available on the sage. The process stimulates certain pertinent questions whether sainthood is a divine grace that befalls upon some chosen ones or it is a fairly cultivated discourse which can be obtained through personal accomplishments as well as performance, circulations of biographical and hagiographical accounts, media projections along with timely sartorial adeptness and postural mimesis.

Though the structure of the book *The Modern Monk* does not directly deals with discursive formations of modern Indian sainthood yet tries to retrieve human from the divine. It does not seem to transfix his identity as a born saint but gradually develops his persona as an enlightened being. Unlike the literature available on Vivekananda which more or less tries to contain his life in a linear progression, the argument in the book focuses more on the fallibility of his character. The moments of Vivekananda's self-doubt, performance anxieties and inconsistencies finds adequate space in the book to chart out his journey from childhood to maturity.

Instead of reinforcing Vivekananda's piety and grace through anecdotes and hagiography, the argument focuses/emphasizes on the candidness and iconoclastic attitude of the sage. The pattern of the narrative dilutes the earlier iconographic image of the saint and tries to reinvent his persona with modern sensibilities. It drifts away from presenting Vivekananda's early life as "the ideal life of the holy man". Rather, Sengupta foregrounds the image of a boy who indulged in mischief making and caused trouble to his parents. His interest in *gilli danda*, flying pigeons, and fight with his playmates over sweetmeats showcase images of an errant boy. The structure does not probe into the intricacies involved in the process of becoming a saint. Rather the monk's elevated extraordinary (magical) powers, especially in the earlier biographies, has been subsidized and presented as having "…nothing miraculous about these, nothing unobtainable". Right from his fluency in English, photographic memory, graduation report card to his lecture at the

Parliament of Religions, the narrative structure modernizes the persona of the monk to a large extent.

The intertwining of writer's own upbringing with that of Vivekananda gives ample space to the author to contextualize the relevance of his ideas and philosophies in the present context. It brings forth the pragmatic self of the sage who "was not dismissive of material prosperity". The engagement of the saint with the issues such as education, space of women, metaphysics within the framework of science and rationality shows his persona to be of an ascetic activist. Rather than reinforcing an ideal image of a saint, the trajectory of the biography reveals the complexities involved in his journey from *Narendra Nath Dutta* to Swami Vivekananda.

From the untimely death of his father to his constant involvement in the lawsuits, the argument delves deep into the interior landscapes of his life. Vivekananda consistently moves to and fro between his desires to break free from his familial relations along with his aspiration to bear the responsibility of his mother as a dutiful son. For instance, *Sengupta* expresses the position of the monk "during the most intensive preaching period of his life- the nine years from the time he spoke at the Parliament of Religions to his death, constantly worry about money". The simultaneous attachment, as well as detachment from the materialistic world and its delicacies, makes his character more fascinating as well as intriguing. The argument reinforces the complexities involved in the materialistic engagements throughout his life and never questions his spiritual aspirations.

Furthermore, the author digs deep into his life and talks about the eating habits of the monk. His interest in culinary delicacies intertwines with his spiritual sojourn in India as well as abroad. For instance, "One moment, he would read the Holy Scriptures to them; the next moment, he would cook them delicacies". Without establishing Vivekananda as a consistent and cohesive entity, the writer brings out his inconsistencies and imperfections which make him a man of our times. He neither forsakes the material world to attain the ascetic ideals nor deviates from attaining spiritual yearnings. The trajectory of the biography situates him as a person whose philosophical ideas, social and moral beliefs are more suited or attuned to our conflicts in ultra modern society. The process judiciously shapes his persona as a modern human being.

Though the narrative structure reinstates the spirit of skepticism, doubt and questioning yet stop short in explaining the ideological clashes between the master (Ramakrishna) and disciple on several issues. Without delineating with the complexities involved in the relationship between Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, the book establishes them as the crusaders of modernity. It also establishes the encounter between the two as "the most definitive instances of modernity in religious discourse of India". Their relationship is being portrayed not only as the beacon/torchbearer of Bengali Renaissance but also as a decisive moment which shaped the cultural identity of Hinduism both in India as well as abroad.

Owing to his urban sensibility/urban exposure, the structural pattern suggests/explains his wandering phase as a pre-requisite

for the monk to understand the prevalent socio-cultural conditions of rural India. His encounter with persons belonging to different strata of the society, hardship faced in many situations challenged his deepest convictions and transformed his outlook on religion and Indian spirituality. Throughout his life, he suffered from one disease or the other and his letters reveal his deteriorating conditions. Sankar lists the number of diseases that traumatized the sage "migraine, tonsillitis, diphtheria, asthma, typhoid, malaria, indigestion, liver diseases, lower back pain, upper back pain, fatigue, sea- sickness, diabetes", which continued to haunt him throughout his life. The same man has been hailed as an embodiment of masculinity, strength and virility. His physical vitality, boldness and defiant look seem to be a strategy / discursive practice to create the masculine image of Hinduism which was hitherto perceived to be as weak and effeminate. It questions the discourse of masculinity which, deliberately or otherwise, was mythologized through verbal and non-verbal mediums. The persona that emerges out is a "tussle between the monk and the man […] there is a tension in his story, and failure. He even has his moments of fatalism".

The narrative continued to position/ posits him as the brand ambassador of Indian spiritual wisdom to the West. It also dwells upon his idea to relate science with spirituality. The monk disseminated *Vedantic* philosophy and fostered the notion that "all religions are essentially in agreement". The lucid technique presents Vivekananda's philosophy being materialistic and ascetic at the same time. Though he remained aloof from politics

yet considered political freedom as an essential cog in the spiritual fulfillment of mankind. Rather than probing into Vivekananda's desire to set up an institutional framework in the western countries, the narrative reinforces his image as a revivalist of Hinduism. The narrative judiciously appropriates certain events from his life to merge his ascetic identity into the discourse of modernity.

The skillful structural pattern along with lucid language recreates the identity of the sage within the garb of modernity. The idea is to project him as an entity who is capable of engaging between "temporal and ecclesiastical" at once. However, the argument stops short in explaining the shift in his philosophical and ideological thought processes during his stay in India as well as abroad. It focuses more on constructing and shaping his identity as a modern monk and does not question the discursive processes involved in it. The reduction of Vivekananda as an icon or a photograph to be displayed in the offices and politicization of his identity has been excluded from the core argument of the book. Despite some reservations, the book unfolds the lesser known aspect of his life and presents him more as a human than a saint.

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K.M. Ziyauddin, *Muslim Scavengers in India - Perception and Perspectives of Social Exclusion*, Saarbrücken, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012, 160 pp., ISBN: 978-3-8484-9669-3

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Muslim Scavengers in India by K.M. Ziyauddin is a pioneering work. There have been a few studies of the scavenging communities of different parts of India so far. However, the present work is the first on Muslim scavengers. Scavenging as an occupation involves the cleaning and sweeping of the streets, drains, and sewers. Manual scavenging refers to the manual removal of human excreta – known also as night-soil,[1] from dry latrines.[2] In India, manual scavenging is a caste-based occupation, carried out almost exclusively by Dalits. Practised by a large number of families across India, this occupation involves one of the worst and cruel forms of manual labor.

Ziyauddin has worked on the Muslim scavengers of Hyderabad. The book is a micro-level study of the identity of a highly marginalized community. A part of a Minor Research Project titled "Scavengers and their Occupations: Perception and Perspectives of Social Exclusion in the district of Hyderabad", the aim of Ziyauddin's research was to explore and understand

[1] "Night soil" is a euphemism for human excreta, which is collected by scavengers from privies during the night and sometimes used as fertilizer.
[2] Dry latrines are toilets without the modern flush system.

this ‘hidden’ population, who – according to the author – did not want to disclose its identity. The importance of this research lies not only in the fact that it deals with a community which has been excluded for long from both academia and policy making, but also with one which has been victimized and actively discriminated against over centuries. In his research, Ziyauddin has sought to understand the multi-layered identities of this group. He explores how the caste, religious, occupational, and familial identities interact with each other by conducting several interviews with different members of the community.

The book is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters are more of an introduction to social stratification in India and the socio-historical background of manual scavengers in India. Although across the world, there are various forms of social stratification, the Indian caste system is a unique social system. This uniqueness derives from the intertwined nature of its economic, occupational, social, and religious characteristics. Once a person is born into a caste, he or she, bound by the unwritten rules of the caste group, cannot change the social status. At the bottom of the Indian caste system are the “untouchables”, known also as Dalits. They are theoretically outside of the caste system and are traditionally considered to be the lowest group in the hierarchy of the Indian society. Scavengers comprise the lowest group within the category of the Dalits. Depending on the region, they are called “Bhangi”, “Mehtar”, “Halalkhor”, “Lalbeg”, and “Khakhrob”. Because of their lowest status, they had to do all the work which was

considered by the others to be unclean and polluting. Besides removing human and animal excreta, the scavengers also had to handle dead animals, flay them, and process their skin for leather production. The author points out that early Indian texts do not mention any caste-based responsibility for the removal of night-soil. However, he highlights that Vajasaney Samhita – one of the ancient Vedic Sanskrit texts – mentions the Chandals and Paulkasas as the slaves responsible for this work. The author assumes that it was only after the emergence of Muslim states in India that scavenging became a formal profession. To support his argument, he gives the example of the system of the bucket privies, which was designed and constructed by the Muslims for their women in *purdah*. Under British rule, the profession of manual scavenging became more formalized. Around this time, scavengers were employed especially in the railways and army for cleaning dry latrines.

Discussing the reasons for working as scavengers, the author argues that most of the people employed in this profession had to do it out of economic necessity. Members of different castes and communities had to take up cleaning toilets in various governmental institutions, including railways and army cantonments, in the hope of occupational benefits like stable salaries, health care, and pension.

Another interesting issue which Ziyauddin discusses is the issue of religious conversions. In order to escape caste discrimination, a large number of scavengers and sweepers – especially from North India – decided to convert from the Hindu

religion to Islam, Christianity, and Sikhism. He points out that in the past, several scavenging groups converted to these seemingly-more egalitarian religions in the hope of getting rid of their caste and occupational stigma. In reality, however, conversion hardly improved their status in the society. Moreover, since they were no longer Hindus, they could not benefit from the Scheduled Castes reservations.[3] The Indian Constitution says that "no person who professes a religion different from the Hindu, the Sikh, or Buddhist religion shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste".[4] This has led the author assume that the religious conversions happened due to economic compulsions and not necessarily because of religious convictions.

The next chapter deals with more specific issues like the measures taken by the government to enumerate the members of the scavenging community and uplift their status. Ziyauddin points out that during colonial period, British officials had difficulties in classifying the Indian population on the basis of their caste. In the 1911 Census Survey, the scavengers were registered under several tribal groups like *Adi Dharmi*, *Adi Dravida*, *Adi Karnataka*, and *Adi Andhra*. Over time, census methods improved. By the Census of 1931, the government put the number of scavengers across the country at two million. However, the author emphasizes the fact that it was – and still is

[3] Scheduled Castes (SCs) is the official designation for the historically underprivileged and marginalized groups in India.

[4] K.M. Ziyauddin, *Muslim Scavengers in India - Perception and Perspectives of Social Exclusion*, Saarbrücken, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012, p. 48.

– very difficult to know how many people were actually involved in manual scavenging. Fearing discrimination and social stigma, many are ashamed to admit that they clean toilets for a living. Discussing the socio-political measures for their upliftment, the author mentions the 1993 Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act. This act illegalized the construction of dry latrines and the employment of manual scavengers in cleaning them. Breaking this law was punishable with imprisonment up to one year and a fine of rupees 2,000 or both. This, however, did not manage to bring down the number of manual scavengers. On the contrary, the latter increased greatly over time. For instance in 1992, the Government of India claimed that there were 770,338 people engaged in the "unclean" occupation of cleaning human excreta. By 2012, however, the number doubled.

The fourth and final chapter is perhaps the most crucial. It presents the outcome of Ziyauddin's fieldwork. For his research, he conducted a series of interviews with Muslims working as scavengers in different parts of Hyderabad. He begins this chapter by presenting a brief history of Hyderabad. He then proceeds to describe the demographic and physical features of the city. Discussing the methods of his research, data collection, and fieldwork, Ziyauddin underlines the limitations of his study. Initially, the author developed an interview schedule, which was planned to be administered in the field. However, after several trips to the field and multiple discussions with his respondents, Ziyauddin realized the problems in identifying Muslims

scavengers. He points out that in Hyderabad, they are not only a hidden population, but also do not function as a coherent community. Consequently, he found his respondents and their families scattered around the city, in a bid to hide their identity. Therefore, he could not identify the target groups of his research in terms of their residence or living areas. He had to do this on the basis of their workplace. Since they are such a hidden population, the study of the whole community in its entirety was quite impossible. Moreover, the author had to change his initial plans for collecting information through scheduled interviews and adopt a different research method – snowball sampling. It was using this method that he was able to penetrate the community and slowly build his contacts one by one.

In the second half of the chapter, he presents six cases studies of Muslims working as scavengers. By analyzing them, he makes the following observations. He argues that the geographical locations of Muslim scavenging families in Hyderabad are quite random. All of his respondents work in different parts of the city. They clean either the toilets of mosques or those of railway stations. Some of these respondents and their families had migrated across neighborhoods within the city in order to hide their identity. They told him about other scavengers who had changed their professions and had migrated to other areas. For these people, leaving their jobs as scavengers also meant abandoning their old way of life. Many of them also had to change their surnames and social circles.

Perhaps one of the most important issues that come up in the discussion about Muslim scavengers is that of exclusion. In many cases, scavenging is a governmental employment that comes with certain standard benefits like pension and health care. Yet, as a job, it is perceived as something very degrading. Therefore, the existence of exclusion plagues the workers at all levels. The scavengers are marginalized by the society and perceived as outsiders even within their religious communities. Ziyauddin says that "[E]xclusion is there in the social relationship, social interaction and in establishing any contacts or matrimonial"[5]. He points out that some of the most visible signs of exclusion and discrimination surface in matters of marriage.

All of Ziyauddin's respondents talked about their problems in getting their sons and daughters married. Even when their sons were not employed as scavengers themselves, their fathers had to hide their occupational identity. Moreover, many of them ran into debt in order to pay the dowry expected of them as a gift at the wedding. One of the respondents narrated a tragic story of the death of his daughter, who was killed by her husband for not paying sufficient dowry. Another respondent hid the fact that his son-in-law also worked as a scavenger in the same institution as him. In many cases, marriages would not happen to other caste members, if the occupational identity would get revealed.

Based on his conversations with his respondents, the author observes that the scavenging community is divided into small

[5] K.M. Ziyauddin, *Muslim Scavengers in India*, p. 107.

groups. These groups do not interact with each other too frequently. In comparison to the Hindu scavengers of Hyderabad, he did not find much social solidarity among the Muslim scavengers. A large number of the Muslims of Hyderabad have migrated to Arab countries in the last two decades. This migration has had a dual effect on the socio-economic status of the remaining Muslims of the city. While it helped most to improve their status in the society, the scavenging communities became even more marginalized. In the concluding part of the book, Ziyauddin points out that there is a clear distinction between those Muslims working as scavengers or sweepers and those who have managed to change their occupation. The latter now work as motor mechanics, vendors, hawkers, auto drivers, or salesmen in small neighborhood shops.

The book has a few limitations. Most of these are closely linked with the way in which the author has conducted his fieldwork. The study is based on only six case studies. It is problematic to draw conclusions about a larger group based on so small a sample. Moreover, while discussing the social stratification of Indian society, the author focuses almost entirely on the Hindu caste system and does not explore how this relates to Muslim social groups. Similarly, in the first two chapters, he writes about the Hindu scavengers from other parts of India, but does not mention the situation of the Muslims of the same occupational groups. Thus, the title of the book – *Muslim Scavengers in India* ends up being somewhat deceiving.

The primary importance of the present book lies in the fact that it marks the initial foray in understanding a relatively unexplored community – the Muslims scavenging communities in Hyderabad. By looking at the lifestyle, religion, rituals, worldviews, and the idea of exclusion of his respondents, Ziyauddin portrays a nuanced picture of this community. In the process, it explores the intersection of two marginalized communities of India – "Muslims" and "scavengers". In sum, K.M. Ziyauddin's book opens up an entirely new field of study and raises new questions that future generations will have to grapple with.

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Arundhati Roy, *The End of Imagination*, Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2016, 408 pp., ISBN: 978-16084866191.

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Published in 2016, Arundhati Roy's *The End of Imagination* compiles essays, talks and lectures spanning over a period of roughly six years (1998−2004). The introductory part sets the current state of affairs in India, where topics such as vote bank politics, obsession of demography, *ghar wapsi*[1], *award wapsi*[2], caste system and untouchability[3], freedom, education and others are discussed. Many of these are elaborated and commented upon in the body of the book.

One cannot but admire the passion and vividness of Roy's discourse, her conviction and fixed belief with which she carries her thoughts and exerts an overwhelming, − almost magnetic – attraction on both readers and listeners. Roy has been defined as a "writer-activist", yet delving into her world, one discovers her utter lack of enthusiasm for this label as she feels it does injustice

[1] The returning home – that is, to Hinduim – of the indigenous people of India; as Roy explains, there is an undergoing attempt to convert native populations to Hinduism, to purify them of their pollution (lower castes are seen as polluted and need to be avoided at all costs).
[2] The phenomenon of artists spontaneously returning their awards received from the state.
[3] Referring to the lowest caste of the Indian social system.

to both words; instead, she prefers to be called a “storyteller”, one that wants to share her perspective and hopes to make a change.

Is the book an easy read? Depending on the kind of engagement, one of two answers is available: either yes, or no; personally, a strong “no” stands erect, like an ancient pillar that sustains the entire weight of the universe: the issues brought forth by Roy have a striking universality and hit home hard, regardless of the fact that they are explained in an Indian or American context – I shall do my best in selecting relevant examples to highlight these cross-cultural similarities.

Having in view the complexity of the subjects pondered upon, we are unable to point out each and every one of them; we shall, thus, sift through the pool and stop to dissect the ones appropriate for our society as well. The first of the stops entails a detailed view of the people and its relation to the State. Roy is very vocal when speaking of rights and the State’s ill treatment of its citizens. On multiple occasions, she has brought to surface the indifference of leaders toward the suffering of the many by pointing at projects such as dam building or implementing irrigation systems – at face value, one is tempted to judge Roy and condemn her attitude as erroneous, however, when one is confronted with the reality of the dispossession and displacement of millions of people, whose existence comes to a standstill, losing their livelihood and any future prospects for a better chance and the certainty that plans for dams and irrigation systems are being approved without proper studies or taking into

consideration the full impact on humans and the environment, then, the situation changes radically.

Can such a state be further called a State, when it builds its growth on the broken backs of the poorest of the poor, on shattered dreams, on millions condemned to always stay in the shadows and never have a recognized public identity? Do development and evolution justify such injustice?, she asks. "Our country is like a piece of meat being torn between hundreds of thousands of people for their own interests, in whose mouths the *Bhaarat Mata ki Jay*[4] is trumpeted", she remarks. Doesn't that sound oddly familiar? While the cake entitled Romania is being disputed by numerous individuals, each awaiting their fair share, the people are wasting away in a useless and ceaseless battle with the System, drowning in their own wails that no authority seems to hear, never able to even come close to a slice of what is theirs by right – Romania belongs to the people as well.

Is life worth living, then? Are dreams worth fostering? A strong "yes" sets into motion Roy's conviction that life is worth living to make a change, to put a stop to passivity and engage oneself in society through whatever one does best: literature, music, film etc. The only dream worth having, she says, is "living while you're alive and dying only when you're dead". How can we make that change happen? Not putting up with being sacrificed in the name of the *greater good* anymore; constantly questioning and digging deep enough for the truth, not stopping

[4] In translation: *Long live Mother India!*, p. 75.

midway for a rest because the state never tires, falls ill or ages, but its citizens do; encouraging and supporting what we love and not destroying what we hate; instead of slaughtering each other in the name of religion, we should hold hands in a bond that will surprise and shake the state to its core – nonviolent civil disobedience is the way to raise our voices and keep our identity untarnished as being different from *them*. We should no longer be satisfied by the crumbs that are thrown at us to deter our attention and force our energy be wasted in fighting for a morsel, when, in broad daylight, *they* are mapping and constructing our futures without us being informed or consulted. Although saddening, it is somewhat reassuring to know that one's own motherland is not the only one in a state of turmoil, where the governing powers treat the citizen as a piece of stained cloth that gets thrown into a whirlpool[5] only to get sucked to the bottom and be crushed by the rage of the water; if ever freed from the frenzy, it (the citizen) awakes, unsurprisingly, to the brilliance of the stains, which are still there, gleaming in the sunlight more than ever, accusingly – accusingly because no matter how passive or vocal one is, one shall forever bear the heavy burden of being responsible for acting and for not acting at all, as Roy puts it.

As Romanians, we are caught up in the definitions other nations provide for us, just like Indians are unable to escape the definitions penned by the white, as Roy mentions in her writing. Language, once the flag-bearer of thought, has now become a

[5] Like the ones found in rural Romania, usually made of wood on the rapid rivers and used to clean fabrics and clothes.

tool behind which individuals hide to mask true intent. We must treat with suspicion every word we are being fed, in order not to be cut out of our own lives. If the struggle dies, so does the spirit and whatever is left of it. There is a growing tendency in Romania – and in India, as confirmed by Roy – to train people to have masters and take orders, like well-behaved pets. Yet both countries proudly introduce themselves as healthy and just democracies. Roy underlines that it never was about knowledge as opposed to ignorance, but about one value system against the other. I dare say, a healthy, just and moral value system is unachievable without its primary ingredient: a healthy, just and moral education – which brings us to our second relevant subject to be examined.

Education seems to be anything but a priority, both in India, as well as in Romania. Roy emphasizes that, on a certain occasion, the home minister[6] declared that "education is not a pressing priority"[7]. Since the downfall of the Communist regime, Romania has had no less than a bit over 20 ministers of education[8], with the award-winning performance of six people holding the reigns of education in a single year (2012). If we add to the mix the fact that, more often than not, the first thing leaders do is change laws, rules and regulations concerning national exams and textbooks, we cannot but be thankful that the system is

[6] Minister of Home Affairs
[7] See *Summer Games with Nuclear Bombs*.
[8] If we calculate the average, we could say that no minister has held a seat for more than slightly a bit over a year.

still standing. The legitimate question comes without delay: what does education have to do with everything? It has precisely everything to do with everything: how do you control a nation? by controlling its people; how do you control the people? by enforcing power; and how do you acquire power? by kneeling the people; how do you achieve that? by keeping its citizens illiterate, making education unavailable to the masses and available only to the select few, adds Roy. Lack of education is synonymous with eternal winter and perpetual darkness: personal input is eaten up by the hungry beast that dictates thought process, but the most dangerous thing of all is the breaking of unity among the many. Manipulating masses is an incomparably easier task when the many stand unaware and divided. The poison of discord seeps in unknowingly, into the deepest and most hidden crevices of the human soul and once settled, only tremendous determination and heroic obstinacy in the form of healthy, just and moral education can wrench it out of its hiding place and purge it out of our systems. If unattended, it brews hatred and intolerance, blindly following mainstream opinions, regardless of their malicious content. Let us not become our worst enemy, let us not get comfortable in the victim seat either; Roy urges us not to give in to the NGO-ization of society since it is taking us in the opposite direction, namely making us dependent on aid and handouts – we need to rethink the meaning of civil disobedience. There is no doubt that both countries have progressed, but have the people kept up the pace? And at what cost? Is setting up a so-called bright future on the tired, hard-working backs of unsuspecting

citizens an achievement? I dare say it is a curse in disguise, for the plan is never fool-proof and it will backfire, sooner or later – and Roy advances this idea on multiple occasions. Therefore, are we truly free in the choices we make or is it a mock freedom which we naively celebrate, behind which lay in waiting sneering officials with lines ready to convince us of living in a true democracy?

Here we are, facing the third and last subject of our short endeavor: freedom. Are we truly free? – this is a question that pops up time and again in Roy's stream of thought. The answer she paints using her penmanship is far from a pretty one: if the pressure of selling well or being under the magnifying glass of a government dawns on us, will we still say the truth or lay our arms to rest for self-preservation? Murmuring, whispering the truth inaudibly has never brought change; voicing it, moreover, setting aside differences and breathing as a sole entity under the banner of rights to equality, justice, freedom, education and many more is what shall quicken the advent of a new order. "My world has died and I write to mourn its passing", notes Roy disheartened. However, newly found hope should never cease as it fuels action. Both countries have fought for independence, both have paid dearly for rights; people have won them, they were not awarded by any government, says Roy. It is time to re-imagine the ways we can "fight" for our rights, ultimately securing our wellbeing. This echoes the title of the book marvelously: once imagination is dead, so is humankind.

I will conclude with a few ideas related to change and underline, in unison with Roy, that time has come to demand our rights be respected, by, first, setting the proper example. Change is imminent and it may become far worse before it becomes better. Change can be terrifying or beautiful, it is all in our hands. Leaving you with a question from a recently released Hindi-language film called *Mom*[9], I encourage you to sincerely answer it: "*if you were to choose between wrong and very wrong, which would you choose?*[10]"

Bio-note: After having completed a B.A. in Philology, with the major in English and the minor in Hindi, Hilda-Hedvig Varga went on to finish her Master's studies in Religious Studies, both at the University of Bucharest. She is currently a PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Bucharest, with a thesis on *Hindu rites of passage*. Her interests encompass anything Indian, be it language and literature, history or philosophy.

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[9] Released on July 7th, 2017, the film is directed by Ravi Udyawar, and stars Sridevi, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and Akshaye Khanna, among others.

[10] In original, transliterated: "*galat aur bahut galat mein se agar chunna ho to aap kya chunenge*? "

Amelia BONEA, *The News of Empire: Telegraphy, Journalism, and the Politics of Reporting in Colonial India, c. 1830-1900*, Oxford Press, India, 2016, 400 pp., ISBN: 978-0199467129.

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In 2016 Amelia Bonea published an interesting research, *The News of Empire: Telegraphy, Journalism, and the Politics of Reporting in Colonial India, c. 1830-1900*, which can be situated at the intersection of journalism, telegraphy and politics. The book explains how the newspaper press during both Colonial India and the British Empire benefited from the evolution of the electrical telegraph in the nineteenth century. Moreover, it presents how the government managed to monitor and centralize the political and military news that could be offered to press agencies without affecting the rule of the British Empire, in general, and in colonial India, in particular.

Recently there have been published many academic works which deal with both newspaper press and periodical publications from nineteenth century colonial India. Just to name a few - Stuart H. Blackburn's book from 2006, *Print, Folklore, and Nationalism in Colonial South India*, and Joanne Shattock's study from 2017, *Journalism and the Periodical Press in Nineteenth Century Britain*. However, Amelia Bonea's research is unique due to the fact that she managed to present not only the history of the newspaper press in colonial India, but also how the

government maintained strict control over the official information that was distributed by the press Moreover, she discussed the important effect of the electric telegraph on the press and on the daily life of the people from nineteenth century India.

Amelia Bonea's research is a systematic study as it starts with an academical introduction explaining the reasons for choosing this topic and its importance, as well as with a short introduction into the history of journalism, the history of journalism in South Asia and the theories of communication. At the end of this introduction Bonea explains what methods she used and that she had divided the research into five chapters, each of them focusing on a specific problem of journalism and of the use of the telegraphic system in journalism in Colonial India. Finally, after the five extensive chapters on journalism and the implications of using the electric telegraph in journalism, the author offers a short conclusion in which she emphasizes the importance of telegrams in journalism and the impact of the human factor in the distribution of news in Colonial India in the nineteenth century.

In the first chapter the author explains how the communication of news in India and between Britain and India evolved during the nineteenth-century. Her starting point is the integration of the mechanical telegraphs at the end of the eighteenth century as part the post office service in 1837. Bonea ends her narrative in 1855, with the introduction of the wire telegraph network. Furthermore, in order to make her study more accessible to scholars not so familiarized with the means of spreading the news in India, she offers not only a description of

the evolution of the means of communication in the nineteenth century, but also she introduces her readers to various means of communication before the British occupation. In this chapter she explains how the Indian elites received manuscript newsletters from Mughal and Maratha courts with various official news, advice and other information through a rudimental local postal system where runners ensured the connection between sender and receiver.

In order to show the importance of the electric telegraph in daily life, Bonea starts the second chapter by offering "a variety of historical material in the form of popular and specialist press, memoirs, (auto) biographies, folk songs, and literary texts" (p. 29). Due to its fast evolution, the usage of the electric telegraph spread rapidly to other sectors besides the administrative structures and commerce. It had started to be used also for delivering information regarding the birth of a child, the death of a relative, details about a certain trip or even for sending money and conveying congratulations on various occasions. Finally, this chapter touches upon the manner in which electricity and this technology was described in the newspapers, the periodical press and scientific publications and how the telegraph became a part of the Indian collective memory after the 1857 Mutiny.

The third chapter details how the newspaper press functioned in nineteenth century India by taking into account "[the] perceptions of journalism and news reporting in Colonial India; the socio-economic background of journalists; and the processes of collection, transmission, and publication of news as well as its

eventual return into the public domain via subscription, distribution, and reading practices" (p. 149). However, the author's final goal in this chapter is not to build a faithful depiction of the evolution of the newspaper press system in colonial India, but to highlight the rising importance of telegrams in the construction of news articles, as the electric telegraph system itself evolved. Although in some cases the telegrams led to the spread of false news, while it helped to prevent disasters brought by weather in other cases.

The fourth chapter explains how the Indian colonial authorities managed to distribute only news useful for the general population to the newspapers agencies through certain means like "the establishment of the Editor's Room, government gazettes and the institution of the press commissioner" (p. 30), while restricting access to important political and military information. Moreover, this chapter also emphasizes the role of Reuters in India and succeeded "in taking over other ventures for news distribution such as the *Times of India* Telegraphic Agency, and its role in promoting a vision of news as a commodity that needed to be protected through copyright" (p. 30).

The final chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section Bonea offers a detailed depiction of the evolution of news-reporting practices, advertising, and the incorporation of the telegrams into "English-language journalism in colonial South Asia" by offering examples of these practices "in two major Anglo-Indian newspapers, the *Bombay Gazette* and the *Englishman*" (p. 30). The second section shows how two

important events, an international and a domestic one, were represented in the newspaper press in India. Furthermore, she explains how the telegraphic system helped journalists access information quickly, although the information was not always reliable due to the misinformation infiltrated by the British officials in the telegrams.

In conclusion, it may be said that Amelia Bonea's research, *The News of Empire: Telegraphy, Journalism, and the Politics of Reporting in Colonial India, c. 1830-1900*, is a highly innovative study because it explains the development of journalism in colonial India from 1830 to 1900. The book also shows how news reached to the editors of the newspapers through the telegraphic system and how the evolution of this system changed the very nature of journalism. Furthermore, the work highlights not only the way in which the colonial Indian government managed to restrict or permit access to official information to reach newspaper agencies, but also the role of Reuters in the distribution of news in Colonial India.

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Materials, as well as general inquiries, can be sent via e-mail at mihaela.gligor@ubbcluj.ro.

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