

CLIMATE CHANGE, LAND AND CULTURE: AN ARTIST'S PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract¹

Relation to the land plays an important part in culture, social identity and food security. Climate change is bringing about a new understanding of a community's dependence on the land. Cultural exchange is an essential human response to changes taking place in the environment, and also patterns of social change brought about by modern forms of development. Environmental concerns, along with social justice, must determine how local communities must address the challenge of climate change, and the culture of the poor whose livelihood and culture are shaped by the landscape which is their homeland.

Keywords: Climate; Culture; Inculturation; Indigenous people; Justice; Land; Language

Climate change is increasing our understanding of the relation of human culture to the natural resources that are to be found on this planet earth. The perennial wisdom to be found in all cultures recognizes that the way human beings use natural resources should

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show a respect for the integrity of the environment. Culture should not be in conflict with nature, but should recognize that all human beings together with other living creatures depend on nature for their livelihood. Human life is integral with the life that is to be found in nature around us. To exploit and ultimately destroy the sources of life in the natural world is to alienate the human community from the interconnectedness of all created forms that we find in the world that we inhabit.

As an artist I have been very concerned with the landscape.² This landscape is not a given entity, but is constantly being shaped by the way communities and cultures relate to the land. The landscape changes as climate changes. In fact the rhythm of the different seasons has been the preoccupation of cultural ways of celebrating the harmony between human lifestyles and the rhythms of growth, death and renewal of life that characterizes natural processes. What in Indian thought is termed "*ritu*", is the basis for the spiritual rituals of life that connect the human community to nature. Nature is not simply something external, limited to objective phenomena. It is also at the heart of a human self-understanding, as we are part of nature. In that sense what we are calling "nature" is an essential component of human consciousness. In fact, indigenous communities have understood consciousness as a state of mindfulness that extends beyond the human person, and is present in all natural forms in different ways. The human response to nature, which is the basis for culture, is a conscious awareness of our place within nature.

Climate change is related to our inner self-consciousness. It is not only the concern of a scientific and rational understanding of how nature works. Climate change affects our own spiritual growth. It is from this viewpoint that we look at the landscape as linked to the creative imagination, and the way we work with natural materials. Material culture shapes the way we live, and express our oneness with nature. Many artists today are responding to the ecological crisis by creatively engaging with an "eco-art".

Such an art addresses the problem of our cultural alienation from nature. What we understand as "modern culture" is in many ways seen as a departure from natural forms. Human artifacts increasingly use artificial materials like plastic or cement. The machines that have

²The history of art is not only about human communities, but also about how culture is part of nature. Human beings have been closely tied to an experience of the land, which is very much the "body" of culture, providing the forms that culture has taken from its natural environment. (G. Jellicoe, S. Jellicoe, 1975, S. Schama, 1995).

been invented by a human desire to control nature, lead to forms of lifestyle that are alienated from nature. We now have largely lost the imaginative awareness of the natural origins of the items we daily use in our consumer society. More and more modern society is defined by a city culture that is artificial.

Impact of Modernity on Traditional Indigenous Worldviews

This sense of alienation from nature, is affecting the way in which indigenous communities living close to the earth, are being made homeless, and marginalized. Climate change is affecting the livelihood of those who have always depended on nature for sustenance. There is a real connection between the way in which nature is exploited, and the exploitation of the poor of this earth. The ecological crisis that is to be noted in the effects of climate change is ultimately a spiritual and cultural crisis. It is in this context that we need to reflect on the spiritual significance of the way we approach the land.³

There is much concern in our present world about sustainable development. Movements that have stressed the need for self-sufficiency, and cultural identity in a particular place, have transformed the focus of those extended imaginative practices that express the human involvement in a natural environment.

A People on the Move

Writing these reflections at a time of great stress caused by a Pandemic, and also severe disruption of the pattern of seasons, due to Climate Change, we are made aware of the suffering of many rendered homeless in urban work places, and vulnerable in remote villages without medical infrastructure. The human lack of foresight, and wilful negligence, are linked to the spread of devastation and disease. The earth that provided a caring home for all living creatures has seemingly turned against life. It is in this context that we need more than ever a "Theology of the Land." This land is both sacred and profane; a gift, but also a curse to those who misuse its plenty.

How do we understand the context of those who are dispossessed from the land? A better word than "dispossessed" would be "displaced", as we are not speaking about possession, but rather dislocation.⁴ I think that it is generally understood that colonialism

³Cfr "Insights from Asian Indigenous Peoples in Light of *Fratelli Tutti*," a key note paper presented by Jojo M. Fung, SJ at the "Politics of the Land," introduction.

⁴See Claude Alvares, *Decolonizing History*, The Other Bookstore, 1991, 18-75.

changed the relation of subject peoples, to the land they cultivated.⁵ The concept of land ownership was given by colonialists a new status, with relation to a system of taxation, or the collection of land revenues. The basic statement of indigenous communities: "We belong to the land, but the land does not belong to us" needs to be understood, when thinking about the fundamental relation between a people and the land they inhabit.

Every tradition is rooted in the land. However, what "the land" means is determined by what artists call the "landscape." This landscape is something that is in constant relation with human cultures, and the way communities have shaped the landscape. Living in a village outside Bengaluru, I have become very much aware of how the landscape is constantly changing. I note that even in the brief span of a generation, how the landscape has changed around me!

Land is not understood in this context as a fixed "territory." The landscape is not about borders; something quantifiable, which government surveyors mark out on maps. The landscape is our elemental experience of the material world in which we live. It is an environment, a habitat. We are responsible for the shaping of the landscape. The landscape is changed by the way we care for the land. Our environment changes through cultural exchanges that take place in community life. It is this living exchange that constitutes a culture. Culture, like the landscape, is not something static, or given.

For the indigenous people who live close to the land, the land is something living. It is not just a dead thing. When the British colonial authorities first began surveying the land, they asked the local inhabitants "To whom does this land belong?" The question was difficult to understand for the original dwellers on the land. "How can land belong to us?" they asked. "We belong to the land, but we do not possess the land." Land, for indigenous people is not just a place, but also a life. An *Adivasi* is reported to have said: "If you take away the land, you take away our life."⁶

⁵Fung notes that where colonialism left off, development took over, and that 'ecological refugees' constitute one third of the Indian population. Quoting Sarah Jewitt "Europe's Others?...Practices in Colonial and Post Colonial India," OUP 2004. Cfr also Alvares, *Decolonizing History*, 1991.

⁶Dr Marianus Kujur of the Xavier Institute of Social Service, remarked that Land is life, not a commodity. A people's homeland encompasses a worldview or holistic understanding of life. Alienation from the land gives rise to a sense of lifelessness. Note: The term "Adivasi" meaning an aboriginal people, should not be generalized, as Adivasi cultures in India are very diverse.

Finally speaking the land does not even belong to any political authority. In ancient societies the King was seen as a vice-regent. The authority of an earthly King represented a Divine Presence. Meister Eckhart spoke of the “aristocracy of every human being.” Every person is called to be a King, in that the Presence of the Divine is in every person. The land belongs to the individual person, in so far as the person is also the dwelling place of the Divine Creator.

The Culture of Migrant Peoples

The relation of the migrant to the individual settled on the land and assuming a piece of land to be a personal possession, implies a profound cultural shift of consciousness. This is not only about a sense of ownership or entitlement, but is also related to how an individual understands a sense of self-identity, based on the physical body. The land is a projection of how we perceive the body, or the material existence in which we live. Is nature something that we can possess, and in that sense exploit? The prostitution of nature is intimately connected with the prostitution of the body.

Pope Francis talks about a “culture of exchange.” What is meant by “exchange”? Ancient societies were often characterized as based on the exchange of gifts.⁷ By this we do not just mean the bartering of commodities. The exchange of gifts lies in a deeper sense that there is a gratuitous aspect in our relation to physical things. The physical, material word is a doorway to the spirit. In that sense what we call “culture” is a form of giving, and also receiving. We speak of the imaginative capacity of an individual as a “gift.” To be creative is to be gifted, receptive to the gift of relationship.

The Concept of Culture as Exchange in *Fratelli Tutti*

Pope Francis speaks in *Fratelli Tutti* of “An exchange of gifts for the common good” (FT 190). He does not suggest that what is “exchanged,” are “different cultures.” Culture, he seems to imply, is something that emerges out of the very process that takes place when an exchange of thoughts, values, or more profoundly, spiritual vision takes place. Culture is a perspective, a way of seeing, and expressing a shared vision. It is not to be reified, or made into a prescriptive formula. In that sense, what Pope Francis is outlining is different

⁷Relation of the concept of “Exchange” to “Exchange of gifts.” In a gift economy human interaction is not based on monetary exchange, but on the symbolic importance of gifts. This is highlighted in the writings of anthropologists, and those concerned with culture as a gift. Cf. Mauss, *The gift*, U.K. Routledge, 1950 (trans. 1954), and Lewis Hyde, *The Gift*, New York, Vintage books, 1979, 96-121.

from what was understood originally as “inculturation” as a way of relating Gospel to culture. We cannot exchange one culture for another, in the way we exchange artefacts.

We need to distinguish between culture and tradition. Tradition is something that might be termed “material culture.” We approach the material culture of ancient peoples by understanding their life style, what they used. Traditions always change, depending on the circumstances of a community. Traditions are part of history. In a broader sense, traditions bring about civilizations. However, every civilization is time bound. It is something that flowers, but also goes to seed. A civilization has a beginning but also an end. Creative art cannot go back to the past. We might value what is past, but creativity is something that grows. It is a way of responding to the present by looking forward to the future.

Indigenous societies have no concept of “art” as understood by the art market. Art is not defined by what is made. Once, when I was visiting a Santhali village I asked about the art of this community. I was told that the Santhalis had no art! I was surprised. Looking at the traditional Santhali village it seemed to me that everything came out of their approach to art. The way they created beautiful woven baskets, even made a household broom into a work of art, or plastered the walls of their earthen houses with soft clay from the fields, using the movement of the hand to create a pattern on the surface of a wall—all this originated in a creative impulse giving life to the whole community. The distinction made between a so-called “fine art” and a craft is an artificial distinction. It is not the product, but a creative process that constitutes art.

Creativity is not a matter of just imposing an idea on a material—that was how in the Renaissance the Fine Artist was understood as transcending the material with a creative imagination. An Eastern approach to creativity relates to a respect for materials. Art is a dialogue with the material world, liberating a spiritual dimension that lies present in the material world.

Fraternity as the Spirit of a Cosmic Covenant

The encyclical *Laudato Si'* is about relationship to the land. When St Francis spoke of Brother Fire, or Sister Water, he was approaching the elemental land from the point of view of a “Cosmic Covenant.” Here we find an extension of a covenantal spirituality that informs what Pope Francis calls the “culture of exchange.” Exchange is not about the giving and receiving of tangible goods, but about life itself. When the Good Samaritan rescues (another Biblical word is ‘redeems’) the

injured traveller who has fallen by the wayside, he does not make an exchange of what can be measured or quantified. What this exchange is about is “substituted love,” the gift of life. For the Buddhist it may be understood as the relationship of a helper, or Saviour, who is figured in the future *Maitreya*. He is the Vedic *Mithra*, a keeper of a bond, a commitment to be involved with all creatures, until “the last blade of grass is liberated.” This is the understanding of the *Bodhisattva*, who is committed to remain with creatures as an eternal friend.⁸

The universal friend, for whom all creatures are part of a fraternity, is a binding relationship that St Francis establishes with the elemental world. It is this approach to exchange as relationship, as a covenant between the Creator and Creation, that gives meaning to all forms of relationship between creatures, illuminates a spiritual network, informing an ecological understanding of a unity which includes diversity. This is what represents the common good. We read in *Fratelli Tutti*:

All this calls for the ability to recognize other people’s right to be themselves and to be different. This recognition, as it becomes a culture, makes possible the creation of a social covenant. Without it, subtle ways can be found to make others insignificant, irrelevant, of no value to society. While rejecting certain visible forms of violence, another more insidious kind of violence can take root: the violence of those who despise people who are different, especially when their demands in any way compromise their own particular interests (FT 218).

Pope Francis insists on a respect and inclusion of the poor within a “cultural covenant”:

When one part of society exploits all that the world has to offer, acting as if the poor did not exist, there will eventually be consequences. Sooner or later, ignoring the existence and rights of others will erupt in some form of violence, often when least expected... It often happens that good ideas are not accepted by the poorer sectors of society because they are presented in a cultural garb that is not their own and with which they cannot identify. A realistic and inclusive social covenant must also be a “cultural covenant”, one that respects and acknowledges the different worldviews, cultures and lifestyles that coexist in society (FT, 219).

Statements like these help in re-assessing the process that has been termed “inculturation.” Inculturation should be a covenant, an

⁸What Pope Francis calls the “Culture of Exchange” involves an understanding of inter-religious dialogue. In this context “inculturation” is concerned with a dialogue with the cultural traditions of ‘Other Faiths’. Cf S. Mark Heim, *Crucified Wisdom*, USA: Fordham University Press, 2019.

exchange that gives life. This culture of exchange is about respecting other people, and the way they choose to live. It is not just about preserving the past, or appropriating the culture of others, but is an understanding of the future. It is about preserving the land so that future generation can live.⁹

Land and Language

We need to look at a vocabulary and syntax based on an experience of the land. What we understand by a local language shows the development of a network of symbols based on the land as an environment, having particular features and an ecology that underlies a network of meanings that we ascribe to a language. Perhaps here we find that there is an ecology of language itself; metaphors that are rooted in the community experience of wandering over the land. This experience of the land and interaction with natural elements, gives rise to stories, as a community not only walks, but also “sings the land”; evoking the passage of a particular community as it moves through the landscape. The recitation of a story becomes the myth of a wandering people, mapping out a spiritual journey, like the Exodus story of the Hebrew tribes. To be displaced from this landscape is to lose the memory of a land of promise; to be not merely migrants, but also exiles. The displacement of a community who are no longer part of the land that is their inner map, giving rise to a sense of being in communion with the land, is to lose their native tongue, born out of a feeling of being rooted in the land.

‘Inculturation’ has often been thought of as a form of translation. The Missionary goes to those who do not accept the Gospel, carrying a copy of the Bible. This is a written text, which carries the authority of the Word of God. It appears in the form of a written book. The local person who relies on an oral tradition, one that tells stories, and not on the authority of written documents, says to the Missionary, “my book is the land. I know how to read the landscape. What does your book have to tell me about the land which is my life?”¹⁰

⁹The problem of “appropriation” relates also to a cultural colonization, which has become a concern that affects certain aspects of “inculturation” where cultural forms characteristic of “Other Faiths” are taken over as a way of “translating” the Christian message by using the visual and poetic language of non-Christian Faith systems, in order to make the Christian Gospel more intelligible to people of “Other Faiths”. Cf Kathleen J. Martin, *Resistance and Change: Visual Culture, Missionization and Appropriation*, U.K. and U.S.A.: Ashgate, 2010, 9-39.

¹⁰The linguist Vijay D’Souza, in his intervention at the Symposium on the ‘Politics of the Land,’ spoke of the work of Dr Rimi Tadu, and mentioned a story about a

Here there is an important connection between the land and a local language. Perhaps the most important shift when talking about the Liturgy in the first document of the Second Vatican Council was a stress on a local language that the community of believers could understand and relate to. The Word of God has to be presented in a language of the People, not just in a sacred language which only priests are familiar with.

In the process of translating liturgical texts, and the Holy Bible, into local languages, it was the written text that dominated. What is the relation of the text to the margins? How does the text relate to the landscape that is the book of those living close to the land? This was the concern in the Middle Ages for those who tried to devise a "*Biblia Pauperum*," or 'Bible of the Poor.' This 'Bible of the Poor' was presented in the form of images—stained glass windows, or sculptures. It was also enacted through mystery plays.¹¹

The Voice of the Land: Oral Culture as Physical Gesture and Movement

Sacred spaces, holy groves, rivers, mountains, along with pilgrimages, festivals, dancing and singing, all that is embodied in the rhythms of the land—this language can illumine the text of the written book. It is here in the unwritten margins of the book that the Word of God speaks to the heart.

There is a difference between a language arising from lived experience and language documented in transportable things (such as books). Among the Khasis in Meghalaya I came across a story about how wandering tribes lost their written documents. I was told that originally stories were inscribed on things, but as the migrants had to cross many mountains and valleys, and had to swim through rivers, they were not able to preserve tangible things. They had to swallow their stories, recorded in material objects. In the process their stories were no longer in outer things, but were absorbed into

priest Fr Quick who visited a chieftain of the Apatani Community in Arunachal Pradesh in the first half of the 19th century, bringing with him a copy of the printed Bible. In a semi fictionalized version of this story the chieftain poses the question relating to reading the landscape.

¹¹Visual language involves a different syntax and grammar from spoken or written words. Many "oral cultures" rely on images, and songs rather than written texts, and have been designated as the culture of the illiterate. It is in this context that images have been used in preference to the written word, when communicating religious truths to those who cannot read. This art was called in the Middle Ages the "Bible of the Poor" or "*Biblia Pauperum*," Cf. David Zersen, *Biblia Pauperum*, Bangalore: ATC . 2008, 7-24.

their physical bodies. Here was a graphic way of relating text to context. Kabir said that we should "listen to the body." Our lived experience is integral with our physical environment and the body.¹²

The term "marginal" in this context is significant. "The margins" of a text lie on the outside of a written document, forming the space in which the written document is framed. "Marginal" communities are often based on an oral culture, a culture that is within the frame of their bodies. It has been remarked that the culture of primal people is to be found in their dance, in the way they move and gesture. It is a spoken language that comes from the heart.

The worldview of indigenous people is founded on a cosmology in which culture is seen as part of nature, and not just set against natural or elemental realities in the world. It is this wisdom that indigenous cultures speak about through their myths, rituals, and healing arts. This living wisdom we are trying to regain, and revalue; not by just going back to a primitive past, but by seeing that it has relevance for the future of our planet earth.

The process that underlies the technology of mining the land is regarded with deep misgivings in ancient myths and symbol systems. As we read in the book of Job:

Silver has its mines and gold a place for refining.
Iron is extracted from the earth, the smelted rocks yield copper.
Man makes an end of darkness when he pierces the uttermost depths, the black and lightless rock.
Mines the lamp-folk dig in places where there is no foothold, and hang suspended far from mankind...
Man attacks its flinty sides, upturning mountains by their roots, driving tunnels through the rocks, on the watch for anything precious.
He explores the sources of rivers, and brings to daylight secrets that were hidden.
But tell me, where does wisdom come from?
Where is understanding to be found? (Job 28:1-12) (Jerusalem Bible.)

To delve deep into the earth to discover there the secret treasures that lie hidden in the bowels of Mother land, is to go back to the womb in an attempt to despoil it of its riches. It is a form of physical violence that is manifested in an attempt to rape the life-giver.

¹²Visual language can be understood as "embodied language." The form that we see, is experienced as a form of incarnation. Cf. Linda Hess, *Bodies of Song*, India: OUP, 2015, 36-47.

The Life of the Land

The sacred grove is the place of the ancestors—it is the domain of the spirits who control the land. In the grove is the shrine where the seed of life is preserved. This is the “*bija*” which is generated again and again. Cut down the sacred grove, and the link that the living have with the world of the spirits is broken.

Destroying the grove is not just about breaking the cycle of sustainable growth, but is also the loss of a community memory, of being bound to a lineage that has its root (*moolasthanam*) in sacred groves. This connects, according to a primal worldview, with the meaning of wholeness and healing in the community and individual. The grove is not only the place of a perennial wisdom, but is also a symbol of hospitality and healing to be found in the elemental forms of nature. Dr Marianus Kujur reports that for the Adivasis of Chotanagpur their displacement from the land means that they become lifeless, and they no longer have the will and energy to live.¹³ This is also significant because the mining industry that displaces whole communities also makes the land something that is dead, unable to support the life of natural growth. This destruction of the life of the land relates to an ecology that is part of a pattern of life that is the basis for the culture of an indigenous people. This cultural ecology includes systems of healing, and well being which integrates the community not only with their natural environment, but also a sense of the presence of their ancestors, whose bodies have become one with the land.

It is in that sense that to take away the land is to take life away from each person whose source of identity lies in the community, and its rootedness in the land. To make human beings landless is in a way to kill the individual person. It is a form of violence—the ultimate violence of murder. “You must not kill” entails “You must not take away the land; you must not deprive the person who is the meeting of soul and body, the right to be physically whole.” The relation of land to person, is a relation of wholeness.

The relation of land to trees and vegetation in general, goes back to neolithic times.

In deep antiquity human beings received all that was necessary for life from the godly trees. All people were equal. Happiness reigned everywhere. But the trees gradually started giving less and less fruits, and

¹³Dr. Marianus Kujur, from the Xavier Institute of Social Service, spoke at the “Seminar on the Politics of the Land” on how Adivasis of Chotanagpur and Jharkhand, look at poverty and who controls and manages the land.

humanity was threatened with ruin. At this time the first Tirthankara Rabha appeared. Having given laws, knowledge, sword, agriculture, trade, cattle breeding and ink, he saved the people. He created books on sciences and religions, but the language of these books was forgotten. They are, however, retold in various languages.¹⁴

There are a number of *Adivasi* creation stories related to the tree. In central India we have among the Kharia tribe the legend of the *Karam* Tree. This tree is also known as the '*Karam Raja*,' and is the same tree as the *Kadam* tree that is linked to legends of Krishna in the Bhagavata Purana. There we learn about a Krishna connected with a youthful tribal hero of the Brindavan forest.

The connection between trees and the land is the basis of the *Sarna* Faith system – the *Sarna* being the sacred grove, also known as *Jaer* or *Jaher* among the Santhalis. The sacred grove is the holy place of an *Adivasi* belief in the life of the land. It is in this symbolism of the tree that the relation of life to the land is made apparent, and preserved as a sign for future generations on earth. The grove is the abode of the Earth Mother – the womb of all that grows from the seed embedded in the soil.

It has been pointed out that many indigenous people are not against development understood as growth, so long as it is sustainable.¹⁵ If we study the different myths and symbols that characterize indigenous cultures, people who lived close to the forests that once covered the land, were always aware of the need to use their skills to develop both their task to cultivate the land and also increasing their knowledge of nature.¹⁶ The city of Hazaribagh, in the heart of a land of many forests and tigers, was the place where the Buddha wandered in search of enlightenment. This same land in the valley of the Damodar river that is a tributary of the Ganges, is today the most ravaged by the industry of mining. The *Lohar Kahani* an ancient tribal myth among Munda and Uroan/Oraon tribes, is about the indigenous settlers in this part of the Eastern Ghats who initiated the work of mining iron ore.¹⁷

¹⁴Notices of the Jains received from Carukirti Acharya, the chief pontiff in Belligola, Mysore.

¹⁵"Indigenous peoples are not opposed to progress, yet theirs is a different notion of progress, often more humanistic than the modern culture of developed peoples" (FT 220).

¹⁶cf Jojo Fung on industries such as mining, metal industries, mega-dams, and multipurpose hydro-electric projects in his paper discussing "Policy Development: Social Justice Perspective" circulated by the *Laudato Si'* Research Institute, Campion Hall, in Oxford.

¹⁷Oral traditions are very much linked with myths which are the basis for a whole belief system that includes rituals. Cf. A. Van Exem, SJ, *The Religious System of the*

Prehistoric Adivasi settlements in this land rich in minerals indicate mining activities and rock shelters along the edge of the valley. According to this myth, the work of mining the earth led to the destruction of nature, created by the green god *Haram*. This is a long mythic tradition going back to the beginning of our common era, possibly to the time of the Buddha. Finally it was only through sacrifice that the balance of culture and nature could be restored, according to the *Lohar Kahani* or Story of the Iron Smelters.

The Connection between *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*

Indigenous people feel that they “belong” to the land, because they are rooted in the living land, and its place in the cosmological scheme of things. This sense of being rooted, or growing from the land, is not about property, but comes from a feeling of identification with all that the land nurtures, or supports.

As an artist, I have a sense that it is here that we may discern the connection between ethics and aesthetics. Perhaps the whole problem underlying what we are now understanding as the Ecological Crisis, lies in an approach to development that comes not from an innate capacity in the human conscience for reverie, or reverence for creation, but rather a functional way of rational thinking, that underlies a technological link with science; seeing nature ultimately in mechanistic terms, rather than appreciating the life of the land.

Pope Francis, is very conscious of the relation of the global to the local. He argues that in fact the need to “broaden our horizons” involves respecting local cultures rooted in the land. He writes in his encyclical:

There can be a false openness to the universal, born of the shallowness of those lacking insight into the genius of their native land or harbouring unresolved resentment towards their own people. Whatever the case, “we constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good which will benefit us all. But this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God (FT 145).

This wholeness Pope Francis advances through the image of the polyhedron (we may think of the geodesic dome that is a convex polyhedron made of triangles). This wholeness is created out of the many-faceted, rather than the uniform. In his vision of a New Culture, he writes:

Munda Tribe, Ranchi: Haus Volker und Kulturen, 1982, 9-27. See also: Victor Rosner, SJ, *The Flying Horse of Dharmes*, Ranchi: Satya Bharati Publishers. 1982, 1-8, 160-175

Life, for all its confrontations, is the art of encounter. I have frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter capable of transcending our differences and divisions. This means working to create a many-faceted polyhedron whose different sides form a variegated unity, in which "the whole is greater than the part" (FT 215).

Pope Francis discusses at some length the need for a respectful and constructive dialogue between people of different cultures and belief systems: "A country flourishes when constructive dialogue occurs between its many rich cultural components: popular culture, university culture, youth culture, artistic culture..." (FT 199).

Authentic social dialogue involves the ability to respect the other's point of view and to admit that it may include legitimate convictions and concerns (FT 203).

Such a dialogue is also based on the rights of peoples and cultures.

Indeed, justice requires recognizing and respecting not only the rights of individuals, but also social rights and the rights of peoples (FT 126).

The experience of being raised in a particular place and sharing in a particular culture gives us insight into aspects of reality that others cannot so easily perceive (FT 144).

Conclusion

An approach to culture and the land, is intimately connected with a concern for human dignity, and the universal right to life. This vision linking an ecological worldview, to a belief in justice for the poor and marginalized opens the door to an eco-art, which affirms beauty both in the landscape, and in the human community and culture.

Climate Change, like the Pandemic that we are experiencing at this time, is something that affects everyone. It is a warning that nature belongs to all, and must not be exploited. However, the poor and marginalized, like the migrant workers who lost their livelihood during the lockdown imposed to stop the spread of the virus, are the ones who suffer the most. The prophetic vision that is articulated in the encyclicals of Pope Francis, points to the connection between Climate Change, and injustice to the poor and marginalized.

An art committed to ecology, is also an art which points to the liberation of those who have suffered from all forms of colonialism, that characterize the consumer market that dominates the global economy of today.