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His publications in Japanese journals include : "Mahatma Gandhi's Interpretation of History", "Mahatma Gandhi's View of Modern Civilization", "Mahatma Gandhi's Message for the Modern World", "Explanation of a Cultural Language", "A Picture of the Universe — a study of the works of A. K. Saran", "The Crisis Consciousness of a Modern Indian Intellectual", "Tradition of Indian Sociology and Modernization", and "J. C. Kumarappa's Religious Economies".

In recent years, he has been actively interested in introducing Coomaraswamy to the Japanese World.

GANDHI
AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Minoru Kasai

GANDHI AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Cover Illustration :
PHOENIX
Engraving by Morante

To have realized that the thread is one, however many the knots, is to be assured that by holding on to this thread or golden chain by which, as Plato says, we are suspended from above, we cannot go astray; it is only for so long as we think of the knots as independent substances that we cannot "thread the maze" or escape from the toil.

On the other hand, the one-line technique in black has quite an extraordinary development in Europen calligraphy. Here, quite likely, it is at last employed solely for decorative purposes and without awareness of an implicit significance, although in the hands of the Spaniard Pedro Dias Morante, perhaps, its most brilliant exponent, it is repeatedly employed to form traditional motives that are far from meaningless to anyone who is acquainted with their history. We find the "one-line", too employed in parts of his wood engraving of the Phoenix, protecting a trinity of rabbits (who are guarded also by a one-line "fence") from the poison of the snake, in what Strzygowski would have called a "Hvarena landscape" and is undoubtedly a Paradise; the inscription, "My piety makes light of poison", in connection with the ancient motive of the Sunbird killing a snake, makes it almost certain that Morante meant his Phoenix for a type of Christ; while the form of the "fence" reminds us that the Greek key-pattern or meander had once a metaphysical significance.

(Source of the engraving and the text: Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy : "The Iconography of Dürer's "Knots" and Leonardo's "Concatenation", *Art Quarterly*, Vol. VII, Spring, 1944.)

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AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

MINORU KASAI
International Christian University, Tokyo

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Centre for Communication Studies
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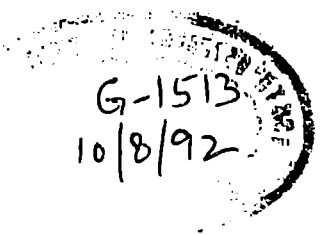

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Gandhi and the Contemporary World

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POONA
August 15, 1980

LACHMAN M KHUBCHANDANI

INTRODUCTION

On August 6, 1945, *at* 0815 *(Japanese time), the death occurred of Modern Western Civilization.*

With this death, which occurred in 'triumphal' circumstances, begins a story of suffering and shame, anguish and anxiety, self-deception and self-glorification, mock-nobility and mock-freedom, misery and wretchedness, dread and despair. Western Civilization is dead but not buried; there is global reluctance to acknowledge the death. The City of Man is now a necropolis, but we don't want to be aware of this.

On August 6, 1945, *the uranium* 235 *bomb was* **actually** *tested for the first time by being airdropped, with no warning at all, on Hiroshima at* 0815 *by the United States of America virtually representing the Allied Powers of World War Two. The already tested plutonium type bomb was then dropped, again without warning, on Nagasaki at* 1102 *on August* 9, 1945. *Each bomb was of the equivalent power of* 20,000 *tons of TNT. Some two-thirds of the city of Hiroshima was instantly and completely destroyed. Out of*

the total of its less than 300,000 inhabitants some 70,000 were killed at once, another 70,000 were wounded — many of them to die later in strange and horrible ways. In Nagasaki, 40,000 died immediately; about the same number were seriously injured to die later or live a permanently damaged life. In the final tally the total of the dead and wounded came to 300,000 for the two bombs, one of the uranium type and the other of plutonium type.[1] The genetic chain-consequences of this unprecedented holocaust continue; and it is not definitely known how long and in what ways these consequences will go on.

At the time it was decided to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the War had virtually ended in favour of the Allied Powers. Germany had surrendered, Hitler was known to be dead, two years earlier Mussolini had been overthrown in Italy, and Japan, the last of the Axis Powers, was on the verge of complete defeat though it had not yet surrendered. "It would be a mistake", says Churchill, "to suppose that the fate of Japan was settled by the atomic bomb. Her defeat was certain before the first bomb fell and was brought about by overwhelming maritime power."[2]

The standard explanation for the massacre of 300,000 Japanese is a simple one: close to 500,000 American lives would have been lost in an invasion of Japan which would otherwise have been necessary to end the War, The arithmetic of this calculation might have been on the high side, but its qualitative assumptions were evidently decisive.

It, however, remains extremely doubtful if an American invasion of Japan would have been really necessary. It was by no means a certainty that Japan was **bound** *to take the insane decision of continuing the War singlehanded, and against the already victorious Allied Powers. In fact, there is some evidence to the contrary. The implicit argument seems to be that the only economic way to stop Japan from prolonging the War was to foreclose the possibility by a decision surpassing any Japanese madness.*

This whole thinking completely ignores all moral and political dimensions and rests solely on economic-technic considerations. It could not have been the real basis of the Hiroshima decision. Even as a technical-military argument, it is spurious. A nuclear attack is an incommensurable factor in the context of a non-nuclear, conventional war. The possible losses and gains of the two cannot be computed on the same basis. The decision to invade Japan would not immediately cost 500,000 lives, and the invasion could be ended at any time before reaching this figure. On the other hand, the decision to use nuclear power is a decision to kill and wound a huge number of people instantaneously *and to start incalculable chain-consequences.*

America's decision to rain death and devastation and genetic disruption over Japan remains as dark, barbarous and hubristic as the genocidal Jewish pogrom *of Hitler. And it should not be forgotten that the gas-chambers worked full-speed with the knowledge of the Allied Powers including Russia. World War II ended without moral or political victory for either side. With the Japanese holocaust to the credit of America, it would be arbitrary to view it as a war between barbarism and civilization.*

Hitlerism and Hiroshima are not aberrations or anarchronisms; nor do they represent the extreme points of a malfunctioning of the Western socio-economic system. They symbolise the deepest urges of the modern civilization and represent the extreme points of its functioning. The diabolism as well as the appalling banality of Auschwitz and Hiroshima is implicit in the fundamental formative idea of the modern civilization, namely, that the destiny of man is to create anew himself, the world and history. Experimental atomic explosions abolish the line between the real and the experimental; and, in the last analysis, Hiroshima remains a Masterly experiment.

The death of the Modern Western Civilization is not acknowledged: that is to say, we do not dare see the meaning of Auschwitz

and *Hiroshima; in other words, rather than seek new life, we cling to a dead civilization. In freely deciding against following the Western path of nuclear violence, Japan sees the meaning of Hiroshima and Auschwitz and begins to accept it; but a tragic double will endangers this insight, this grace, which only a tragedy like Hiroshima (and Nagasaki) can give to a people. Japan decides to become a modern economic super power, forgetting that the road to modernism is the road to Hiroshima — of many masks and many faces.*

"Four obstacles above all", says Simone Weil, "separate us from a form of civilization likely to be worth something: our false conception of greatness; the degradation of the sentiment of justice; our idolization of money; and our lack of religious inspiration."[3] *In a word, the modern Western civilization is the greatest obstacle to a normal, human civilization.*

Simone Weil died two years before Hiroshima. But she could clearly see its meaning: "Our conception of greatness is the very one that has inspired Hitler's whole life. When we denounce it without the remotest recognition of its application to ourselves, the angles must either cry or laugh, if there happen to be angels who interest themselves in our propaganda."[4]

Strangely beautiful, deeply alive, Minoru Kasai's poignant little essay is an iconography of the meaning of Hiroshima and of the hell and hope of one who inherits the devastating experience and the suffering thereof.

CALCUTTA
May 2, 1980

MAHESH K. VARMA

Lies have to be plausible; also hypotheses and novels. Must truth be plausible?

GANDHI AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Let me at the very beginning present my personal conviction which should be treated also as an assumption to be tested in public. Those who live in 'divergent problems' will meet each other at the converging point of cultures. Living in 'divergent problems' is a way of life centred in a continuous return to the ultimate meaning, radically transcendental.

Divergent Problems

But what is a 'divergent problem'? The term is borrowed from E. F. Schumacher's *A Guide for the Perplexed*, a work of rare sanity and profound relevance for our times, the very title of which is an act of courage reminding us of Moses Maimonides and the task he set for himself: renewing for his age the unity of Faith and Knowledge.

" Take a design problem ", says Schumacher, " say, how to make a two-wheeled, man-powered means of transportation. Various solutions are offered, which gradually and increasingly converge until finally a design emerges which is simply 'the answer'—a bicycle, an answer that turns out to be stable in time. Why is this answer so stable ? Simply because it complies with the laws of the Universe—laws at the level of inanimate nature.

" I propose to call problems of this nature *convergent problems*. The more intelligently you study them, the more – whoever you are – the answers converge. They may be classified into ' convergent problem solved ' and ' convergent problem as yet unsolved '. The words ' as yet ' are important; for there is no reason, in principle, why they should not be solved some day .. What is needed is more time, more money for research and development (R & D) and, maybe, more talent.

" It also happens, however, that a number of highly able people set out to study a problem and come up with answers that contradict one another. They do not converge. On the contrary, the more they are clarified and logically developed the more they *diverge*, until some of them appear to be the exact opposites of the others".[1]

Giving some illuminating examples of divergent problems, Schumacher goes on to observe, " Education presents the classical example of a divergent problem, and so of course does politics, where the most frequently encountered pair of opposites is 'freedom' and 'equality', which in fact means freedom *versus* equality, equality

versus freedom. For if matters are left free, i. e. left to themselves, the strong will prosper and the weak will suffer, and there will be no trace of equality. The enforcement of equality, on the other hand, requires the curtailment of freedom *unless something intervenes from a higher level.* I do not know who coined the slogan of the French Revolution; he must have been a person of rare insight. To the pair of opposites, *liberté* versus *egalité,* irreconcilable in ordinary logic, he added a third factor or force — *fraternité,* brotherliness — which comes from a higher level. How do we recognize it as coming from a higher level than *liberté* or *egalité* ? These can be instituted by legislative action backed by force, but *fraternité* is a human quality beyond the reach of institutions, beyond the level of manipulation. It can be achieved, and indeed is often being achieved, but only by individual persons mobilising their own higher forces and faculties, in short, becoming better people. ' How do you make people become better ? ' This question is being constantly asked, and it merely shows that the essential point has been missed altogether. The idea of *making* people better belongs to the level of manipulation, the same level at which the opposites exist and at which their reconciliation is impossible. "

Living in Divergent Problems : Gandhi

Schumacher's insight that ascent to a higher level alone can redeem man from the antinomy and confusion implicit in many accepted ideologies, immediately brings to mind, as an existential example of living in divergent problems, Gandhi's style of life : beginning and ending

the day with prayer. The assessment of the contemporary world by those who live in 'divergent problems' is radically critical, so they suffer immensely. At this level of the understanding of history, they (we) are speaking about their (our) common problems because they (we) are becoming aware of the destiny of man. From this perspective, Gandhi stands at the converging point of cultures in the contemporary world. He is therefore universally significant as a symbol beyond, and in, cultures in the contemporary world. This symbol stands for the ultimate meaning which is both transcendental and immanent. It indicates the only meaningful destiny of man and of mankind. This ultimate meaning is critically related to the meanings of different cultures which are the foundation of each respective society. In other words, each society has this ultimate, transcendent meaning at its centre.

Cold Death of Society

I will start my exposition with a little story. This story becomes more and more vivid in my mind, whenever I think of the contemporary world, even though the event happened long ago. One day, I visited Professor Raymond Panikkar at his home located on the bank of the Ganges river in Varanasi. It was night, dark and strangely calm. The Ganges running below the houses along the ghats; on the other side of the shore, a deep silence. In the midst of this serene landscape there was a light burning at Manikarnika Ghat far away. I was struck by the contrast it provided to the dark surroun-

dings. I gazed at it for a long time. For me it was a light from an abyss. Soon after this, Professor Panikkar visited me in Hiroshima. We went to see a mutual friend, a foreigner, who had come to Japan in his early twenties and was now over eighty years old. He was well known, being one of the few foreign Zen masters. He had been through the rigorous discipline of a Zen monastery and had been recognized by his Zen Master as having attained the stage at which he could lead others. Together we visited varions places and met various people. On the way to Itsukushima shrine, located on the sacred island called Miyajima, Professor Panikkar asked our mutual friend what had been the most meaningful experience in his long stay in Japan. He pondered for a long while. I was keenly interested in his reply, expecting him to recall some kind of Zen experience. But his answer was most unexpected. After listening to him a deep silence prevailed over us. We had just seen the Hiroshima Heiwa (Peace) Museum in which the devastation wrought by the atomic bomb was vividly exhibited. Our friend was in the center of the city when the atom bomb was dropped. According to him, Hiroshima was a" living hell : around him there was nothing but burning fires, choking smoke and unbearable heat. He decided to run through the fire and smoke, hoping that it would take him out of this torture. As he ran, he met two persons running in the same direction. He spontaneously held out his thin hands to them and they spontaneously responded, reaching out to clasp his hands. They ran together without identifying themselves. Soon afterwards he lost consciousness. When he recovered

he found himself lying down together with many other wounded people. But he could never identify those whose hands he had clasped and who had run with him.

When we speak of the contemporary world, most of us do not think of 'the torture of burning fire and choking smoke.' Nor do we listen to the silence of the burning light of a departed person, of the ghat along the Ganges river in that serene, historical setting. However, a few of us do think in these terms and feel these painfully, as reality. Today, the understanding of these few people is not necessarily nonsensical because harsh realities are becoming more visible and being physically felt by most of us. This has been most eloquently stated in the Epilogue of E. F. Schumacher's last book, *A Guide for the Perplexed*:

"Only if we *know* that we have actually descended into infernal regions where nothing awaits us but 'the cold death of society and the extinguishing of all civilized relations', can we summon the courage and imagination needed for a 'turning around', a *metanoia*."[3]

It is a striking experience to observe how a few of us, sensitive to the miseries of the contemporary world, meet Gandhi on the way of life's pilgrimage to self-understanding, and in our reinterpretation of the cultures to which we belong. Schumacher is one of the most well-known examples. Today, however, I would like to give you some relatively unknown examples, drawn largely from my own personal experiences.

EASTERN FACE OF CHRIST

While I was teaching at Ateneo de Manila University in the Republic of the Philippines, under a government exchange programme, I met Father de la Costa, an outstanding historian. He was a graduate of this University, which had trained many outstanding national figures in its long history of more than a hundred years. Being one of the most brilliant students of this prestigious University and the only child of the family, he was expected to become a leading personality in the secular world—by his parents as well as by the University. But contrary to their expectation he was called to take up a religious vocation. However, being gifted intellectually, he was allowed to pursue his studies in history, and got a Ph. D. from Harvard. I found he was deeply respected by many intellectuals and was loved by the students. In his last days, before being hospitalized because he was suffering from cancer, he had concentrated on teaching. He could take only a small class so that, naturally, the number of students was limited. In order to get permission to attend his class, the students had to form a queue on the day of registration, from early in the morning, long before the office opened.

Having lived under American colonial rule during the most sensitive years of his life and having experienced prison life during the Japanese occupation, he was very much concerned with the destiny of his nation and his people. As a historian, he was aware of the tragic past of his nation under colonial rule and of its consequences.

In one of the notes which he left behind after his death, he clearly stated his vision of the destiny of his nation. Having been weak and small, his country suffered from colonial rule, Spanish, American and Japanese. The disasters had been immense. The Philippines as a nation had nothing to be proud of. He felt that it would continue to suffer. But he saw that it had been given prayer and song. Everywhere in the Philippines, in towns villages and homes, there had always been prayers to God, and singing in the praise of God, under all situations. So he was convinced that as long as the Philippines continued to live in the tradition of prayer and song, as it had done for decades, it would be resurrected again and again in more suffering and death. The image of suffering as the destiny of the Philippines has been strongly persistent in his reading of its history.

It was very natural that for him, and the Philippines as he understood it, Christ was central as their 'meaning'. As I indicated at the beginning, each society has a 'meaning' at its centre as its foundation, which provides also an uncompromising critique of the existing social systems. In this context, his commencement speech at the University of the Philippines is significant. It is a memorable speech. The title is 'Eastern Face of Christ'.

In this speech, he gave his reading of the working out of the 'meaning' in the history of Asia. For the ancient period, he singled out Confucius for having revealed the necessity of social order—for man to be human. For the early modern period, his example was

Jose Risal, the national hero of the Philippines who revealed the dignity of the leader of the nation and of the people. In the modern period, he saw the Eastern Face of Christ in Mahatma Gandhi, who revealed the dignity of the ignored, the suffering and the oppressed, by his uncompromising refusal to submit to social injustice; through endurance and the suffering of ahimsa Gandhi represented the sufferings of the people in his person. In his commencement speech, Father de la Costa urged the intellectuals of the Philippines to be loyal to the meaning of the destiny of the Philippines which was to be found in Christ. It is indeed remarkable that in the vision of the late Father de la Costa Gandhi was alive at the ' meaning-centre ' of this island Republic so remote from India.

FAITH OF LOSS

From the Philippines I would like to move to America. At Harvard, in 1967, I was very fortunate to have met Professor R. N. Bellah, a sociologist and a Japanologist, who is extraordinarily sensitive to the meaning of cultures. I knew that his writings were occasionally referred to by some sociologists in India. Probably the best known in India is *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, edited by him. He had sent me a paper while I was in the Philippines. That was in 1973. When I read through it I was deeply moved and touched. It was his first public speech after about six months of silence; his daughter had committed suicide in the stormy period of university unrest—she was a student at the University of California, Berkeley.

'Reflections on Reality in America' is the title of the paper. Its opening sentence is, 'It is winter in America...'It reflects the critical condition of America, symbolically demonstrated in 'Watergate', 'Wounded Knee', 'Continuation of Vietnam War', 'Resignation of the Vice-President of America with charge of corruption cases more than forty', 'Murder of Larry Casuse' and 'Agonies of the Youth' (which related to his daughter's death). He had tried to respond to the crisis of America as a father, as a citizen, as a social scientist and as a human being, going beyond his own painful sense of loss.

According to his short intellectual autobiography, *Beyond Belief*, his life was 'a story of loss: the lost father, the lost religion, the lost ideology, the lost country ', and the lost daughter. A few years ago, he had lost another daughter, in her first year at college, in a traffic accident. He had to suffer unbearable limits of endurance. Through this process of loss, he reached a point which he could only symbolize as the 'nothing' or the 'abyss'. But this was not that 'loss of faith' which brings despair, it was rather the 'faith of loss' which he also calls 'the consciousness of the nothing'. This 'faith of loss' is awareness of the foundations of human dignity, freedom, responsibility, social justice and, therefore, of inclusive identity, which was lacking in American history. Thus, in the process of his deepening self-understanding, he became more and more critically aware of the question of the destiny of America.

Professor Bellah sees a fundamental conflict between

two principles from the beginning of American history. One, represented by John Winthrop's sermon given on board before landing in America in 1630, of obedience to God and the establishment of a brotherly community based on transcendental love. The other, of greed, self-interest and worldly success. In the early history of America, the former was stronger, but now the latter is dominating. The result : a declining sense of moral obligation, so much so that the self-destruction of man and society becomes an imminent possibility. The misery of the situation of *Broken Covenants* is awakening America's conscience to examine critically even the original vision of America. The original vision of a brotherly community did not include either the native American Indians or the minorities from Africa and Asia. For the first time in American history, the American conscience has now begun to hear the cries of the suppressed and the suffering in the ' abyss ' of society. If there is still any meaningful future left for America, it must start with being able to listen to the voices from the ' abyss ' of society and of man. The meaningful destiny of America is to be found in becoming a part of the destiny of mankind, moving towards a universal community based on transcendental love. Thus, the original vision has to be deepened and transcended. To do this, the Americans, as individuals and as a people, need humility to listen to their forerunners, and to *repent* before it is too late. Here, the basic themes of American history are very valid: ' repentance ' or ' conversion ', ' covenant ' and ' judgment ' in their religious dimension; ' revolution ' or ' liberation ', ' constitution ' and ' liberty ' in their political dimension.

In his loss experiences, Professor Bellah meets Gandhi, one of the most outstanding forerunners of the destiny of mankind. Gandhi lived and died for this destiny. For Professor Bellah, Gandhi is a call to America to repent. Therefore, in this sense, Gandhi appears in the ' centre of the meaning of America ', crossing or transcending cultural boundaries. Does America respond to the call of its forerunners? American success, demonstrated by wealth and power, makes this extremely difficult because it is already destroying 'the ties that bind man to man ', and 'the innerness of a spiritually sensitive personality '. American conscience suffers immensely in this situation : I see this in Professor Bellah.

FAITH AND UNIVERSAL HUMAN COMMUNITY

Meeting Professor W. C. Smith at Harvard was another great experience. Reading his writings on comparative religion was a relief, a consolation and an encouragement : his thinking was so true in my own experience. In my understanding of India, U. S. A., the Philippines, China - where I was brought up till the age of thirteen - and Japan, my own country, it is inevitable and natural that I encounter endless data from these diverse cultures. To respond to this ceaselessly accumulating data demands almost infinite effort. In this process, it is a great blessing to meet a person deeply rooted in his own culture and yet profoundly at home in various religious traditions. Gradually, since then these endless data have become more and more colourful, personal, reflective

and tragic. This had initiated me into seeing cultures from within where meaning is central. It is the reality of culture that man does not live by bread alone. Cultures have nurtured, inspired and sustained man's pilgrimage from birth to death. The central meaning of one's culture is the source of courage, tenderness, boldness, creativity harmony, endurance and order.

Father de la Costa, Prof. R. N. Bellah and Mahatma Gandhi show this. However, being now initiated into the mystery of culture, another ceaseless process begins. It is self-transformation and self-understanding in a communion beyond the boundaries of different cultures. In this context, it becomes self-evident that each society has its own frame of reference for self-understanding which has been handed down from generation to generation. An experience like mine is not likely to be intelligible in the contemporary setting because there is no awareness of the mystery of personal meeting and communion as something essential in human situations.

Dr. W. C. Smith, Professor of the Comparative History of Religion at Harvard University, identifies three levels in the study of the History of Religion and boldly proclaims the centrality of faith in history. His position comes from his own personal faith and his vast, painstaking scholarship. The first level of study is 'information'. Here the aim is to accumulate objective data and to establish it systematically with scientific objectivity. It is a movement from ignorance to information. This level of study has been wholly identified with modern academic

disciplines. Accordingly, truths of academic disciplines have been confined to objectively demonstrable 'facts'. Prof. Smith refutes this and goes beyond it. It is true that academic discipline must be loyal to facts without any compromise. However, facts are not only objective, but also subjective: and truth transcends this duality of the objective and the subjective. So one has to move beyond objective facts which Professor Smith calls ' tradition'. Here we are ' talking about it '. However, without persons, society, culture and tradition are dead. And without meaning, there are no persons. There are two kinds of meaning: first, the meaning of the tradition and, second, that of the universe in the light of tradition. This meaning is ' faith ', according to Prof. Smith. It embraces not only the tradition, but also ' the whole of life '. Thus, the second level of study is the study of faith and persons. Faith, being a personal relation to the Ultimate, is the meaning of history. Faith as God's grace and one's personal response to the divine and transcendental reality is not objectively observable and demonstrable because it is fundamentally personal. It must be known through self-transformation and personal fellowship. At the second level of study, it becomes intelligible and visible that the people in India have been aspiring to build their society and culture as the reflexion and expression of faith. At this level of study, ' we are talking with you '. Faith, at this level, is still the meaning of each specific tradition, is the source of courage, tenderness, boldness, creativity, harmony, endurance and order.

At the third level of study, faith is the converging point of each different religious tradition, breaking their barriers and becoming the foundation of universal human community. Prof. Smith distinguishes society from community. Faith is 'what turns a society into a community'. It raises the 'fundamentally human question as to what sort of person one is or shall become, and what overall vision deserves his loyalty'. Study of faith, at this level, is to understand ourselves as religious. It implies a radical mutation in our self-understanding. Faith is conceived as universal human quality, leading persons toward universal human community though 'faith is immensely diversified in particular'. At this level of study, we are talking neither about 'it' nor about 'you', but about 'ourselves'.

He gives fascinating examples of the reality of this third level of study. Referring to Mahatma Gandhi, Professor Smith makes the far-reaching claim:

" It has been said that the most important disciple of Mahatma Gandhi so far in the twentieth century has been Martin Luther King. In this among other ways Gandhi may be said to have participated consequentially in the Christian life of the United States."[4]

This is an explosive statement. Gandhi is an Indian and a Hindu; Martin Luther King is an American, a Negro, and a Christian. If the above quotation is intelligible, then, in the turbulent history of America, Gandhi is a co-worker with Martin Luther King in a most crucial way: becoming indeed a true witness to the meaning of America and the Christian tradition.

The scene when Martin Luther King preached in the chapel of Princeton University in my student days still remains in me most vividly. Normally seats were available, but when Martin Luther King preached, the huge chapel was filled with people and many had to listen standing. I was one of those standing near the pulpit.

He was assassinated later, but his message, I believe, will not die.

Professor W. C Smith, an alumnus of and a Visiting Professor to Princeton, continually renews this undying message.

TO LIVE AUTHENTICALLY

Now I would like to turn my eyes to India. Harvard was a great place for me because I met there Professor A. K. Saran, an Indian sociologist, and one of the most uncompromising critics of both modernization and traditionalism. That was in 1967. Since then, my friendship with him has deepened. I began to see more and more clearly that he is one of those rare individuals who live in ' divergent problems ' and accept the consequences of doing so: his understanding of the miseries of India causes him acute pain.

What are these miseries of India ? First of all, traditional Hindu society is in decay, or is dying, without producing a new one in the process of its disintegration. Secondly, India has been under the continuous onslaught of modernisation since the time of colonial rule and, moderization, essentially, is ' neither humane, nor normal,

nor rational'. Thirdly, in this context, man and society are becoming rootless and blind to their reality, 'steadily drifting towards disaster'. Fourthly, social scientists in particular and intellectuals in general are unaware of the meaning of modernization : they play an important role in bringing India to this helpless state. It has become a case of the blind leading the blind. This is a perplexing condition because the above analysis indicates that there is no way open for a man who desires to live *authentically* in this society. This acute awareness of a tragic predicament and ruinous conflict reflects Professor Saran's condition: there is no way other than a life of ordeal ' from fire by fire'. It is, according to him, 'a state in which man, while living and suffering in his own historical time, preserves a consciousness of the unreality of time and is open to the Myth of the Eternal Return'. It is 'a constant endeavour to have right understanding and to act completely in accordance with it'. This is the basic theme of all his writing from the beginning of his professional career around 1947.

He finally identified it as the 'autological question' or as 'autology', in his article, *Religion and Society: The Hindu View* (published in 1965 in Spanish, and in 1969 in English). This is the central frame of reference for understanding Hinduism and Hindu society. It is a problem of self-understanding. and its question is, Who am I ? Its spirit is that of a traditional pilgrim, ceaselessly transcending and moving forward.

Professor Saran's encounter with Gandhi started very early, in his student days, when he became a reagular

reader of the journal *Harijan*. However, in his intellectual career, the first time he mentioned Gandhi's importance was in a footnote to his paper, 'India', published in 1958. Since then, Professor Saran began to write about Gandhi, as an exceptional person who lived courageously in an impossible world : a forerunner of or a witness to tradition. Professor Saran's first major paper on Gandhi, ' Gandhi's Theory of Society and Our Times', clearly perceives Gandhi as a converging point of cultures. Gandhi, according to Professor Saran, is 'a universal figure with relentless and steadfast concern with the destiny of man'. His analysis of the threefold Gandhian revolution of the Indian freedom movement is convergent with Father de la Costa's and Professor Bellah's understanding of Gandhi. The first was its basis : 'the religiousness and misery of the Indian common people'. The second was its scope : the universalization of the Indian struggle 'as representing the struggle of the oppressed and the exploited against all oppressors and exploiters'. The third was its nature and foundation : the spiritualization of Indian politics with 'Truth' as 'the basis of social order' and 'Non-violence' as 'the instrument of socio-political dynamics'. Through this, Gandhi wanted to restore a spiritual social order in India and, consequently, in the world. Clearly, this threefold revolution would be like building a house on sand if it lacked 'the spiritual renewal of man', which was 'Gandhi's main mission'. Gandhi himself testifies this in his definition of revolution :

" A revolution is a return to the first principle, to the Eternal. Some men cling to the form of the past and

the memory of the dead, and they live like the dead; others hurl themselves into foolish novelties until they plunge into the void. I go forward without losing my way, for I am always coming back to the most ancient traditions through a complete revolution, a total but natural reversal, willed by God and coming at its appointed time"[5]

Thus Gandhi distinguishes his position both from traditionalism (living like the dead), and from modernization (chasing ' foolish novelties .... plunging into the void '). Gandhi knew the miseries of the world and felt them bodily. The following is Gandhi's observation on the condition of India :

" *It is a sad condition. In thinking of it my eyes water and my throat gets parched.* I have grave doubts whether I shall be able sufficiently to explain what is in my heart. It is my deliberate opinion that India is being ground down, not under the English heel, but under that of modern civilization. *It is groaning under the monster's terrible weight.* There is yet time to escape it, but *every day makes it more and more difficult.* Religion is dear to me and my first complaint is that India is becoming irreligious. Here I am not thinking of the Hindu or the Muhammadan or the Zoroastrian religion but of that religion which underlies all religions. *We are turning away from God.*"[6]

Little wonder, then, that Professor Saran sees Gandhi more and more as a forerunner in his own journey of pilgrimage.

GANDHI : CONVERGING POINT OF CULTURES

Gandhi stands at the converging point of cultures—as a universal figure. At this level of history, we are, each one of us, speaking about our own and at the same time, universal problems; the ultimate meaning the right action, the right understanding of crisis, *et cetera*. Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and environmental pollution are grim realities and profound symbols exposing, with ominous power, the ' abyss ' of Japanese culture. And yet, this worries only an extremely small minority of the population. The majority lives as if there were no ' abyss' . Indeed, most people refuse to see and feel such a crying reality as ' the cold death of society ' and ' the extinguishing of all civilized relations '. Perhaps, the relative success of Japan's economy is so powerful as to blind Japanese eyes to the reality. Many still believe that Japan, unlike America, has not yet been exposed to the destructive forces of modernization. But this is simply an illusion. It is only a question of time and but a short time. For the present, Japanese culture, like a container, hides this reality; and, I am afraid, religion in Japan—as a part of culture—is also playing the role of a container. But inside this container there is an immense void.

Those who feel the ' abyss ' and the void, see well the symbolic significance of Gandhi, even for Japan. I observed this when reading Gandhi's writings with my students, at a time when many of the universities in Japan were practically closed—for about a year from 1968 onwards—because of the student revolt. These reading

sessions continued for about three years until I left for the Philippines, and in that time Gandhi came to mean a great deal for these Japanese students. Otherwise, these sessions could not have continued for such a long time. I also see Gandhi at the converging point of cultures. I find myself meeting, with extreme gratefulness, a friend from India at the extreme edge of Japaness culture and, more exactly, beyond it.

I would like to close this talk with a beautiful quotation from Franz Kafka :

"The relationship to one's fellow man is the relationship of prayer, the relationship to oneself is the relationship of striving; it is from prayer that one draws the strength for one's striving. "[7]

EPILOGUE

On no account let anyone suppose that he is far from God because of his infirmities or faults or for any other reason. If at any time thy great shortcomings make an outcast of thee and thou canst not take thyself as being nigh to God, take it then at ar y rate that he is nigh to thee, for it is most mischievous to set God at a distance. Man goes far away or near but God never goes far off; he is always standing close at hand, and even if he cannot stay within he goes no further than the door.

NOTES

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The source of the Epigraph is Hamann : "Lugen und Romane mussen wahrscheinlich sein, Hypothesen und Fabeln; aber nicht die Wahrheiten und Grundlage unseres Glaubens." — *Werke*, I, p. 425.

The Epilogue comes from Meister Eckhart.

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