

Editorial

BEING HUMAN AND BELONGING TO A COMMUNITY: Product and Project of Dialogue

According to Wittgenstein, "The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity. (One is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes)."¹ That human beings are not solitary individuals but belong to a community and engage in various forms of dialogue are among such important facts that "are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity." It is often a temptation to think that independent of others one might exist, live and have one's being separate from and independent of others. This is impossible logically and practically. As individuals, though human beings are complete in themselves and separate from others, they are just beings-in-the world, as other objects in the world. In the process of being human subjectively we expand our horizons to being-together-with others in a community. Our existence becomes coexistence and pro-existence, and the world is made a human world, rather than a biological environment. As active and free agents living in the world, we realise ourselves not in seclusion but in a life of conversation and collaboration with fellow human beings. Belonging to a community is fundamental and dialogical.

From an anthropological point of view, dialogue is species specific to human beings so much so that human beings can be described as *homo loquens* as much as they can be characterized as *homo sapiens* and *homo fabiens*. That we are *homo loquens* and dialogue partners is not just a homely reminder of an empirical fact but an existentially fundamental fact of life showing who we are and how we live. Co-reflection as *homo sapiens* and collaboration as *homo fabiens* are possible only through conversations as *homo loquens*. This is fundamental, meaning, it has something to do with the way we live; it is constitutive of

¹Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953, 129.

our life, individually and socially. We are in collaboration and conversation with other human beings in an inter-subjective world. Dialogue of words, deeds and life are interwoven and play fundamental roles in the project and process of belonging to a community and becoming fully human. Living human beings are not just present in the material world in direct interaction with other objects in the world, but also in a human world, where our being and becoming fully human depend on our interaction with fellow human beings. The notion of becoming fully human does not mean that there are degrees of more or less in human beings. None of the human beings are less than human beings, even when some of the physical or mental faculties are not fully developed. What the notion of 'fully' picks up is that human beings are not just born; they are formed and they become. There is a dialogical process of belonging to a community and becoming fully human.

Though we are born as natural beings, we become persons through nurture. Human babies are equipped with fewer instincts and skills for survival compared with other animal species and have long periods of infancy and maturation. Nurture comprises those aspects of human activity that are socially rather than genetically transmitted. We belong to a community in our characteristic ways of being human. A person in being present to the world naturally is present also to other human beings socially. Being present to others is characteristically different from being present to objects and this capacity is of enormous significance in the growth and development of a human being – on being a person. As Margret Archer observed, "It is just as ineluctable that we have subject/subject relationships in the social realm as that we had subject/object relations in the practical world and bodily/environmental relations in the nature. The three together make up the human condition; they stem from our human nature and we would not be recognisably human in the absence

of any of them.”² In every significant event in human life, we could see the overlapping and criss-crossing of nature and nurture, and individual and community. The making and maintaining of a community is a joint venture of nature and, nurture, and it is effected through dialogue.

The survival and wellbeing of human society and the universe depends on effective dialogue. “Sociocultural changes in the world, with their inherent tensions and difficulties, as well as the growing interdependence in all sectors of society necessary for living together, for human promotion, and, above all, for pursuing the demands of peace, all render a dialogical style of human relationships – today ever more urgent.”³ The spirit of dialogue is an attitude of respect and friendship that permeates different forms of life. Nurturing dialogue in all the fields of thoughts, action and life, is necessary for promoting peace and harmony in the contemporary society, marked by political, ethnic, and religious conflicts. There are different persons and institutions involved in the practice and promotion of dialogue in various forms. Mathematics, Economics, Literature, Ethnicity, Politics, Religion, etc. are some of the “aspects of things that are most important for us” that are explored from the perspective of dialogue in this issue of *Journal of Dharma* on “Dialogue and Society.”

We begin our investigations with “Mathematics as an Agent of Dialogue in the Society” by Joseph Varghese Kureethara and Mayamma Joseph. They begin with an obvious fact: Though Mathematics is mostly considered as a subject of the intelligent, it is used by everybody for daily activities. It acts as an efficient agent of dialogue in the society. Its role in transferring abstract knowledge to concrete experience, in interpreting the unknown and as a tool for problem-solving are discussed in this paper.

²Margret Archer, *Being Human: the Problem of Agency*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 215.

³“The Attitude of the Church toward the Followers of Other Religions: Reflections and Orientations on Dialogue and Mission,” 21 <<http://www.cimer.org.au/documents/DialogueandMission1984.pdf>> (20 Feb 2017).

Mathematics also helps human beings to transcend from concrete experience to abstract knowledge. This paper showcases various elements of Mathematics over a wide spectrum, from those are useful in the everyday life of human beings to the discussions on potential and actual infinity. Mathematics is an integral part of human life and an essential tool in knowing the universe. The authors do not deliberately side with any of the schools in Mathematics or that of Philosophy.

Utilizing Wacquant's theorization of urban ghetto, Willard Enrique R. Macaraan, in his paper "Filipino Catholics in Japan and Ambiguity of 'Full Integration'," argues, based on a field study of selected churches in the Archdiocese of Tokyo, that the negotiated existence of Filipino Catholics in Japan, at least in the Archdiocese, has shifted from being a "sworded victim" to being a "shielded enclave." In response to aging demographics and increasing nonreligiosity of the young, the Archdiocese initiated a vision of "full integration," generally understood as a strategic goal to achieve an image of a multicultural Church that implies a call to end any dynamics of "swording" on the part of the dominant group as well as "shielding" among the subordinated ones. In deconstructing the ambiguity of "full integration," the paper analyses traces and cues provided by the Filipino Catholics' negotiated existence in the Archdiocese of Tokyo. In addition, the paper makes use of ideations from Will Kymlicka's bi-partite multicultural theory, in articulating a solution to the ambiguity of "full integration" as well as to the predicament of disinterested bicultural youth of the Church in Japan.

The cultural artefact to identify human-being as the 'Other' has developed a persistent sense of dissimilitude where 'us' receives social recognition, while 'them' lives with a demeaning sense of identity. The mentioned social process employs invention of 'categories' by casting groups, individuals, or objects into the role of the 'other'. In this negotiation, the dominant cultural location vilifies the innate qualities of the 'others' to any positive social recognition. In the concurrent wave of multiculturalism, the function of this 'other' has created a conflict of boundaries

culminating into cultural clashes, and strengthening its demand for Cultural Nationalism. By revisiting Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1991), *The Black Album* (1995), and *My Son the Fanatic* (1997) Sahel Md Delabul Hossain and Rajni Singh examines the position of 'other' in constructing the British Muslim Identity in the United Kingdom in their paper "Investigating the Problematic of Multiculturalism in Hanif Kureishi's Novels" and presents Kureishi's characters as cultural products with an innate 'desire' for equal social recognition. Further the article tries to find how the failure of the 'desire' for identity in the characters results in the creation of negative reality.

Emperor Asoka's rein is considered an important era in ancient Indian history because of the vastness of his empire and the Buddhist elements in his administration. Gerard Rassendren and Sheetal Bharat in their paper "Re-Evaluating Emperor Asoka: A Relational Contract Theory Explanation for Economic Transformation" proposes an economic argument, in addition to these reasons for highlighting Asoka's glorious reign. It was during the century or two around Asoka's rule that the subcontinent's economy underwent a transformation from a simple pastoral-agricultural economy to a more mature economy with large scale production, specialisation and trade. The element that Asoka introduced into the social relations in his empire is Buddha's *Dhamma*, which formed and strengthened relational contracts. A key feature of relational contracts is incompleteness of arrangements that is managed by social iterations and formal and informal enforcement mechanisms. Each of these is reflected in Asoka's edicts, the earliest surviving writing samples from the subcontinent. Asoka planned for these measures to ensure political and economic stability. In addition, he also laid the most important foundational material in a rather unique way for all future economic transformations.

Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theatre personality develops the concept of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as a dialogic praxis that uses performance as a participatory space in developing collective strategies to bring about social transformation. "Boal's Reception in India: Dialogism of Jana Sanskriti's Theatre of the Oppressed"

by Shubhra Ghoshal and Nirban Manna explores the interactive aesthetics of TO in the Indian context as applied and amplified by Jana Sanskriti (JS). Using the methods of qualitative research with theoretical and comparative referential axis of dynamic synergetic experience, the paper examines dialogic dimensions achieved by JS during the various phases of its theatrical process towards subverting 'monologue' and propagating 'dialogue'. The pragmatics of JS is investigated to foreground that Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of 'dialogism' attains an empirical expression in the *modus operandi* of TO, and a dialogic culture is capable of achieving synergetic dimensions leading to sustainable development in the society.

Nicu Dumitraşcu, in "Rethinking Reconciliation: Healing of Memories in Transylvania," discusses the relationship between the Hungarian minority and the Romanian majority in today's Transylvania, with a short reference to the situation when the minority become a majority in some areas. In European political debates interethnic relations are an extremely controversial issue and in the Romanian political debates, the theme of the relationship between majority and minority communities and their peaceful living together is brought to the foreground only on the eve of elections. The explanation lies in the Romanians' nature itself, always oscillating between inconsistency and sacrifice. The current article proposes a way of mutual dialogue between Churches for promoting a good atmosphere of living fraternally for all people of Transylvania.

Dialogue is indeed the life blood of human existence individually and personally. Our customs and institutions, culture and civilisations, are the result of dialogue and they will be maintained only with effective dialogue. Exploring these vital dimensions of our lives critically and creatively is important for the survival and wellbeing of the environment and humanity. It is with this sense of responsibility for the environment and humanity that *Journal of Dharma* presents this issue on "Dialogue and Society."

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