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Journal of the Asian Research Center
for Religion and Social Communication

Vol. 5 Nos. 1 & 2 2007

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of Cambodian Students
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EUCHARIST IN A NEW MEDIA AGE*Sebastian Periannan¹***Introduction**

The main **objective** of this paper is to explore the meaning of the new media age and to expound the communication dimensions of Eucharist towards an authentic Eucharistic experience for a seeker of God from a communication perspective.

This paper **presupposes** faith in Eucharist, as well as biblical, theological and doctrinal explanations on the Eucharist, though pertinent citations are made, though not delved in depth.

It aims to bring out the **(abcd)** beauty of adoration, benediction, celebration and devotion of the Eucharist on the one side, and on the other side to enunciate the attraction, beauty, boldness, creativity and dangers of the media in general.

The **significance** of the paper calls for a deeper faith filled understanding of the Eucharist from a communication and media stand point and to build a better community of love, justice, and peace envisaged by the Eucharistic Lord.

1. What is New Media Age ?

Clearly, what happens in cyberspace is directly related to new media: 'Domains of digital communication and information technologies', which include 'the Internet, email, chat rooms, MUDs, (Multi User Domains) digital imaging systems, virtual reality, new biomedical technologies, artificial life and interactive digital entertainment systems.' The following two tables tell us about the historical development of technologies, social/economic system, function of art and various stages of media and communication down the centuries.

¹ Sebastian Periannan, PhD is Dean of Communications and the Rector of St. Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore, India. This paper was presented at a FABC-OSC sponsored conference on 'Eucharist as a Communication' held in Bangkok, Thailand.

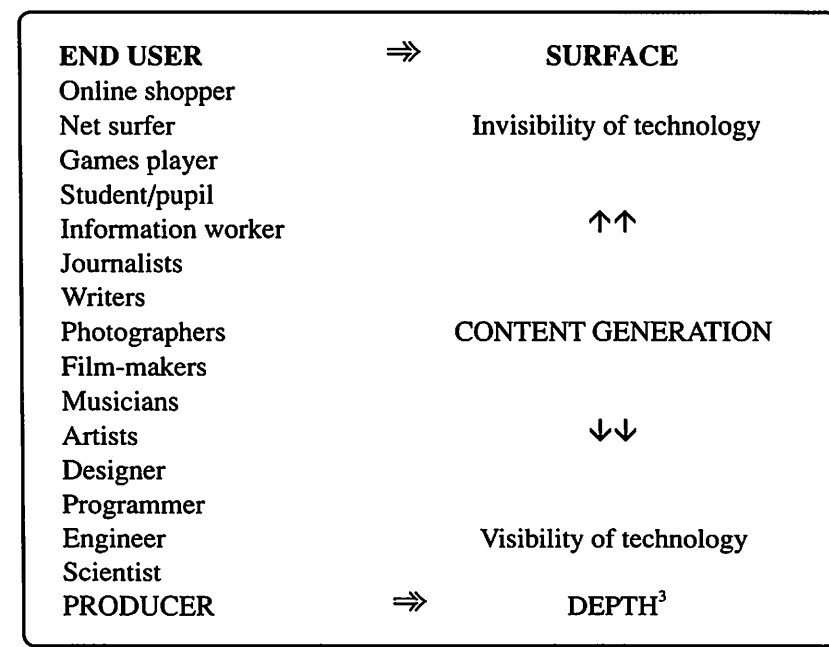
<i>Technologies</i>	<i>Social/Economic system</i>	<i>Function of Art</i>
Stone Age	Tribal	Art as magic
Bronze Age	Hunter/gatherers	Art as magic
Iron Age	Feudalism	Art as ritual
Print	Mercantilism	Art as cult of beauty
Machine age	Capitalism	Art as art
Electronic age	Hyper-capitalism	Art as information ¹

Six Stages of Media and Communications

	Oral	Script 3100 BC-	Printed 1440s- (Europe)	Wired electronic 1830s-	Wireless electronic 1920s-	Digital 1990s-
Medium		Letters, manuscripts	Calendars, books, newspapers	Telegraph	Radio, television	Computer, Internet
Communication	Interactive	Mainly Interactive	One-way	Mainly One-way	Mainly One-way	Two-way
Time	Real time	Delayed	Delayed	Immediate	Immediate	Internet time
Space	Local	Extended local	Local, extended national	Local, increasingly international	Local, national, global	Does not matter
Reach	Small audience	Restricted audience	Mass audience	Mega mass audience	Mega mass audience	All audiences
Inclusion		Literate	Literate	Access based on national infrastructure and affordability	Access based on national infrastructure and affordability	Access and affordability based less on national infrastructure
Control		Church, monasteries, courts	Church, courts, printers, bourgeoisie	Governments, companies	Governments, companies	Companies, governments, individuals. ²

Source: modified from Lull, 2000: 38

Players in the new media age as an example



Understanding analogue and digital

<i>Analogue</i>	<i>Digital</i>
Transparency	Opacity
Realism	Montage/collage
Linear	Non-linear
Non-interactive	Interactive
Passive	Active
Window on the world	Windowed worlds
Perspective	Surface
Proscenium	Permeable space
<i>Old media</i>	<i>New media⁴</i>

The characteristics of new media is:

Colourful and technical therefore interesting, informative
 Changing and moving therefore entertaining and creative
 Friendly and fantastic therefore it is educative, instructive
 It is available, affordable and accessible also costly at the moment

It is a best story teller, baby sitter, carrier of news, information, truth, lies, and prejudices, also a vehicle of violence, vulgarity, obscenity, promoter of mediated culture, popularity and profit, disseminator of globalization and offers a ray of hope, faith and charity too. In a nutshell it is noisy, speedy, spooky, stressful as well as comfortable.

Film, fashion, finance on the one side, the other side gun, games and gambling, and in between mail, cell, and bill leading to sexy, crazy, and busy way of life are the hallmark slogans, movements and activities of the media age.

2. The context of Eucharist in the New Media age

Theological Context: Eucharist as

- Presence and silence in the Eucharist is the source of personal joy
- Reconciliation at interpersonal and community level
- Covenantal meal of a given community celebration
- Relationship and participation resulting in social transformation
- Feast is a Cosmic experience
- Sacrifice is a biblical revelation of the eschatological mystery
- Communion brings the mystical experience

The Eucharist, heart of the Church

The late Holy Father Pope John Paul II wrote: "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist. This truth does not simply express a daily experience of faith, but recapitulates the heart of the very mystery of the church. In a variety of ways she joyfully experiences the constant fulfilment of the promise: 'Lo' I am with you always, to the close of the age"

(Mt 28:20) In fact, celebration means fulfilling the words of St. Paul: "Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father" (Eph. 5:18b-20). Every Eucharist is a happy event as God's life comes to us: "Father we celebrate the memory of Christ your son" (Euch. Prayer 1) "Father, we now celebrate this memorial of our redemption" (Euch. Prayer VI).

Eucharist as a Meal and Sacrifice:

The Instruction *Redemptionis Sacramentum* rightfully reminds us that we should neither ignore nor unduly emphasize one aspect of the Eucharist over the other: "The constant teaching of the Church on the nature of the Eucharist not only as a meal, but also and pre-eminently as a Sacrifice, is therefore rightly understood to be one of the principal keys to the full participation of all the faithful in so great a Sacrament. For, when stripped of its sacrificial meaning, the mystery is understood as if its meaning and importance were simply that of a fraternal banquet" (RS 38).⁵ Jesus identified his body with the bread used at the Last Supper and with the Passover lamb.⁶

Eucharist, a Mystery to be believed:

"The Eucharist is a 'mystery of faith' par excellence: 'the sum and summary of our faith.'⁷ Every time the priest proclaims "*Mysterium fidei!*" (Mystery of faith) after consecrating the bread and wine, he expresses his *ever-renewed amazement* at the extraordinary miracle worked at his hands.⁸

The first part while explaining the Eucharist as a mystery to be believed highlights that it is the free gift of the Blessed Trinity. It illustrates mystery of the Eucharist on the basis of its Trinitarian origin. Another striking feature of this exhortation is to present Eucharist as the centre and goal of all the sacramental life (n. 16-29).

Eucharist, a Mystery to be celebrated:

The liturgy is the radiant expression of the paschal mystery. "It is not mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God's love encounters us and delights us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us towards our true vocation, which is love".

Eucharist, a Mystery to be lived:

The love that we celebrate in the Eucharist is not something that we can keep for ourselves. By its very nature, it demands to be shared with all (n. 84).

The Holy Father insists, "The first and fundamental mission that we receive from the sacred mysteries we celebrate is that of bearing witness by our lives" (n. 85).

The relationship between the Eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit. In this final chapter Pope expresses his concern for humanity, for the poor, displaced people, people affected by social and financial inequalities and all suffering persons (n. 90). Through the Eucharistic spirituality we are invited to sanctify the world and protect the creation. He concludes by invoking the Holy Spirit to kindle within us the same ardour experienced by the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35).

3. Challenges of the new media:

Technological challenges of new media age:

- *Contact* through anonymity and tele + social networking. There are about 300 TV channels, millions of Web sites, more than a billion users of Cell Phone ever increasing than any other medium of the past.
- *Transmission* - working from home, e-shopping. Any one, any time and any where is the slogan of the media.

- *Comprehension* - balance of power between info rich and info poor, celebrity versus audience, politicians versus people, policies versus corruption, media producers' versus users.
- *Acceptance* - freedom of speech, crime, pornography. Everything is taken for granted and accepted without any iota of hesitation. What is the place of Ethics and moral principles ?
- *Feedback* - socialization and isolation. Though modern media is two-way and inter active lots of people go unnoticed, ignored and isolated in the family and community. As a result suicide rates and heart failure are in the increase.
- *Internalization* - innovation and depression. Innovation is the key for the modern media but it brings in depression of divide, domination, and suppression of human values.
- *Action* - communication and learning. No doubt it is faster, better and cheaper. But will it help to eradicate poverty, illiteracy, superstition and myths ? Action must be oriented towards justice, charity and peace.

Convergence

Henry Jenkins observed (2001), First, there is social or organic convergence, which can be defined as social practices in which we are engaged in more than one level of media attention. Multi-tasking in the workplace would be an equivalent to the organic convergence of watching TV and texting a friend at the same time. Second, Jenkins defines cultural convergence as new forms of cultural creativity at the intersections of media technologies. Third, global convergence recognises that there is a two-way 'cultural traffic' in a global communication network, which leads to cultural hybrid.

Technical convergence has re-ordered the toolbox, recasting the separate tools of analogue media into a common digital matrix, allowing sound, image and text to be captured, encoded, edited and outputted in the same technical 'studio' using the same 'apparatus'.⁹

Databases constitute one of the fundamental platforms upon which new media practice takes place, because accessible databases are used in new media to construct interfaces to and multiple pathways through searchable data.

Lovejoy (2004) states that 'the database itself and the three dimensional virtual space it exists in can be thought of as "true" cultural forms.' This is a reference to the World Wide Web and the Internet, seen, metaphorically, as a new form for structuring of cultural experience. Seeing the WWW and Internet as 'the database' amounts to a theoretical leap in which the specificity of different technical databases, scientific, financial and institutional, each with their own codes of access, are collectivised as a unified cultural form. Clearly, the WWW is a major new cultural medium whose forms are, as we write, being worked out through the convergence and remediation of existing media, writing, photography, film-making, games, economic transactions, etc.

Binary opposites used to characterise difference

<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Database</i>
Representation	Information
Linear	Non-linear
Fiction	Reality
Illusion	Control
Fixed	Relational
Object	Process
Author	User
<i>Old media</i>	<i>New media</i> ¹⁰

TV and radio channels partnering with film companies - has benefited each segment of the media industry. New Media, too, is sweeping the net waves. The computer, the mobile phone, satellite-based publicity vehicles, interactivity, web journalism, out-of-home advertising, direct-to-home and CAS broadcast distribution, and a variety of other technological breakthroughs have now brought us to a point where this industry could well become the single largest in some countries' economies within the next decade.¹¹

"Information is power and internet brings it to your finger tips. It has revolutionised our lives, primarily by saving on time - a precious commodity. India as a country has vastly benefited from the internet revolution", says Rajendra Singh Pawar, chairman, NIIT.

"Today how many people living in the metros actually go to a bank for transaction, or an airline office to purchase a ticket; how many write letters instead of e-mails; and apply for a job in any other way but online ? Our lives have been transformed by the internet, and will continue to be altered by this powerful tool," points out Neelam Dhawan, managing director, Microsoft India.¹²

Blogs exist to give the world a microphone, to make every person an expert.

The problem with blogging, though, is that every person cannot be an expert on everything. If one turns to the Web for authentic or reliable information on anything, one is more likely to get a welter of conflicting perspectives, a veritable Tower of Babel. While it enables millions of people to make themselves heard, blogging, therefore, needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. And while established brands need to fight to sustain their credibility and relevance there will remain a place for them.¹³

Illusions

Richard Barbrook, who explores the subject in *Imaginary Futures - From Thinking Machines to the Global Village*, asserts that after all, if we really considered what has made a difference, "it's as likely to be soap or the contraceptive pill or antibiotics, which you could argue on are more important than the convergence of computing, telecommunications, and the media.

The central idea was that the fusion of broadcasting, computing and telecommunications would create a new - and better - social order. The "information society" came from a U.S. government remix of the ideas of Marshall McLuhan, the professor who coined the phrases "the global village" and "the medium is the message". We have been living with the belief that technologies "transform society" ever since, he claims.

Moreover, the same idea has been recycled with different terminology for at least four decades. "In the 1970s it was futurology, in the 1980s Silicon valley hype, in the 1990s the dotcom bubble and now we have Web 2.0".

Mr. Barbrook says it is partly because the concept of the information age came complete with new types of workers who, instead of producing goods and services, would create "knowledge". He describes these "knowledge workers" along the lines of the Leninist vanguard party: "Lenin always appeals to people on the left selling newspapers because Lenin said the people who sell the newspapers are leading the revolution."¹⁴

The insidious influence of the internet, as expected, has created unprecedented upheavals in the minds of children. Till recently, in an affluent school in Mumbai, a group of sixth standard students used to decide on Mondays what each of them would download. Then they would exchange the material through CDs over the weekend. When this subculture was finally exposed, it was discovered that their CDs contained, apart from games, some amount of pornography.

The uncontrollable curiosity of a child now permeates deep into the net and invokes answers that are at once useful and disturbing.

The mushrooming of social networking sites has led to young minds forming their own profiles.¹⁵

Digital divide and gaps:

The revolutionary developments in IT have brought new contradictions and the digital divide actually combines several gaps:

- i) Technological divide - great gaps in infrastructure and its access;
- ii) Content divide - much of the web-based information is simply not relevant to the real needs of people;
- iii) Gender divide - women and girls have less know-how and access to IT than men and boys; and
- iv) Commercial divide - e-commerce is linking some countries and companies ever more closely, but others run the risk of further marginalisation. (AntonyP Integral liberation p 107)

The Six stages of E-mail:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. Infatuation | - | got mail |
| 2. Classification | - | to the point |
| 3. Distraction | - | XXX |
| 4. Disenchantment | - | unanswered mail |
| 5. Accommodation | - | Y/N, sorry, doubt |
| 6. Death | - | call me/control |

4. Information and faith interfaces

The information age has created some serious challenges to the teaching authority in modern times. The modern scholarship with the help of new technologies has made not merely e-scriptures but also a vast literature on their formation and interpretation, as well as the historical factors influencing the development of doctrines available to the general public. Thousands of websites that are connected to the libraries all over the world bring to the public the day to day progress in scholarship in these fields such as new discoveries, new influences, changing interpretations etc. Hence any rule or guideline issued by teaching authority today has to be backed up by elaborate study and investigation into its background. No church authority will step today into a predicament similar to what happened in the Galileo issue.

As biblical and historical knowledge spreads deeper, wider and faster among the faithful, they seem to draw **inspiration** and messages more directly and personally rather than through any intermediary. This tendency is visible in the modern style of personalized understanding of the Bible that we find in informal prayer groups. Thanks to the reach of IT, the teacher has become just one among the several sources of knowledge (and sometimes less efficient than others). One can come across students who have direct access to information through other means and hence have less respect and admiration for their teachers. A similar threat is emerging in the case of the teaching authority of the Church too. People today tend to draw their own conclusions from the knowledge they obtain from numerous sources.¹⁶

The most obvious use of information technology is simply to store and access information. Even this straightforward application represents a great opportunity to learn about the faith, given the longstanding practical challenge of accessing a literacy patrimony spanning 20 centuries. Catholic researchers have been at the forefront of such work since the 1950s, when Fr. Roberto Busa SJ collaborated with IBM to digitise and index the entire works of Thomas Aquinas. Today, the whole Thomistic corpus can be stored on a single CD, and many similar products are now widely available on CDs or the internet. These include the Holy Bible and many of its translations, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and much else besides.

In my view, this has given rise to two extraordinary opportunities for catechesis. First, we are now able to integrate **text and images** very easily. Images are important because of the kinds of intellects that we have and because of the nature of the Catholic faith. It is very hard to think about anything without an associated image, and the central teaching of the Catholic faith is that the Word became flesh, that is, something tangible and visible to the senses. Recognizing these truths, much of the Western artistic tradition developed to give visual expression to Catholic theology. Contemporary technology enables us to represent this artistic patrimony anew, to give a rich visual experience of Revelation. We can, for example, take the works of a great artist such as Fra Angelico and use technological cues to show how theological truths are represented in these paintings. Such images are retained in the mind more easily than words alone, and can sometimes express much more than can be said in words.

Second, contemporary information technology is especially powerful for drawing connections between distinct **ideas**. Besides fast cross-referencing, in catechesis such techniques can help to convey a sense of the organic unity of the faith. In particular they can show how scripture, tradition and the magisterium are connected so that “one of them cannot stand without the others”, as Vatican II stated.¹⁷

One of the downsides of the openness and **anonymity** of the web is that anybody can pretend to be anybody else, even the Pope of Rome. The last time I counted, there were more than 50 fake Benedict XVI pages on MySpace, some respectful, others less so.

The Catholic **Community** website (www.catholic.org.uk) tells surfers about the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Yet your average young web-user takes part in a very different form of penance today; carbon offsetting, where he signs up to one of many green websites and prays forgiveness from Mother Earth for his carbon-sins by donating money for planting trees and shrubs. It isn't only the church message that will be in competition on the web; so will its practices.

People are looking for answers as they surf the web and create their own personal 'spaces' - and if the Church thinks it has a Truth to reveal to them, then it ought to get its hands (or at least its typing fingers) dirty.¹⁸

It is in this vacuum that “the press, radio, TV and video have become other forces which compete with the parents in the education of the young. The mass media, particularly the TV, invade our homes and bring the world in. This widens our horizon but can also insert unwelcome ideas. In many families the parents have abdicated their obligation to educate their children.

With the invasion of the **home** by TV, computer games, internet, children get glued to these electronic forms of entertainment. This is not only bad for their eyes and general health, but also for their emotional growth. Many of these electronic games “involve slaughtering the opponents or destroying them head on. Experts in the field say that this type of entertainment can lead to aggression, increasing levels of depression and emotional confusion among youngsters across the world.”¹⁹

The media invasion is bad even for the **family** taken as a whole. We are not even together for a meal. Some take their food and sit before the TV. Others have a chat with their friends over the mobile. Still others are trying to download some item on the internet. “We've forgotten the magic of sharing a meal with our family members....; it is also important to remember that sharing a meal is not just about eating, but also about strengthening family bonds and making pleasant memories.... The more often families eat together, the less likely that kids are going to smoke, drink, do drugs or get depressed.”²⁰

One reason why many **young** people today do not participate in the Eucharist even on a Sunday may be precisely this loss of the deep symbolic function of the meal. We believe the Eucharist gives us the energy we need to resist evil, so too “sociologists stress that the power of eating together is a kind of a vaccine that protects kids.”²¹

With the rapid advances in information technology, we no longer need to go out in search of pornography. It is available always and everywhere. “The family and pornography are poles apart; one contradicts the other.”²²

Technology brings about acceleration: fast and abundant production, fast food, fast communication, fast transport, and our youth is being sucked into a cesspool of fast ‘love’ and fast ‘dump’. It is a tool of the few powerful people who dictate terms to others. Likewise, “communication technologies are used by the very same few to manipulate information, distort the perspective of values concerning basic needs and wants, and project particular lifestyles.”²³

5. Communication dimension

Communication is an art, science, and a discipline with its process and scientific method. Communication as a field is endowed with various dimensions, chief among them are:

a) **Religio-Pastoral** dimension includes all creative and dialogical functions of communication practices of those who follow any religious tenets and carry out pastoral care, concern and love to all the subjects to experience a fuller and meaningful direction and content in life.

b) **Socio-Cultural** dimension covers all participatory functions of communication acts and events that take place irrespective of caste, colour, creed, race and ethnicity towards the web of inter-personal and inter cultural relationships towards social transformation and harmony.

c) **Developmental** dimension concentrates on the liberative function of communication on the process of growth and development of people, culture, history, science and technology for a better quality of life.

d) **Ethical** dimension includes the prophetic function of communication which binds every human being by doing ones duty, witnessing to the truth, and human dignity through conviviality.

e) **Advocacy** dimension adopts the facilitative function of communication which is supposed to promote good will, human rights, and civil responsibility through every aspect of human communication.

Eucharist as communication

That above mentioned five dimensions and functions of communications could be easily identified and are interlinked and intertwined with the Eucharistic dimensions such as food or meal, sacrifice, covenantal celebration, communion, and sacrament are shown in the following table. Communication dimensions help us to understand Eucharist as communication. In any case these dimensions need not necessarily limit the scope, stifle the depth, and hinder the relevance and the mystical meaning of the Eucharist.

Eucharist as:

<i>Communication Dimension</i>	Food or meal	Sacrifice	Celebration	Communion	Sacrament
<i>Religio-Pastoral</i>	Eternal Banquet	Spiritual, self-emptying	Reconciliation	Experience of God	Grace
<i>Socio-Cultural</i>	Sharing	Freedom & Tolerance	Relationship	Harmony	Peace
<i>Developmental</i>	Caring	Mutual Co-operation	Education	Charity	Transformation
<i>Ethical</i>	Moral obligation	Talent management	Human values	Justice	Sense of sacredness
<i>Advocacy</i>	Promotional	Networking	Good will	Human rights	Civil Responsibility

Implications:

a) **Creative**, dialogic function and Religio-pastoral dimension of the Eucharist stands and offers the eternal heavenly banquet through spiritual renewal, self-emptying, reconciliation, experience of God and grace. "The Eucharistic sacrifice nourishes and increases within us all that we have already received at Baptism with its call to holiness, and this must be clearly evident from the way individual Christians live their lives".²⁴

b) **Participatory** function and Social dimension of the Eucharist reveals the meaning of sharing the resources, tolerance, understanding, family commitments, communal harmony and peaceful co-existence. Hence, the centrality of the Eucharist in the itinerary of holiness, as the Pontifical Exhortation affirms: "The Eucharist is at the root of every form of holiness, and each of us is called to the fullness of life in the Holy Spirit. How many times Saints have advanced along the way of perfection thanks to their Eucharistic devotion!"²⁵

c) **Liberative** function and Developmental dimension of the Eucharist delivers care to the needy, poor through mutual cooperation for education, charitable activities and transformation of the social systems. "In discovering the beauty of the Eucharistic form of the Christian life, we are also led to reflect on the moral energy it provides for sustaining the authentic freedom of the children of God".

d) **Prophetic** function and Ethical dimension of the Eucharist echoes the moral obligation to liberate the marginalised, malnourished through talent management, human values and justice with the sense of sacredness. "Pope John Paul II stated that the moral life has the value of a 'spiritual worship' (Rom 12:1; cf. Phil 3:3), flowing from and nourished by that inexhaustible source of holiness and glorification of God which is found in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist: by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ's self giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all his thoughts and deeds".

e) **Facilitative** function and Advocacy dimension of the Eucharist admonishes for promotion of networking among religions,

governments, and companies through the exercise of good will, human rights and civil responsibility. This is what the Apostolic Exhortation affirms: "To develop a profound Eucharistic spirituality that is also capable of significantly affecting the fabric of society, the Christian people.... should be conscious that they do so in the name of all creation, aspiring to the sanctification of the world and working intensely to that end. The Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos.... The rite....leads us to see the world as God's creation, which brings forth everything we need for our sustenance. The world is not something indifferent....Rather, it is part of God's good plan, in which all of us are called to be sons and daughters in the Son of God, Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:4-12)".²⁶

6. Pastoral Orientations

Spirituality of the Eucharist is something personal, family and communitarian awareness of the Holy Trinity; reflection of the gift of faith, hope, and love; and an action of conversion, concern and compassion. Eucharistic experience can be achieved through a formation to follow the Eucharistic Lord, to believe in the resurrected Christ, and to proclaim the Kingdom of the Gospel. The Last Supper event precedes the Manger and anticipates the death and the resurrection. Eucharistic experience has touched the lives of millions including great saints and leaders through an act of immediacy and transparency leading to prophetic mission and eschatological vision.

Inculturation reflects the result of the Incarnation of the Word in history, and hence it is a Missionary process in accordance with the dictates of the Holy Spirit and demands of the local culture and global influence.

Prayers, parables, preaching and miracles are the vibrant communication channels.

Mission in the context of global culture of media involves discernment of the Spirit and situation, dialogue with people and religions, and a prophetic liberation of the poor, oppressed, women and children.

Clarity and predictability is achieved through biblical scholarship. Negativity is faced with unexpected challenges, fundamentalism and heresies. Importance must be given to Biblical apostolate.

Witnessing is the fruit of the experience of faith formation, spirituality, inculturation and Missionary Orientation. Witnessing through silence, word and deed is more effective than any digitised media of the digital age.

Individuals, communities and Christian nations stand as witnesses.

Communication Experience and reflection:

a) Eucharistic Knowledge

- This celebration aims at denouncing injustices while announcing the 'programme of life' offered to us in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5:1-12).
- An authentic expression of "God as Our Father" can be experienced in the celebration provided we understand more the Word of God and eat the body and blood of Jesus.
- The digital man wants to see the Church inculturated in the local cultures and deeply rooted in the symbols and communicative expressions. Within the church liturgical celebrations especially homilies should be communicative and respond to the real needs and feelings of people.
- The emergence of fundamentalism, terrorism and consumerism has given rise to insecurity and confrontational situation among various groups of nations and communities. Therefore our celebration should not exhibit fanaticism and fundamentalism rather belief in the Eucharistic Lord.
- Opening this particular site in the Internet may be the result of globalization and communication revolution but it is nothing like participating and celebration the "memory" of Christ in the designated place with the faithful community.

- Since media age is characterised by knowledge society, the knowledge of the Eucharist must be enhanced through appropriate pedagogy and catechesis.

b) Eucharistic Attitude

Our attitude towards the Eucharist must be one of gratitude to God through our offering of thanks and praise. Eucharist as a dialogue between me and God, my family and God, my community and God helps us to have dialogue with other Christians too.

- A Christian presence and consciousness is created in the intractability of human condition based on the Trinitarian dimension.
- Sinners and Saints stand together but it is, God who judges, who is who ?
- While representing the Universal appeal to humanity the celebration is singled out as the local concrete cultural experience.
- Eucharist expounds that Jesus is the one and only Saviour while acknowledging the need for a dialogue with different religions.
- With the advent of Satellite/wireless communication and cyber media like Internet, Networks are emerging and they are based on ethnic affiliations and/or common economic interests rather than nations.

c) Eucharistic skill

We need to attend, participate, and celebrate the Eucharist with an open mind, clear conscience and sincere heart.

- In the context of the Government/controlled to market driven economies the Eucharistic experience must manifest the "Voice of the Voiceless", plight of the poor, the marginalised, minorities, indigenous cultures and migrant workers.

- It is an open invitation to anyone who wants to browse on the Eucharist. It offers lots of information on Eucharist, but there is no actual personal experience of Eucharist. I have personally browsed through various sites but all of them provide only information from different angles than the conversion, presence, communion, and renewal for peace and thanksgiving. Therefore, this is a preparation short of actual experience.

d) Eucharistic Value

Values of communion, sense of the community, coming together, sharing and caring are the important values need to be nurtured.

- Consumerist, materialist and hedonistic influences tend to develop cultures without God and deeper values. Therefore, a Eucharistic communication must help to keep God and bring Him into the centre of human life, which corresponds very much with human values.
- The Eucharistic celebration in every parish can help develop an approach which serves in a special way local needs, should contribute to a positive acceptance be it urban or rural values. Thus the people will grow from anonymity of community.
- In spite of seeming prosperity and development the gap between the rich and the poor must be addressed. For this the Eucharistic experience should help to realise the importance of human dignity, labour and welfare.
- In the past, young people grew up in societies based on stable, cultural, moral and spiritual traditions. Now, these traditions are very often substituted through different options available to the individual and community. That being the case, the Eucharistic celebration challenges us for an open vision and an authentic mission of Christian faith.

e) Eucharistic Spirituality

Eucharistic spirituality is founded on the principles of love, unity and peace.

The digital world calls us to be witnesses that of “you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) Eucharist as an analogue and digital communication communicates the “Living Water”, (Jn 4:10-15) “bread of life” (Jn 6:35) eternal life, namely, the knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (cf. Jn 17:3). As Pope John Paul II exhorts, “Catholics need to work with the members of other Churches and ecclesial communities and with the followers of other religious to ensure a place for spiritual and moral value in the media”.²⁷

Recommendation

A) Adoration: Adoration is “Christo”-centric in nature and “Marian” in culture. “Of all devotions, that of adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the greatest after the sacraments, the one dearest to God and the one most helpful to us” The Eucharist is a priceless treasure: by not only celebrating it but also by praying before it outside of Mass. We are enabled to make contact with the very wellspring of Grace. (EE no 25) Every teaching on the Eucharist should begin with an act of faith in the real presence of Jesus. Adoration means keeping silence and contemplating on the mysteries of God like Mary “the woman of the Eucharist”, (EE 53) “she treasured all these messages and continually pondered over them” (LK 2: 19, 51). Unless, we Christians contemplate like Mary, we cannot experience and share the joy of the Gospel to others. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament offers light and enlightenment to the hearts and the minds of the adorer.

B) Benediction: Each human being is in need of the vision and the “image” of God through the “Abba” experience of Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament. “For the most holy Eucharist contains the Church’s entire spiritual wealth....Consequently the gaze of the Church is constantly turned to her Lord, present in the Sacrament of the Altar, in which she discovers

the full manifestation of his boundless love” (EE no 1) We need to truly experience in depth and extent God’s saving action in the paschal mystery of Christ in us and in our communities in the liturgy. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament blesses the individuals and the community with healing, prosperity and peace. Today’s culture being dominated by images and image building culture, we need the image of the Benediction from the Sacrament of Eucharist.

C) Celebration: The “Pascal mystery” as the basis and the “Pentecostal” history as the foundation is the celebration of the Eucharist. The Church, the Christians, did have the Eucharist as the centre of their lives in the early centuries. The martyrs of Abitina who violated the law with regard to the Sunday Eucharist, replied to their accuser Emperor: “We can not live without the Sunday Lord’s Supper” and “Whenever the Church celebrates the Eucharist, the faithful can in some way relive the experience of the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 31) (EE 6). This experience of Sunday Mass means that this is living communion, which binds us all together in Jesus Christ. We need to learn to truly express our relationships with God and with one another in the liturgy through words, silences, songs, gestures and actions. Celebration of the Eucharist celebrates the very gift of life, truth, justice and charity offered by Our Lord through His death and resurrection. It is a very celebration of unity because it is a sacrament of Unity. As Pope Benedict XVI asserts in his homily, we can encounter him only together with all others. We can only receive him in Unity”.

D) Devotion: As the Vatican Council teaches: “These devotions should be so drawn up that they harmonise with the liturgical seasons, in accordance with the sacred liturgy which are in some way derived from it and lead the people to it. Since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them” (SC 13)! We need to spare no pains to strive to be inspiring animators of our liturgical celebrations. Devotion to the Holy Eucharist or the Blessed Sacrament deepens the faith of the devotee to respect and serve the other in need. In the Encyclical on the Eucharist *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, John Paul II urged the entire Church to live true and real “Eucharistic Wonder”. Devotion to most Holy Eucharist leads every single human being to become more humanly matured, emotionally balanced, intellectually awakened, and above all spiritually renewed and committed.

E) Eucharist and Cyberspace: The Church clearly states, “virtual reality is no substitute for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the sacramental reality of the other sacraments, and shared worship in a flesh-and-blood human community. There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible there by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real-world interaction with other persons of faith.” (The Church and Internet; 2002, Part 1, No. 2)

WEBSITES

Websites have become so integral to our lives that I wonder whether the term ‘new media’ is appropriate for it anymore.

Eg. <http://www.vatican.va>

BLOGS

A blog is literally a publicly accessible only diary of individuals. Some of them are news-based, some personal reflections, some controversial, some humorous and some intellectual; yet all of them have challenged, informed, inspired, corrected and sometimes even scared me.

Eg. <http://insightscoop.typepad.com>

PODCASTS

A podcast is actually an audio or video file which is regularly broadcasted over the internet for its subscribers.

Eg., Technopriest: <http://www.technopriest.org/index.xml>

VIDEO SHARING PORTALS

Today many sites, such as GodTube (Godtube.com) and EJVideo (ejvideo-place.blogspot.com) have been created to provide specific Christian or Catholic contents to viewers.

FRIENDSHIP NETWORKS

People, both young and old, are finding new acquaintances, building communities, and ‘scapping’ away. Sites like Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn etc. are drawing more and more subscribers.

MOBILE NETWORKING

Receiving emails, conferencing, viewing videos and even watching television on a mobile phone has become common.

End Notes

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- ²⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Apostolic Exhortation 'Sacramentum Caritatis'*, no. 79
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MORAL IMPLICATIONS OF CYBERSPACE:
ETHICS IN INTERNET

Dr. Moon-su Park*

I. Importance & Influence of Internet

"The Internet is the latest and in many respects most powerful in a line of media, telegraph, telephone, radio, television that for many people have progressively eliminated time and space as obstacles to communication during the last century and a half. It has enormous consequences for individuals, nations, and the world." (Ethics in Internet, no. 2)

The Internet's history is not very long. It was invented 40 years ago as an experiment of the U.S. Defense Department. In fact, it was not originally designed for the Public's personal use. The original goal of the Internet was to establish a system to safeguard the exchange of information among different government agencies in the event of war. With no one computer or person controlling the Internet, the enemy could not destroy some country's means of communication with just one military strike. Today this unique feature of the Internet remains constant and part of its success. No one person or organization controls or heads the Internet.

"The communications and information delivery capability of the Internet serves all sectors of society. The areas of education, health, social policy, commerce and trade, government, agriculture, communications, and science and technology all benefit from Internet access to information and to individuals through electronic mail. These two resources are interlinked and synergistic: individuals can visit and exploit relevant information sources, which often point to additional sources of information and to knowledgeable individuals. The correlation between information, communication, and economic growth is well-known, making the

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usefulness of networks nearly self-evident. Electronic networking is a powerful, rapid, and inexpensive way to communicate and to exchange information. When networks are available, previously unanticipated collaboration seems to come into being almost spontaneously” (George Sadowsky, 2002)

In 2005 host computers or sites exceeds hundreds of millions and is constantly growing. The Internet users amount to 11% of world population. Now Internet is becoming the way of life and the new living space for the contemporaries. Because of the Internet’s tremendous growth in spreading speed and its influence on the actual life, some scholars call it the ‘civilizational event’.

South Korean case

Internet appeared in 1982 as a SDN in South Korea. Since 1982 Internet business in S. Korea has been developed in high speed. In 2005 there were 33 million Internet users (rate of usage 72.8%). Almost every household is using Internet. Now, cyberspace became the 2nd life to Koreans. And Internet is one of the most important communication media in S. Korea. Therefore, Korean society came to experience almost all kinds of ethical problems in Internet use.

We can find out the fact that a new information technology or tool has both sides, a two-edged sword. Internet also has the same aspects. This presentation will treat the ethical problems in Internet which is happening in Internet -using societies. I will sum up related Catholic Ethical Principles and then discuss Internet ethical problems happening now. Finally, I will reflect on these briefly.

II. Catholic Internet Ethic

1. The Fundamental Principle

The most important principle in the Catholic Social Teaching is to protect the Human dignity. We can draw the Catholic Church’s communication ethic from this principle - the Contribution to Human

Well-being, the Contribution to Common-Good, the right to Information and the Information justice (social equity). And “All this (principle) applies to the Internet.” (“The Church and Internet,” no. 4).

Contribution to Human Well-being

The Pastoral Instruction “Communion et Progressio” shows one of the significant principles to contribute to Human Well-being through solving the social problems quickly and cooperating with God’s Creation and Integrity. The Human Well-being can be attained through ‘seeking to establish relationships of mutual confidence and respect, based on fundamental common values’ (CP 6, 8, 18; AN 8). This Pastoral Instruction urged communication’s role according to “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis” (no. 44): “It is within this vision that the means of social communication fall into their proper place. They help men share their knowledge and unify their creative work. Indeed, by creating man in His own image, God has given him a share in His creative power. And so man is summoned to cooperate with his fellow man in building the earthly city” (Communio et Progressio, no. 7).

Contribution to Common-Good

The Pastoral Instruction “Communio et Progressio” (no. 16): “The total output of the media in any given area should be judged by the contribution it makes to the common good. Its news, culture and entertainment should meet the growing needs of society. The news of something that has happened must be given and so too must the background of the event so that people can understand society’s problems and work for their solution. A proper balance must be kept, not only between hard news, educational material and entertainment but also between the light and the more serious forms of that entertainment.” This shows the ethical role of the mass media. This teaching simply does not lay emphasis on the balance between news and entertainment. These teachings also suggest that these principles should be based on the evaluation of Internet communication. The Pastoral Instruction (no.17) emphasized this principle like the most important principle regardless of media’s segmentation and individualization. That is because communication plays the “window role”

for contemporaries to see the world in the present mass society. Only a few can be attained to the truth through the other information media. But the majority can not. For them, the mass media is the only window for understanding the world. Therefore media (or communication ethic) plays a significant role for developing human society and man's inner maturity.

"Christians have in effect a responsibility to make their voices heard in all the media" (AN, no. 8). By doing so, we can contribute to promoting the common-good for the contemporaries.

Right to Information

Most people do not have the capacity to reach the useful information, and also do not have the right to let the mass know his own thought when needed. Not every-body has the basic right of communication such as "freedom of opinion and the right to be informed" (Communio et Progressio, no. 33). In real life, most people do not exercise their own right to communication. The Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio" regarded 'the right to communicate' as 'the right to information' (no. 35). Above all, the right to know is basically 'universal access' and 'open access' to information. Of course, the right to know is not applied to all areas limitlessly.

The second is the right to information. The Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio" shows that "(T)his right to information is inseparable from freedom of communication. Social life depends on a continual interchange, both individual and collective, between people. This is necessary for mutual understanding and for cooperative creativity. When social intercourse makes use of the mass media, a new dimension is added. Then vast numbers of people get the chance to share in the life and progress of the community. Because man is social by nature, he feels the need to express himself freely and to compare his views with those of other people. This applies today more than ever before now that man's intellect and genius are often enough served more by teamwork than by individual effort. So the result is that when people follow their natural inclination to exchange ideas and declare their opinions, they are not merely making use of a right. They are also performing a social duty." (no. 47). Therefore, we should follow the ethical principle of the Catholic Social Communication.

Information Justice

The Pastoral Instruction on social communication does not suggest the ethical principle. But we can draw it from the same ground. The social communication does not relate with media such as mass media only. Therefore we have to draw the ethical principle relating to Internet communication from the teaching of the Catholic Social Communication. The Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio" suggests that the social communication media's role is to remove the economic and social inequality: "Moreover in a manner that is unique, the media, which are already a conspicuous element in daily life, bring artistic and cultural achievements within the orbit of a great part of the human race. And soon, perhaps, they will do the same for the whole of it. This is as authentic a mark of social progress as is the removal of economic and social inequality" (no. 49).

I would like to suggest 'the removal of these inequalities as information justice.' This information justice applies to international relationship besides the one nation and other groups in society. This information justice also applies to the international information order. The above mentioned four ethical principles came from the existing teachings.

III. The Internet Ethical Problems

"The spread of the Internet also raises a number of other ethical questions about matters like privacy, the security and confidentiality of data, copyright and intellectual property law, pornography, hate sites, the dissemination of rumor and character assassination under the guise of news, and much else." (Ethics in Internet, no. 6)

There are various Ethical Issues of the Internet from the time of the invention of the Internet until now. I would like to suggest some general issues here briefly.

Information gap between info-rich and info-poor

The knowledge gap hypothesis which was the critical issue in the communication studies still exists as a form of information gap. "The explosion of information technology has increased the communication capabilities of some favored individuals and groups many times over." (Ethics in Internet, no. 9) Because of this explosion of information technology the gap between the info-rich and the info-poor is widening in the high-tech society and the nations which is in the transition to information society. This information gap issue is serious problem to mankind now because this information gap is now becoming an obstacle to the realization of human dignity and the common-good in the society.

Information gap among the nations

The Pope Paul VI warned the problem which had been worsening the inequality between the developed and the developing countries in the old international division of labor and production in his encyclical "Populorum Progressio" no. 57. The Pope's emphasis has been succeeded to following Pope's encyclicals. Especially Pope John Pall II had an insight. He analyzed the importance of means of production which create the wealth even in the information society. "In our Time, in particular, there exists another form of ownership which is becoming no less important than land: the possession of know-how, technology and skill. In this way, the role of disciplined and creative human work and, as essential part of that work, initiative and entrepreneurial ability becomes increasingly evident and decisive." (Centessimus Annus, no. 32).

This shows that the science, technology and the information is the means of production in the contemporary information society. And these means of production determine each individual's survival and the competitiveness of each nation. The factors which had an effect on each individual's survival and the competitiveness of each nation in the industrial society remain unchanged.

Cyber War

As the birth of the Internet had relation to war, one of its main applications is cyber war. Cyber war can be largely divided into two types. One is to destroy others' computer system through the Internet, which has various methods used for cyber terrorism like e-bomb. And the other is to wage war by directly using the Internet like NMD (National Missile Defense). The Internet is now in the center of the modern and future war, called the "universe war." The power of such war has been already proved through the first and second U.S-Iraq war. Now the Internet is used as a core means to control other countries by the superpowers, especially the United States. And it is highly possible that it will be used as a means to continue the superpowers' domination, since it needs enormous amount of money.

Cyber Terrorism

It is defined that its scope is tighter than the cyber war and can occur in an individual area. It can be limited mostly to a personal abuse, the spread of false reports, cracking, and the attack on a designated group by the intentional widespread of computer viruses.

Cyber Surveillance

It is carried out in two ways. One is to watch closely the entire world's Internet by a few countries, like the US government's Echelon Project. In the past, the surveillance was limited on the military intelligence, but now is expanded into economic information. In an individual area, the interactive communication technology, which is the technical base of peer-to-peer networks, can supervise the inside of other users' computers. The over plus of information on individuals managed by the government is also a big problem. Now the e-Government allows each ministry to systematically manage information on individuals. When they are networked, however, it can be an effective means to control people. The surveillance on a commercial area is also serious. The companies of various credit and discount cards always monitor individuals to comprehend their propensity to consume and their personal information.

Copyright, Copy-left and Creative Commons License

As the monetary value of information went higher and higher, it was started to acknowledge the right to information and protect it. The rights of such mental and immaterial properties are called intellectual property rights. Meanwhile, the initiative to share information has been also taken actively. It is called the "copy left" movement, well known in the computer software area. And the sharing of softwares based on peer-to-peer networks is also a part of the movement. Information sharing has been rather popular by illegalizing Napster in the US, and Soribada and Bugs Music in Korea.

In recent years, influenced by GNU General Public License of Free Software Foundation, free license system has been introduced. The free license, which is called the "Creative Commons License," allows a copyright holder to express more easily his/her intention to share information. It is mainly intended to encourage artists to continue their creative works by authorizing their exclusive right, guaranteeing their living and then, motivating them to work more creatively. But a rat race is still run between those who want to protect copyrights and those who pursue for sharing information.

Increase of Unemployment and Labor Flexibility

The practical application of the Internet in the commercial and business fields is weakening laborers' power to negotiate in their workplace because of raising labor flexibility. The Internet are increasing the unemployment of the young by blocking the inflow of a new labor force and makes laborers struggle for their survival by shortening the average lifespan of a labor force.

Deepening of Sexual Discrimination

It is advertised that information society demands women's fine talent and can solve the prolonged problem of opportunity inequality because it allows women more possibility for a job. But women's participation in society actually shows discrimination from the early days' education. And this problem still continues in most societies without addressing it.

Weakening Cultural Diversity

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications noted in its Pastoral Instruction, *Aetatis Novae*, the problems to be caused by the globalization of international communication. "Commercial pressures also operate across national boundaries at the expense of particular peoples and their cultures. Faced with increasing competition and the need to develop new markets, communications firms become ever more 'multinational' in character; at the same time, lack of local production capabilities makes some countries increasingly dependent on foreign material. Thus, the products of the popular media of one culture spread into another, often to the detriment of established art forms and media and the values which they embody." Also, over preferences for a few languages on the Internet are evaluated to damage the diversity of languages.

Cracking and Dissemination of Computer Virus

The classic Internet crime-breaking into computers-is less common than it used to be. Most countries now have laws in place specifying harsh penalties for unauthorized tampering with other people's computers. Even without specific laws, computer tampering is prosecutable as malicious mischief, just like tampering with any other kind of property. The trouble is, there still seems to be an endless supply of young computer users who believe they'll be hailed as computer geniuses if they break into someone else's computer or at least that they won't be punished if they're under 18.

Forgery/Phishing

Forgery is happening frequently now. In September 2003, an ad for child pornography appeared in thousands of newsgroups. It gave the name and address of a man in Seoul who turned out to be an innocent victim-somebody else was trying to frame him, or at least flood his computer with angry email. That same month, students at the University of Yonsei received, by email, official-looking threats of disciplinary action that turned out to be fake.

Phishing is another example. "In computing, phishing is a criminal activity using social engineering techniques. Phishers attempt to fraudulently acquire sensitive information, such as usernames, passwords and credit card details, by masquerading as a trustworthy entity in an electronic communication. The damage caused by phishing ranges from loss of access to email to substantial financial loss. This style of identity theft is becoming more popular, because of the ease with which unsuspecting people often divulge personal information to phishers, including credit card numbers, social security numbers, and mothers' maiden names. There are also fears that identity thieves can add such information to the knowledge they gain simply by accessing public records." (Wikipedia)

On-line Game Addiction and Confusion between Reality and Virtual Reality

Internet games have several issues in dispute. The first is their violent brutality. As 3D or VR (Virtual Reality) technologies develop, a realistic description of killing or violence has been possible. It, however, affects young people negatively. The second is constant sexual discrimination appearing in characters or avatars of the games. The third is an addiction problem. Players can get easily absorbed in the Internet games since the game stories are not fixed and develop continuously through simultaneous participation of multi-users. This factor affects the increasing number of addicts to the Internet games. The fourth, it is confusion between reality and games.

In Korea, 'Hyoen P' (a compound word of reality in Korean and players' killing) happens often. This phenomenon is that in the reality, a game player actually revenges other player who killed his/her character in the Internet games. The fifth is the problem that various prejudices in the reality are continuously reflected in games. The last one is the trade of game items, which players sell and buy online game items in the reality. It is one of cases that players identify reality with virtual reality.

Pornography

Pornography still has the most powerful and active influence on the Internet. Because it is indiscriminately distributed even to young students through illegal filming, in many cases, it can invade a person's privacy and make people's social life impossible. And the popularization of pornography provokes sex crimes by paralyzing sexual morality of people, especially youth.

The 2nd Life

The project which started the most recently aims at making the Internet the second life space. A virtual avatar can buy things, watch movies and meet someone in much the same way as the reality. In Korea, such virtual life has been tested in the form of a virtual marriage. When this becomes real, the Internet will actually become cyber space where the second life evolves.

Besides these, the Internet still raises so many problems. Among them are illegal disclosure of personal matters on cyber space, a reply for a personal attack, an attack against unspecified individuals like witch-hunting, manipulation of photos by using VR technology, and cyber sexual violence. The Internet creates more varied problems than the reality, since it has different properties from the real space.

IV. Conclusion

The Catholic Church has always been sustained the positive and optimistic view on the media including Internet. But Internet is a two-edged sword like other social phenomena. Internet has the potentiality to make this world a civilized society. But Internet has also dark sides as we have seen in ethical problems. It is a hard scale to balance. Nevertheless, we should take a scale to balance.

I have experienced both sides of the Internet in the last 10 years in South Korean Internet culture. Internet not only posed so many problems, but also had the possibility to solve problems like self-regulation system. In fact most netizens, including Korean netizens, want a clean, open, and self-regulating Internet. We can have hope in this respect. Nevertheless, we still have serious problem like information divide. It is the most serious problem.

Today the Internet is still used by only a small minority of the world's population, but it is increasingly clear in developed countries that it will grow rapidly to become near ubiquitous and that the lives of almost all residents will be touched in one way or another by it. This will also be true of developing regions and countries of the world, but with a lag in time. In the medium to longer run, the stakeholders in the continued evolution and success of the Internet will be almost all of the people in the world. "There is a pressing need for equity at the international level. Determined action in the private and public sectors is needed to close and eventually eliminate the digital divide." (Ethics in Internet, no. 17).

DR. B.R. AMBEDKAR'S PERSPECTIVES ON HINDU SOCIO-RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

*Jagadeesh Kivudanavar**

Abstract

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the greatest leader of the Depressed Classes and also ranked with the greatest leaders of the country in modern times. His life long-struggle for social liberation, political advancement and economic emancipation of the lower classes was memorable in Indian History. As a social reformer, Ambedkar's contribution is of immense significance. The Indian life was paralysed by the various social evils. The impact of Christian ethics, western method of education and Christian missionaries who advocated reforms much before the Indian social reformers. They advocated abolition of caste, the prohibition of widow-burning, child marriage, of polygamy, and of infanticide, the granting of widow of the right to remarry, the prohibition of human sacrifice, of the torturing of animals in sacrifice, of human torture in worship, and the gross obscenity practiced in the streets. Many Indian social reformers of the nineteenth century admitted that the Christian ethics slowly but surely permeated every part of Hindu society and modified every phase of Hindu thought. The leaders of social reform movement realised that the prevailing customs and practices weakened the society and was a great obstacle for the economic prosperity of the country. Therefore they advocated the reform movement to purify the Hindu way of life.

Introduction

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was the greatest leader of the Depressed Classes and also ranked with the greatest leaders of the country in modern times. His life long-struggle for social liberation, political advancement and economic emancipation of the lower classes was memorable in Indian History. As a social reformer, Ambedkar's contribution is of immense significance. Dr. Bhimrao Ramaji Ambedkar was born on 14th April 1891 at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh. His parents were Ramaji Sakpal and

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Bhimadevi. Ambedkar born as a *Mahar* (scheduled caste) and completed his primary education in that village. Later he pursued higher education in America and England and obtained his M.A., Ph.D., M.Sc., D.Sc. and Bar-at-law. After he returned to India with a firm resolve to fight against the social injustice and the inhumane treatment meted out to the millions of his 'untouchables' because India is a land with different religions and castes.

There are different religions and languages in other countries of the world also but caste is a unique feature of India. Religion and language are common to every country but castes is peculiar to India and that too to the Hindu society, which has no parallel in world history; and caste system of the Hindu religion is the mother of all evils. Being untouchable is an integral part of Hinduism. Whenever and wherever the Hindus have gone in search of employment or wealth, they have carried the concept of being untouchable with them. Being untouchable is sanctioned by religion, supported by tradition and perpetuated by custom. Castes are a great obstacle for the human unity and universal fraternity. All his life Dr. Ambedkar revolted against the injustices perpetrated by social orders because millions of *Dalits* in India are not allowed to take water from public tanks, temples, and schools; and they have been denied basic human needs, let alone comforts, due to the caste system. Therefore, Ambedkar decided to fight against the Hindu socio-religious system.

His Perspectives on Socio-Religious System

The Indian life was paralyzed by the various social evils. The impact of Christian ethics, western method of education and Christian missionaries who advocated reforms much before the Indian social reformers, campaigned for abolition of caste, the prohibition of widow-burning, child marriage, of polygamy, and of infanticide. In addition, the granting of widow of the right to remarry, the prohibition of human sacrifice, of the torturing of animals in sacrifice, of human torture in worship, and the gross obscenity practiced in the streets.¹ Many Indian social reformers of the nineteenth century admitted that the Christian ethics slowly but surely permeated every part of Hindu society and modified every phase of Hindu thought. The leaders of social reform movement realized that the prevailing customs and practices weakened the society and was a great obstacle for

the economic prosperity of the country. Therefore they backed up the reform movement to purify the Hindu way of life.

In the nineteenth century the social reform movement was confined to the upper castes of the Hindu society. It dealt with those customs and institutions which were common to higher classes of the society. They never showed any concern for the abolition of caste and customs.² Hence, the non-Brahminical movement was inevitable for the depressed classes. The weakness and the limitations of the higher caste dominated the social reform movement which were highlighted by the non-Brahmin movement in the parts of south India. In the southern west, Jyotiba Phuley and Dr. Ambedkar are the important spokesmen of the Non-Brahmin movement. Its main trust was to free the reform movement from the high-caste bias and perspective so that the down-trodden millions could be liberated. It believed not only in reforming the institution of family but in providing guidelines for restricting the social set up. The social reform should be freedom in the socio-political and economic field was its main objective.

Dr. Ambedkar's theory of social reform should be analyzed against the background of the Brahmin oriented social reform movement and the non-Brahmin response to the changes introduced by the British. He combined in himself the role of a social reformer, a political leader and a spiritual guide of the *Dalits*.

Dr. Ambedkar's thinking as a social reformer was considerably influenced by the teachings of Jyotiba Phuley. He is held in great esteem by Ambedkar. He described Phuley as "the greatest *Shudra* of Modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery to the higher classes and who preached the gospel that for India social democracy was more vital than independence from foreign rule".³ From Phuley Ambedkar learnt his lesson in the liberal and reformist tradition of Maharashtra.

Dr. Ambedkar reviewed the sacred literature of the Hindus and felt convinced that no reverence was due to it. According to him, the demand of the critical spirit was more imperative than the spirit of blind acceptance and reverence which called for such literature. He gave two reasons for this: "First I claim that in my research I have been guided by the best

tradition of the historian who treats all literature as vulgar- I am using the word in its original sense of belonging to the people- to be examined and tested by accepted rules of evidence and the profile and with the sole object of finding the truth. If in following this tradition I am found wanting in reverence for the sacred literature of the Hindus my duty as a scholar must serve as my excuse. Secondly, respect and reverence for the sacred literature cannot be made to order. They are the results of social factors which made such sentiments natural in one case and quite unnatural in another".⁴

Supremacy of reason was a cardinal principle in Ambedkar's social philosophy. His own criticism of the sacred literature and the past was based on this principle. He believed that the Hindu is not free to follow his reason. The behaviour of the Hindu must conform to the sanctions laid down by *Dharmashastra* of Manu, *Vedas* and *Smritis*. Manu absolutely condemns "rationalism as a cause of interpreting the *Vedas* and *Smritis*".⁵ But Ambedkar completely criticized all Hindu *Dharmashastras*. His concept of social reform was wider than that of his predecessors. His assessment of the philosophical religious postulates of Hinduism led him to vehemently criticize the graded inequality which had become the part and parcel of the Hindu social structure. He realized that the social institutions of the Hindus could not be properly understood and reformed without referring to the sacred books and the interpretation of the Hindu religious scriptures in accordance with what is called in the west "higher criticism" and rational theology. They never aimed at rejecting the sacred books as Ambedkar did. He wrote two well-known books with historical analysis of social and political condition of the *Dalits*. They were *The Untouchables* and *Who were the Shudras ?*

It is against this background that Ambedkar's approach towards the problem of being untouchable should be examined. According to Ambedkar, the institution of untouchability did not possess any divine sanction. It was the result of the transformation of the primitive and nomadic communities in to a settled community. In the continuous tribal warfare "a tribe instead of being completely annihilated was defeated and routed. In many cases a defeated tribe became broken into bits. As a consequence of this there always "existed in primitive times a floating population consisting of groups of broken tribesmen rooming in all directions." ⁶ The broken men as stay individuals need protection and shelter with nomadic tribes.

Since the broken men did not have any blood relationship with the settled tribe they could not become one with it. The broken men become untouchables and lived outside the village.

Ambedkar also argued that the theory of filthy occupation as an explanation of the institution of untouchability was not tenable and should be abandoned. He also suggested that the broken men happened to be Buddhists and consequently became the victims of attack of the Brahmins.⁷ The study of the *Vedas* shows, he argued that there was no untouchability during the *Vedic* times. Even its existence cannot be proved from the *Manusmriti*. He therefore, concluded that untouchability was born some time in 400 A.D. "It is born out of the struggle for supremacy between Buddhism and Brahminism".⁸

In *Who were the Shudras?* Ambedkar tried to prove that (1) The *Shudras* were one of the Aryan communities of the solar race; (2) There was a time when the Aryan society recognised only three *Varnas*, namely *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya*; (3) The *Shudras* did not form a separate *Varna* in the Indo-Aryan society; (4) There was a continuous feud between the *Shudra* kings and the Brahmins in which the Brahmins were subjected to many tyrannies and indignities; (5) As a result of hatred towards the *Shudras* generated by their tyrannies and oppressions, the Brahmins refused to perform the *Upanayana* of the *Shudras*; (6) Owing to the denial of *Upanayana*, the *Shudras* who were *Kshatriyas* became socially degraded, fell bellow the rank of the *Vaishyas* and thus, came to form the forth *Varna*".⁹ Afterwards the Brahmin law-givers made the life of the *Shudras* miserable, denied every human right to them and practically turned them into slaves.¹⁰

His above mentioned thesis offered for the first time a historical and sociological explanation of the origin of the untouchables and of the *Varna* of the *Shudras*. It was systematic refutation of the divine origin theory of the *Varna* that the *Shudras* were born from the feet of Purusha. This should be considered as an important aspect of the Indian social reform movement.

Ambedkar therefore, launched the various reform movements to redress the living conditions of the untouchables. His movement for education; temple entry movement, Mahad tank movement; fight for

political rights etc. were the important movements led by Ambedkar and awakened the *Dalits* in the various parts of Maharashtra and influenced other parts of India. For this purpose, he founded *Bahishkrita Hitakarini Sabha*. He published and edited some journals like *Bahishkrita Bharata*, *Mooka Nayaka*, and *Samata*. He published various articles to awaken the *Dalits*. He inspired the *Dalits* to revolt against the evil practices, which prevailed from centuries in Hindu *Dharama*.

On 11th and 12th November 1925, Dr. Ambedkar presided over the third session of the *Bahishkrita Sabha* at Belgaum. In his presidential address, "My dear untouchable friends, today I would talk about how to develop ourselves. Even today the upper class enslaved our people. In the pretext of God and religion, you are thrown out into the slum and outside the villages. Because you are illiterate, and fell into serve the God. You are thronged the deities of Yallamma of Saudatti, Vithobha of Phandharapura etc. But no God protects us. It is said to have that God is *Dushta Nigraha* and *Shishta Rakshaka* (God protects good and destroys evils). But why God he should not come to save you ? These stories in Hindu *Dharama* are myth. The upper class was greedy and depressed you in the pretext of God. The Brahman priestly class cheating you and that class protects its image from the centuries."

"The untouchables sent their daughters to worship god as *Devadasi* (she is reserved for worship of the deity). Later they became prostitutes to the upper class. That is called *Jogati* system. The untouchable women used to worship Renukamba of Chandragutti in bared body. These are all inhumane activities practiced by the priestly class. The upper class does not send their daughters as *Devadasi*. Because you are illiterate and helpless. There fore I am requesting you to educate your children. That is only a way to challenge the upper class."¹¹

Thus Dr. Ambedkar called his people to question the inhumane practices on the pretext of religion. As a result of this, Dr. Ambedkar opened free education for *Dalits* and started hostels in various parts of Maharashtra. His followers in Belgaum District like Mr. Devaray Ingale, Mr. Balavanta Barale, Mr. Datta Katti, Mr. P.P. Hegre and others participated in the *Dalit* movement. They became the staunch followers of Dr. Ambedkar and started reforms for the untouchables. This should be noted here that he was not

opposed to religion. In fact, he considered it essential for the upliftment of individuals as well as of society. He once wrote, "I agree with Burke when he says that true religion is the foundation of society, the basis on which all true civil government rests... consequently when I urge that these ancient rules of life be annulled, I am anxious that its place shall be taken by a religion of principles which above all can lay claim to being a true religion".¹²

He believed that religion was the source of hope and gave solace to the poor people. But it should not be hostile to season and morality and the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality and fraternity. It should not ennoble poverty but offer prosperity and salvation in this world to its followers. On this ground, Ambedkar believed that the ideal of Hinduism was bad and one could not go forward with it. It is Hinduism which permits its scores of followers to be treated worse than dogs and criminals. What Hinduism possesses is not tolerance and catholicity but only indifference or flaccid latitudinarianism.¹³

Dr. Ambedkar says that one of the major weaknesses of Hinduism is caste, which is not a physical thing but a notion, a state of mind.¹⁴ He characterizes the caste system as an unnatural division of labourers not the division of labour, which creates a hierarchy wherein the labourers are graded above each other. The pernicious social status and predestination principles prohibit different castes from inter-marrying which in turn make the Hindus a race of pygmies and dwarfs stunted in stature and wanting in stamina.¹⁵ Other bad effects of caste on the Hindus are that it demoralize them and makes the Hindu society a myth by preventing the emergence of "Hindu consciousness". It has been killing public spirit and sense of public charity.

In the caste and caste system of the Hindu religion, Ambedkar suggested the following changes:

1. There should be one and only one standard work of Hindu religion acceptable to all Hindus and recognised by all Hindus. This of course, means that all other books of Hindu religion such as *Vedas*, *Shastras* and *Puranas*, which are treated as sacred and authoritative, must by

law cease to be so and the preaching of doctrine, religious or social, contained in these books should be penalised.

2. It should be better if priesthood among the Hindu was abolished. But as this seems impossible, the priesthood must at least cease to be hereditary. Any person who professes to be a Hindu must be eligible for becoming a priest. It should be provided by law that no Hindu shall be entitled to be a priest unless he has passed an examination prescribed by the state, and holds a license from the state.
3. No ceremony performed by a priest who does not hold license shall be deemed to be valid in law and it should be made penal for a person who has no license to officiate as a priest.
4. A priest should be the servant of the state and should be subject to the disciplinary action of the state in the matter of his being subject, along with other citizens, to the ordinary law of the land.
5. The number of priests should be limited by law according to the requirements of the state.¹⁶

Dr. Ambedkar firmly believed that a radical change in the structure of Hinduism and in the outlook of the Hindus was necessary. Without it there could be no real reform in the Hindu social system. The other social evils like enforced widowhood, sati, child marriage etc. were part and parcel of the preposterous Hindu social customs.

It is very important to say that Ambedkar gave utmost importance to the education of the poor as a great necessity and the need to elevate the status of women in society. As a member of the Bombay Legislature, Ambedkar always took up the cause of education, which shall strengthen the forces of social reform. His deep concern was for the education of the lower castes and lower classes and therefore he urged the government to follow a policy of "inequality" in an "unequal" society i.e., the policy of protective discrimination. In one of the speeches Ambedkar said, "I find that the intermediate class namely non-Brahmins, who are first in order on the basis of population, are third in college education, third in secondary education and fourth in primary education. The backward classes who are

second in order of population are the fourth in order of college education, fourth in order of secondary education and fourth in order of primary education. The Mohammaden who are third in order of population are second in order of college education, second in order of secondary education and second in order of primary education. The advance Hindus who are fourth in order population are first in order of primary education".¹⁷ Ambedkar argued that India is composed of different communities. All these "communities are unequal in their status and progress. If they are to be brought to the level of equality then the only remedy is to adopt the principle of inequality and to give favoured treatment to those who are below the level".¹⁸ Equality of treatment in India would amount to "indifferentism and neglect"¹⁹ of the handicapped classes.

Ambedkar was the ardent champion of the rights of women who were also completely neglected in accordance with the *Dharmashastras*. His concrete achievement in this direction was the initiation of the Hindu Civil Code. His proposal was an excellent blending of reason and sacred traditions. Defending the proposal of the civil code, he explained that the modifications in the existing Hindu law were based on the *Shastras* and *Smritis*. Property was to be governed by *Dayabagh* system; the child was to belong to the caste of the father under *phithrisaranyat*; divorce was supported by Kautilya and Parashara *Smriti* and women's rights were supported by Brihaspati *Smriti*.²⁰

Dr. Ambedkar's concern of social reform show his remarkable perception of the realities of the Indian society. Unlike his predecessors, he never considered the problem of the *Dalits* as a part of an emerging pan-Hindu consciousness but attempted to relate it with the more fundamental problem of social and economic justice. No one will quarrel with Ambedkar on this score. But the vital question was how to achieve the objective of economic justice with all his radical postures, Ambedkar, failed to go beyond religious framework. The rigid orthodoxy of the Hindus led him to give up any hope of reforming Hinduism. He was also born into the Hindu religion but never wanted to die as a Hindu. He therefore, ultimately turned to Buddhism. He claimed that the basis of Buddhism is reason and rational way to eradicate suffering. He considered it superior to Marxism or Communism, because the Buddhist concept of *Dukkha* (unhappy) embraces the Marxist notion of exploitation; Buddhism does

not favour the institution of private property; and its method for bringing about change is superior to that of Marxism.²¹ Ambedkar along with his followers embraced Buddhism in 1956. While justifying conversion to Buddhism, he said, "Buddhism is a part and parcel of *Bharatiya* culture. I have taken care that my conversion will not harm the tradition of the culture and history of this land."²²

Ambedkar says, "Landlords, Capitalists, Moneylenders and their agents and the government are our enemies. We stand for total emancipation and political domination. We want to rule the entire country. We aim not at individuals but at the system. A mere change of hearts of liberal education will not end injustice or exploitation. We shall rouse the revolutionary masses and organize them; the flame of revolution will emerge through the struggle of these vast masses. The social system cannot be revolutionized by mere demands for concessions, elections and *satyagraha* of Gandhiji. Our rebellious idea of social revolution will germinate in the soil, grow in the minds of people, and ultimately flash into existence like hot burning steel."²³

It is undoubtedly true that Ambedkar succeeded in breaking a new ground in the social reform movement not only in Maharashtra and Bombay-Karnataka but also in India. But his liberal outlook, religious convictions, too much emphasis on communal posture, and commitment to liberal democratic politics did limit the scope of radical and revolutionary reform in the Indian social system. The early *Dalit* Panther movement was certainly a welcome phenomenon. But very soon it splintered and was divided but it showed the direction in which the community should move.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru described Dr. Ambedkar as "the symbol of revolt against the most oppressive features of Hindu society."²⁴ There is no exaggeration when it is said that Dr. Ambedkar's biography is the history of the struggle for the emancipation of the millions of untouchables in India from perpetual degradation and misery. His life is the saga of a heroic fight for establishing basic human values in society. He was a humanist who was intensely human, even beyond humanity. He was a great humanitarian and a great humanist. It is true that his role as a politician and his intellectual contribution have become an integral part of the story

of Indian political evolution. Ambedkar became an indefatigable champion of the cause of the untouchable, and he strove to clean up the Augean stables of Indian politics by espousing this cause. Ambedkar's task was to apply incisive politics in order to expose the trouble spot and thus help healing this gaping wound.

Conclusion

Dr. Ambedkar was a born rebel. All throughout his public life, he fought with courage and vigor and wrote into the Constitution the rights of not only the *Dalits* but also of every Indian citizen. He created the Constitution on the principle of secularism with fond hope that irrespective of caste, sex or any other consideration every Indian could develop his personality and prosper. His struggle for emancipation did not stop with the writing of the Constitution. It was his life's mission and continued it till his last days. Abraham Lincoln was the great leader who fought for the emancipation of the Negroes. Similarly, Dr. Ambedkar is the great champion of the untouchables, who strove to liberate them from the Hindu slavery. He was moved at the very sight of the poor, the helpless and the exploited *Dalits*. He tried to bring a good relation, communication and harmonious manner between the people and communities. The Article 17 of the Constitution abolished the practice of the untouchables but in modern India, if we come to the rural areas the *Dalits* kept outside of the villages. Even today the untouchables are not emancipated from the Hindu evils.

However, Dr. Ambedkar's contribution in this regard is significant. He has become immortal and his own prediction that the sons and daughters of future India will worship him as the hero of this nation is becoming a reality. In the vision and direction of Dr. Ambedkar we declare our resolve that we are slaves to none and we will never accept slavery of anyone. With this firm resolve and confidence every *Dalit* should surge forward in free India. Then only Ambedkar's dream that "we shall be the ruling race in free India" will be a reality.

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MEALS AND CELEBRATIONS IN ASIAN CULTURES

S.M. Michael svd¹

1. Introduction

Tell me what you eat, and I'll tell you who you are, wrote renowned gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin in 1825. Food is a very important and necessary part of our lives. It sustains us, giving meaning, order, and values to our lives. Food reflects the symbolism in our ideological systems. Sharing food has been a way for people of all cultures to create and sustain a bond with others. It also plays an important part in our identity construction, our religious practices, and our socialization. It is a vital part in our celebrations.

We use food for a variety of purposes and the food that we choose to eat is selected because of many different influences. In many religions, food is a communicative symbol where we experience and perceive God's love and life. Foodways can thus tell us a lot about the society in which they play a part. This paper will highlight the facts that we communicate messages by means of as well as about food, and we can look at foodways to discern cultural presuppositions underlying our communicative styles and religious experiences.

2. Food, Meals and Culture

All living organism need to sustain themselves to be alive. But, our human sustenance takes a form of culture. Food becomes a meal through a process of culture. Even animals need to eat food but this food becomes a meal for human beings because of its cultural moorings. It is in the first few years of a child's life that the mother and other members of the family teach it to discriminate between food and non-food, and how, when and in what order to eat it. These rules we carry with ourselves throughout our life though we might modify or change them as we go along.

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Consuming food is a cultural activity, which has several symbolic meanings. We eat food because we need it to live, it is what gives us the nutrients that we need for our bodies to grow. Another reason we eat food is because of psychological reasons. If we are happy, we eat; if we are sad, we eat; boredom, depression, and loneliness are other reasons that we eat. Communities are kept together with the cultural and symbolic meaning of food (Humphrey, 1991.). We use food for social needs. When we have friends, usually we have some form of food to offer them, whether it is a light snack or a full meal. Food items themselves have meaning attached to them.

Normally, people who have the same culture share the same food habits, that is, they share the same assemblage of food variables. Peoples of different cultures share different assemblages of food variables. We might say that different cultures have different food choices (Brown, 1984). All the same, within the same culture, the food habits are not at all necessarily homogeneous. In fact, as a rule they are not. Within the same general food style, there are different manifestations of food variables of a smaller range, for different social situations. People of different social classes or occupations eat differently. People on festive occasions, in mourning, or on a daily routine eat again differently.

Different religious sects have different eating codes (Penner, 1991). Men and women, in various stages of their lives, eat differently. These variations may be influenced by the natural resources that are available for its use. All the same, food is not everything in the environment which can be used for sustaining and nourishing the human body. The environment only sets the limits and provides challenge to human ingenuity. Certain items, animal, vegetable and mineral, are selected by the culture as fit for human consumption and many others as not. In most cases, the selected items are consumed after being processed in certain ways which are again prescribed by culture.

3. Food, Culture and Communication

The role of food in different cultures throughout time and in all parts of the world is very interesting and revealing how societies and cultures have been communicating with the symbolism of food. Beyond

merely nourishing the body, what we eat and with whom we eat can inspire and strengthen the bonds between individuals, communities, and even countries. There is no closer relationship than kin, and food plays a large part in defining family roles, rules, and traditions.

What we consume, how we acquire it, who prepares it, who is at the table, and who eats first is a form of communication that is rich with meaning. Food participates in multiple symbolic systems in a society. To discern some of the meanings that can be read into the patterning of food in a meal will reveal to us the communicative characteristic of food and meal. Choices people make with respect to what, when, where, and how they eat is related to the cultural communication of that community with regard to social relationship of that society.

Nations or countries are frequently associated with certain foods. People also connect to their cultural or ethnic group through similar food patterns. Immigrants often use food as a means of retaining their cultural identity. People from different cultural backgrounds eat different foods. The ingredients, methods of preparation, preservation techniques, and types of food eaten at different meals vary among cultures.

In addition to impacting food choices, culture also plays a role in food-related etiquette. People in Western societies may refer to food-related etiquette as *table manners*, a phrase that illustrates the cultural expectation of eating food or meals at a table. Some people eat with forks and spoons; more people use fingers or chopsticks. However, utensil choice is much more complicated than choosing chopsticks, fingers, or flatware. Among some groups who primarily eat food with their fingers, diners use only the right hand to eat. Some people use only three fingers of the right hand. Among other groups, use of both hands is acceptable. In some countries, licking the fingers is polite; in others, licking the fingers is considered impolite (and done only when a person thinks no one else is watching). Rules regarding polite eating may increase in formal settings.

The amount people eat and leave uneaten also has symbolic meaning in cultures. Some people from Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian countries might leave a little bit of food on their plates in order to indicate that their hunger has been satisfied (Kittler 2001). Cooks from other

locations might be offended if food is left on the plate, indicating that the *guest may have disliked* the food. Similarly, a clean plate might signify *either satisfaction* with the meal or desire for more food.

Even the role of conversation during mealtime varies from place to place. Many families believe that mealtime is a good time to converse and to "catch up" on the lives of family and friends. Among other families, conversation during a meal is acceptable, but the topics of conversation are limited. In some Southeast Asian countries it is considered polite to limit conversation during a meal (Kittler 2001).

4. Symbolic Meaning of Food in Asian Cultures

Food has many symbolic meanings. It has a symbol of hospitality, status, welcome and acceptance. In her book *Welcoming Ways*, Andrea Alban Gosline describes dozens of culinary customs from around the globe. In Uzbekistan mothers whisper these words to their new babies: "My little meat, my little fat, my little honey, my grasshopper, my tiny moon, light of my eyes."

In China Red eggs are incorporated into the naming and welcome ceremony when the baby is one month old. In the Chinese tradition food and health go together. Food not only affects health as a matter of general principle, the selection of the right food at any particular time must also be dependent upon one's health condition at that time. Food, therefore, is also medicine. The Chinese way of eating is further characterized by the ideas and beliefs about food, which actively affect the ways in which food is prepared and taken. Indeed, perhaps one of the most important qualifications of a Chinese gentleman was his knowledge and skill pertaining to food and drink (Simoons, 1991).

In India, food is not exchanged between unequal castes. Food is a symbol of hierarchical status as well as equality. There are minute rules as to what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes. Traditionally, the practices in the matter of food and social intercourse divided the people of India into different segments. Social customs relating to food divided the people of India into five groups. First, the twice born castes consisting of mainly Brahmins; the second, those

castes at whose hands the twice-born can take "Pakka" food; third, those castes at whose hands the twice-born cannot accept any kind of food but may take water; fourth, castes that are not untouchable yet are such that water from them cannot be used by the twice-born; last come all those castes whose touch defiles not only the twice-born but any orthodox Hindu.

All food is divided into two classes, "Kachcha" and "Pakka", the former being any food in the cooking of which water has been used, and the latter all food cooked in butter ("ghi") without the addition of water. As a rule, a man will never eat "Kachcha" food unless it is prepared by a fellow caste-man, which in actual practice means a member of his own endogamous group, whether it be caste or sub-caste, or else by his Brahmin "Guru" or spiritual guide. But in practice most castes seem to take no objection to "Kachcha" food from a Brahmin. A Brahmin can accept "Kachcha" food at the hands of no other caste. As for the "Pakka" food, it may be taken by a Brahmin at the hands of some of the castes only. A man of higher caste cannot accept "Kachcha" food from one of the lower, though the latter may regale himself with similar food offered by a member of one of the castes accepted to be higher than his own (Ghurye, 1932: 7). Thus food is a symbol of hierarchy of castes.

5. Participation in a Meal is the Celebration of Renewal of Relationships

Eating is a social act, and one of the marks or symbols of a family is eating together. Food is also a part of our many celebrations. In many cultures in Asia, eating together by its family members is an important value. Similarly in American Samoa, most family activities and ceremonies center on eating. A host family demonstrates its prosperity or societal rank by providing large quantities of food (Shovic 1994). However, the way that food is used in celebrations varies from home to home, state to state, and country to country. The celebrations that we have and the ways that we celebrate them are affected by our culture (Fieldhouse, 1986: 3).

Thus, gathering around a table, uniting as friends and family is an important aspect of food and celebrations. Food and celebrations unite people in the same family, giving them a common bond. A celebration of all sorts, and the food that adorns them brings people from all over the

locations might be offended if food is left on the plate, indicating that the guest may have disliked the food. Similarly, a clean plate might signify either satisfaction with the meal or desire for more food.

Even the role of conversation during mealtime varies from place to place. Many families believe that mealtime is a good time to converse and to "catch up" on the lives of family and friends. Among other families, conversation during a meal is acceptable, but the topics of conversation are limited. In some Southeast Asian countries it is considered polite to limit conversation during a meal (Kittler 2001).

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world closer together around one table. When we celebrate it is usually with people we love and trust, or are trying to get to know. Food is a powerful element that can bring together many different people. The smell of food also is powerful in that it is able to bring old memories and events to mind, a certain meal and its smell can remind a person of home.

6. Meal is a Celebration of Life Linked to Rites of Passage

We have pointed out that the food we eat is intrically linked to our culture and geography. Our festivals, marriages, pregnancies, births and deaths are ruled by the special food to be made, eaten or fed to others. Even seasons are defined by the type of food and drink that should ideally be consumed at that time of the year. Thus meal is a celebration of life linked to rites of passage.

i) Life is a Celebration

Celebrations in families and societies are marked with rites of passage, and at the height of every rite of passage there is a celebration of a community meal. Participating in the meals of the celebration of a family (rites of passage) or any other celebration means participating in the joy and sorrows and the very struggle of life of a family or a community. Let us elaborate on this point.

In all cultures, life is a celebration of giving meaning to different events of human existence. Life is experienced as pulsating and rhythmical. It is a combination of breaks and re-unions. Rituals and rites are the means by which these experiences of life are communicated. Most of these rites and rituals are filled with meaning, giving an interpretation to the process of life. Hence, experiences of humankind are heavily embedded in cultural symbols, particularly those of rituals and celebrations. These rites and rituals help the members of the community to encounter the changes in their own life and in the environment. As it will be shown shortly, meal is an essential part and the culmination and completion of the celebration of the rites of passage of a community. Community meals are connected to these rituals, symbols and myths.

In order to be alive and active a culture has to relive its experiences. This means the experiences which are stored in rituals must be enacted, myths recited, narratives told, events of importance celebrated. These enactments, recitals, tellings and performances transform and enable the people involved to re-experience the heritage of their culture. "Life consists of retellings" (Bruner 1986: 12). It is in this sense that meals which form a part and parcel of a community ritual is a celebration of that community.

ii) Meals and Celebrations are Essential Part of Rites of Passage

Every individual in a society undergoes different phases of life such as birth, puberty, adulthood, old-age and death. From birth till death human beings take up different positions in life such as childhood, youth, marriage and parenthood. All these changes and positions in life involve different responsibilities and each such change disturbs the individual's equilibrium in relationship within his family and society. A person's ability to handle these situations are marked with uncertainties. Hence, these disturbances which involve marked changes in the habitual interaction rates of an individual are known as crisis (Chapple and Coon 1942: 484). Every culture meets these crisis situations through various rituals so that an individual may pass through these stages without much stress and strain. These rites and rituals are called rites of passage by the well known social scientist Arnold van Gennep (Cf. Gennep 1960). These rites and rituals literally mark the passage of an individual from one state in his relations with other people into another state.

The purpose of these rituals and celebrations are to transform an individual from one stage of life to another. These rites and celebrations are seen as both indicators and vehicles of transition from one socio-cultural state and status to another - childhood to maturity, virginity to marriage, childlessness to parenthood, sickness to health, death to ancestry, and so on. These ceremonies and specific rites also play an important role in the ordering and reordering of social relations (Gluckman 1962: 4).

For example, in the Dravidian cultures when a girl comes of age, her movements and interactions are restricted; she is confined to her home for a certain period of time until a number of rites and rituals are performed (Diehl 1956: 185). These rites and rituals are aimed at changing the quality

of time and status for the girl who has come of age as well as for the members of the family. The girl is no more an ordinary small girl. She is different now. This change of status in her life and for the members of the family and relations are marked with rituals of Rites of Passage. In the words of Kimball, "The person who enters a status at variation with the one previously held becomes "sacred" to the others who remain in the profane state. It is this new condition which calls for rites eventually incorporating the individuals into the group and returning him to the customary routines of life. These changes may be dangerous, and at least, they are upsetting to the life of the group and the individual. The transitional period is met with rites of passage which cushion the disturbance" (1960: ix). Similarly, in other life-crisis rituals such as marriage, death, etc. the rites of passage change the quality of time for the people who are undergoing these rituals. At the culmination of every rite of passage there is a celebration marked with a community meal.

Van Gennep saw "regeneration" as a law of life and of the universe: the energy which is found in any system gradually becomes spent and must be renewed at intervals. For him, this regeneration is accomplished in the social world by the rites of passage given expression in the rites of death and renewal of life. The essential part of this regeneration is a community meal which renews the community itself and the intimate relationships of the members of a community.

Let us take an example from Korean Culture. Naming of a child is a rite of passage which accompanies a festive meal. In Korean culture, there are prescribed rules, timing, rites and procedures in the naming of a child. After a lapse of some time a child is named. For a boy a temporary name, called a birth name, was to be replaced by a proper name upon attaining majority. A girl would have no childhood name.

On the 100th day after the birth, a sumptuous banquet is held. If the child is the first and male, the banquet is especially elaborate. Many varieties and large quantities of food are prepared and a large number of guests are invited. Parents also present rice cakes to the neighbours. The guests invited to the 100th day party come with presents, often in the form of gold rings.

On the first birthday of a child another big party is given, which is called the "tol" banquet. The child is dressed as resplendently as possible, often to its dismay and discomfort, and is set before a "tol" table with an assortment of rice cakes and symbolic items such as a hank of yarn, money, stationery, and a book. The adults enjoy predicting the child's fortune as the child picks one of the items. If it picks the yarn it is supposed to live long; if the writing-brush it is presumed to possess a scholarly talent, and if money it will be blessed with wealth, etc. (see Korean Overseas Information Service, 1978: 328-329).

When this routine is over, relatives and acquaintances are invited to enjoy the food, and the congratulations and presents of the guests are given.

Similarly celebrations of other rites of passage also follow a festive meal. In Korean culture, marriage is considered the most important single event for the entire family as well as the bride and groom, to be witnessed by many acquaintances and close relatives. The marriage celebration is marked by a family meal with relatives and friends (see Korean Overseas Information Service, 1978: 328-329).

The food chosen during these celebrations will depend upon the cultural meaning of food in each society. To narrate this point, I draw examples from India and China in the next section of this paper.

iii) Meals and Celebrations are Essential Part of the Cyclical Rituals

Van Gennep applied his system of "regeneration" to the analysis of feast and festivals in all cultures. Every feast and festival is characterized by the celebration of a community or a family meal. As we just saw, Van Gennep found regeneration is very essential in every society. Cyclical rituals are part of this regeneration.

In almost all human societies, work and life tend to be governed by seasonal and ecological rhythms. Changes in the environment, such as the alteration of the seasons and even the succession of day and night, the phases of the moon, or the progression of the seasons in their annual cycle

involve a disturbance of all the members of a group. They are crises because in many societies, the food supply and the means of livelihood are so dependent upon the vagaries of the environment and its climatic conditions that these human groups live in a perpetual state of anxiety and uncertainty. Moreover the changes in nature exert an alteration in the occupational rhythm of life. Consequently, these changes involve a readjustment of the interaction rates.

For example, in a country like India which is predominantly agricultural, important crisis, that is, crisis which involve relatively great changes of interaction rates, come in the spring at planting time, and in the fall at harvest. Some of the extensive cyclical rituals, such as the harvest rites, mark the end of a period of technical activity; others like planting ceremonies mark the beginning of such a period. The ritual techniques used in these crises enable individuals affected by the changes to build up the new interaction rates needed to restore their equilibrium. Human life need to be adjusted to these changes in nature. Accordingly every culture marks culturally recognized points in the passage of time such as first fruits, harvest, mid-summer, new year, new moon, etc. (cf. James 1961).

Normally, the "Rites of Passage" are associated with non-periodic changes such as birth and death, illness, and so on. The "Cyclical Rituals" on the other hand, are usually connected with the periodic changes; the daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly changes which are associated with changes in technology through the alteration of day and night and of the seasons. Most characteristically, however, the non-periodic changes producing the rite of passage affect a single individual specially, and the rest of the group only through their relations with him, while those producing the Cyclical Rituals affect all the members of the group together. These rites, coming periodically, help to reinforce the habitual relations within the society. E.D. Chappell and C.S. Coon (1942) call these rites and rituals as "rites of intensification", since the goal of these celebrations is the strengthening of group unity.

These rites which accompany and bring about the change of year, season, or month are also, according to Van Gennep, ceremonies of passage. Certain feasts and festivals in different parts of Asia and in other geographical areas of the world may include rites of expulsion of winter

and incorporation of spring - the one dies and the other is reborn (Gennep 1960: 178-180).

Invariably the celebration of these feast and festivals are marked with food symbolism in the meals of their culture. We will study some of them in Asian Cultures.

7. Quality of a Meal Influences the Personality of People

As pointed out above, the food chosen during the community celebrations at the rites of passage will depend upon the cultural meaning of food in each society. Many cultures in Asia consider that there is an intimate relationship between the type of meals (food) we take and our personality. To narrate this point, I draw examples from India and China.

i) Food and Celebration in Indian Culture

In India, food is classified into different psychological qualities based on the nature of food into hot and cold. There is also a classification of diets on the basis of their compatibility with certain lifestyles which are arranged hierarchically. *Satva* (righteous), *rajas* (energetic) and *tamas* (inactive) are three dominant qualities or virtues, and one who aspires to. Hence according to the hierarchy of caste, and according to the psychological qualities expected in their behavior, different castes will choose food items in their meals in any celebration. An individual or a caste group which aspires to lead a *satvic* lifestyle must be vegetarian, teetotaler, and she/he or the caste group has to avoid, among other things, garlic and onion. They must also avoid chilies, and highly spiced food. Many upper caste Hindus, especially Brahmins, people who follow Jain religion and holy men regard vegetarianism as the only diet compatible with that condition of living.

'*Rajas*' food includes meat-eating and the spices, and is regarded as appropriate to those doing manual labour, and for soldiers and others who have to live by using physical force or violence.

'*Tamas*' is gluttony especially in spicy meats and liquor. This type of food is regarded as part of an overall sensuous lifestyle.

The different caste communities according to their caste regulations choose food which is appropriate in their celebrations (Srnivas, 1984: 107).

ii) Food and Celebration in Chinese Culture

The Chinese meals in celebrations are based on its distinctive understanding of food and health. The Chinese's underlying principles in meal preparation is based on the bodily functions of the *yin-yang* principles. Many foods are also classifiable into those that possess the *yin* quality and those of the *yang* quality. When *yin* and *yang* forces in the body are not balanced, problems result. Proper amounts of food of one kind or the other may then be administered (i.e., eaten) to counterbalance the *yin* and *yang* disequilibria. If the body were normal, overeating of one kind of food would result in an excess of that force in the body, causing diseases. Hence, food selected in celebrations take the above aspects of dietary principles (Simoons, 1991).

At least two other concepts belong to the native Chinese food tradition. One is that, in consuming a meal, appropriate amounts of both *fan* and *ts'ai* should be taken. In fact, of the two, *fan* is the more fundamental and indispensable. The other concept is frugality. Overindulgence in food and drink is a sin of such proportions that dynasties could fall on its account (Simoons, 1991).

8. Meals and Celebrations at Cyclical Rituals in Asian Cultures

As pointed out above, in Asia too, the different cultural communities have developed their own rites and rituals for centuries to giving meaning to their life experience in terms of linear and cyclic rituals. The culmination of these celebrations are marked with community or family meals. We will see some of the meals connected to cyclical rituals in Asian cultures.

i) In Chinese Culture

Celebration of the New Year is a cyclical ritual in all cultures. In Chinese culture, it is very elaborate. This is celebrated with a special festive

meal. It is a time to gather with family, honor ancestors and celebrate with a big banquet that symbolizes prosperity in the New Year.

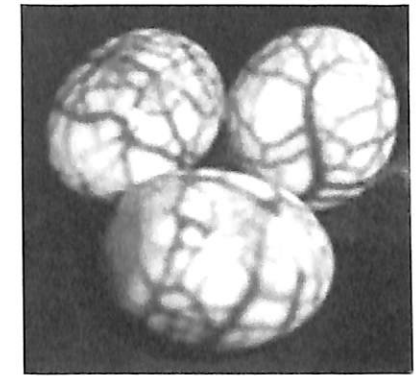
Most of the dishes served during Chinese New Year (also known as Spring Festival) are symbolic of something positive, hopeful and indicating newness of life. Chicken and fish, for example, symbolize happiness and prosperity--especially when served whole. Dishes made with oranges represent wealth and good fortune because they are China's most plentiful fruit. Noodles represent longevity; therefore, they should never be cut ! Duck symbolizes fidelity, while eggs signify fertility. Bean curd or *tofu*, however, is avoided because its white color suggests death and misfortune.

Dishes are also chosen based on homonyms--words that either are spelled the same or sound the same as other words. Fish (*yu*) is served because it sounds similar to the Chinese word for plenty; whole fish represents abundance. Turnips are cooked because their name (*cai tou*) also means "good luck."

Another popular Chinese New Year dish is *jiaozi*, dumplings boiled in water. In some areas of China, coins are placed in the center of *jiaozi*. Whoever bites into one of these dumplings will have an exceptionally lucky year.



Vegetables (Simoons, 1991).



Lucky Chinese dish for a prosperous New Year

The Chinese celebrations include certain specific items of food. This food in celebrations is related to the symbolic meaning of that food item. The symbolic significance of a food may be based on its appearance or on how the Chinese word for it sounds. Here are several symbolic Chinese foods:

a) Eggs

Eggs hold a special symbolic significance in many cultures, and China is no exception. The Chinese believe eggs symbolize fertility. After a baby is born, parents may hold a "red egg and ginger party," where they pass out hard boiled eggs to announce the birth. (In some regions of China the number of eggs presented depends on the sex of the child: an even number for a girl, and an odd number if a boy has been born).

b) Noodles

Noodles are a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture. They are as much a part of a Chinese birthday celebration as a birthday cake with lit candles is in many countries. Since noodles do symbolize long life, it is considered very unlucky to cut up a strand.

c) Fish

Although westerners sometimes balk at the sight of a entire fish lying on a plate, in China a fish served whole is a symbol of prosperity. In fact, at a banquet it is customary to serve the whole fish last, pointed toward the guest of honor. Fish also has symbolic significance because the Chinese word for fish, *yu*, sounds like the word for riches or abundance, and it is believed that eating fish will help your wishes come true in the year to come.

d) Duck

Chinese wedding banquet is marked with a mouthwatering platter of Peking duck on the banquet table. Ducks represent fidelity in Chinese culture. Also, red dishes are featured at weddings as red is the color of happiness. (You'll find them served at New Year's banquets for the same reason.)

e) Chicken

In Chinese culture, chicken forms part of the symbolism of the dragon and phoenix. At a Chinese wedding, chicken's feet (sometimes referred to as phoenix feet) are often served with dragon foods such as lobster. Chicken is also popular at Chinese New Year, symbolizing a good marriage and the coming together of families (serving the bird whole emphasizes family unity).

f) Seeds (lotus seeds, watermelon seeds, etc)

During the Chinese New Year celebration Chinese eat snacks with different types of seeds in them. The seed-filled treats represent bearing many children in Chinese culture.

g) Fruit - Tangerines, Oranges and Pomelos

Tangerines and oranges are passed out freely during Chinese New Year as the words for tangerine and orange sound like luck and wealth, respectively. As for pomelos, this large ancestor of the grapefruit signifies abundance, as the Chinese word for pomelo sounds like the word for "to have."

h) Cake

The sweet, steamed cakes are so popular during the Chinese New Year season. Cakes such as Sticky Rice Cake have symbolic significance on many levels. Their sweetness symbolizes a rich, sweet life, while the layers symbolize rising abundance for the coming year. Finally, the round shape signifies family reunion.

i) In India Culture

In India there is no single New Year celebration. Each cultural groups have their own New Year in their respective annual calendar at different times of the year. Hence, it is impossible to narrate meal pattern for all the cultural groups of India. Hence, an example of only one cultural group is given here, namely *Maharashtra*.

Maharashtra is one of the linguistic states in India located at the middle west of Indian subcontinent. The people of this State speak Marathi as their mother tongue and belong to that culture. Among them, celebration

of a new year is to mark a new beginning. It is known as *Gudhi-Padawa*. It is the first day (Shuddha Pratipada) of the month of *Chaitra*. This new beginning is marked by a custom of erecting a long bamboo decorated with a silk-cloth and silver-vessel, a garland of sweets and neem-leaves. This is called *Gudhi*. After worshipping the *Gudhi*, it is taken down in the evening after sunset and sweet from the garland is distributed among the children. The meal of that day contains sweets. One peculiar custom, which characterizes *Gudhi-Padawa*, is the eating of neem-leaves before taking of the sweetmeats.

Celebration of the New Year teaches us that we need a constant transformation, renewal and rejuvenation. We need constant revision and criticism of our previous orderings of thought and behavior. It is the celebration of life and death. During the celebration of the *Gudhi-Padawa* eating of neem-leaves before taking of the sweetmeats is very special. This reminds people, at the beginning of the New Year, that life is made up of both joys and sorrows, and we need to be ready to face both (Thomas, 1971: 3-4).

9. Divine Meal in Asian Religions

Food has a symbolic meaning in almost all religions. In some religions such as Judaism, Hinduism and Christianity the eating of regular meals is intertwined with ritual acts. In the Hindu family, among the higher castes the morning meal is first offered to the domestic deities before being consumed. Eating must also be undertaken wherein a ritually pure condition, and a greater degree of purity is required while cooking. The kitchen is one of the "purest" places in a Hindu house (Srinivas, 1984: 103).

Around the world, Muslims fast during Ramadan, believed to be the month during which the Qur'an, the Islamic holy book, was given by God to the Prophet Muhammad. During this month, Muslims fast during daylight hours, eating and drinking before dawn and after sunset. Orthodox Jews follow dietary laws, popularly referred to as a *kosher* diet, discussed in Jewish scripture. The dietary laws, which describe the use and preparation of animal foods, are followed for purposes of spiritual health (Rhodes, Web online).

Many followers of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism are vegetarians, in part, because of a doctrine of non-injury or non-violence. Abstinence from eating meat in these traditions stems from the desire to avoid harming other living creatures. Though not more than about 28% of the population are vegetarians in India, in spite of this, vegetarians have a high ritual status in the country and are extremely articulate (Srinivas, 1984: 105).

Meal binds the members of a religious community. It is a custom among the Muslims to sit for a common festival meal along with the guests around a large plate, in the middle of which all the food is kept. The guests as well as hosts eat together by drawing the portion that each one likes to consume. On feast days, Muslims will normally send a piece of cooked mutton also to the houses of the neighbours who may belong to other religious traditions.

In India, among some tribes, there is a ritual meal around a reconciliation experience. It could happen that a boy from one clan has fallen in love and eloped with a girl from another clan, which union is normally forbidden. This makes the tribes enemies of each other, and tensions rise. If normalcy has to be restored, it is arranged that the elders first come together and discuss what has happened and how the problem is to be solved. When the dialogue succeeds, both the clans celebrate with a meal as a sign of reconciliation and mutual trust.

In the South of India there lives a tribal community known as *Todas*. Two basic principles rule their community: a) A woman is impure; b) The buffalo is very sacred. In their culture, the buffalo is normally not killed and consumed for food. However, once a year, a prize buffalo is killed and the entire communities consume it as a festival. It is believed by them that this meal helps them to have the life of the divinity within themselves.

The Sikh religious community in India has a special community meal in their tradition. The Hindus have a concept of "Prasad" (Divine Food) in their religious traditions. Let us elaborate on these two types of Divine Food.

a) *Langar (Community Meal of the Sikhs)*

Langar (in Punjabi language) is the term used in the Sikh religion for the free, vegetarian food served in a Gurdwara and eaten by everyone sitting as equals. *Langar* is also a fundamental element of Sufism, especially the Chishti Order. *Langar* is served in the precincts of a Sufi Dergah in the *Langar* Khana and is served out of a massive pot called a "Deg," and is not necessarily vegetarian. *Langar* is also a practice of the Ravidasi faith, and follows the same format as the Sikh practice ([^http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html](http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html)).

The Sikh *Langar* or free kitchen was started by the first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak. It is designed to uphold the principle of equality between all people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status. In addition to the ideals of equality, the tradition of *Langar* expresses the ethics of sharing, community, inclusiveness and oneness of all humankind. "...the Light of God is in all hearts."

At *Langar*, only vegetarian food is served. This is done to ensure that all people, with whatever dietary restrictions will feel welcome to eat as equals.

The institution of "Guru ka *Langar*" has served the community in many ways. It has ensured the participation of Sikhs in a task of service for mankind, even Sikh children help in serving food to the participants of *Langar*. *Langar* also teaches the etiquette of sitting and eating in a community situation, which has played a great part in upholding the virtue of sameness of all human beings; providing a welcome, secure and protected sanctuary.



Langar service at the Gurdwara at Forum 2004 in Spain
([^http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html](http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html))



Volunteers preparing langar at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India.
([^ http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html](http://www.searchsikhism.com/institution.html))

Everyone is welcome to share the *Langar*; no one is turned away. The food is normally served twice a day, every day of the year. Each week a family or several families volunteer to provide and prepare the *Langar*. This is very generous, as there may be several hundred people to feed, and caterers are not allowed. All the preparation, the cooking and the washing-up is also done by voluntary helpers.

The Sikh Gurus encouraged their followers to regard everyone as their own brother. We are brothers born of the same father. 'Our Father is one and we are all his children.' We are members of one family. All the Gurus showed in actual life how this perception of the 'Brotherhood of Man' was to be lived out; the free kitchen is perhaps the best demonstration of the same love and active sympathy for the downtrodden. The free kitchen is an institution where these noble ideals can be practiced. A Sikh Gurdwara is a central place of worship and *langar* is a place for serving each other. In a *langar* a mingling of all classes is provided and in dining together realization of the truth 'all food is gift of God and that prejudices about it are entirely invalid'.

b) *Prasad (Hinduism-Prasad-Divine Food)*

Prasada (Sanskrit), *prasad/prashad* (Hindi), *Prasada* in (Kannada), *prasadam* (Tamil) or *prasadam* (Telugu) is both a mental condition of generosity, as well as a material substance that is first offered to a deity (in Hinduism) and then consumed.

Prasadam offered on Banana leaves after Puja ceremony at a home in Guntur, India. (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia online)



Prasada is the sacred food offering of the Lord. During Kirtans (Singing hymns), worship, Puja, Havan and Arati, the devotee offers sweet rice, fruits, jaggery, milk, coconut, plantain and such other articles to the Lord, according to his ability. After offering them to the Lord, they are shared between the members of the house or the Bhaktas (devotees) in a temple. From ancient Indian tradition the sharing of food has significance also for the personal relationship between those who partake in the food. To take only the remains of the food, what is left over after the other person has eaten, is a sign of humility, an expression of honour to him who eats first. Hindus believe that the prasad has the deity's blessing residing within it. In contemporary Hindu religious practices in India, the desire to get **prasada** and have darshan are the two major motivations of pilgrimage and temple visits.

Prasada is that which gives peace. Water, flowers, rice, etc., are offered to the Lord in worship. When a sacrifice is performed, the participants share the Prasada which bestows the blessings of the gods. Prasad is extremely sacred. There is no restriction of any kind in taking prasad.

Tukaram, the great mystic and poet of Maharashtra in the 17th century, makes abundant use of food and meal to express divine experience in his sacred poetry (*abhangas*). Tukaram sees in the meal not only the symbol of communion with God but also the bond of mutual spiritual fellowship. Devotees are drawn together by the common gift which they receive from God. Their devotion becomes a source of social solidarity and integration (Neuner, 1987: xvi).

10. Conclusion

Human life is a pilgrimage to one's eternal destiny. One cannot proceed on this pilgrimage without the food required day by day on this journey. Cultural and spiritual traditions have developed a language of symbols to express the importance of food in human life. Food and meals have much significance in the social and cultural life of a community. Family, community and village bonding takes place through eating together. Food also plays an important role in the renewal of relationships and reconciliation. Life is a journey, rites and rituals are the means by which a family and society reaffirms its members to face the challenges of life. At the height of all these rites of passage there is a community meal which bonds the members of a community. Similarly, according to the ecological changes in the environment, feast and festivals are organized to meet the tensions arising from these changes. Here too, festive meals play an important role in strengthening group solidarity and community fellow feeling. There is an intimate relationship between food and religious experiences of people in different cultures. In many religions meal is a symbol of communion with God and also the bond of mutual spiritual fellowship. The food offered at religious places become a source of social solidarity and integration.

As a concluding remark it may be said that there is an intimate relationship between food, culture and religion. There is a community dimension in this relationship. The Christian meaning of Christ as eternal food and the salvific nature of the Eucharist are very deep and theological which will be explored in the following papers.

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5. [^] [Guru Granth Sahib pg. 282](#)

HINDUISM IN CYBERSPACE

Gnana Patrick¹

Introduction

When I typed the word 'Hinduism' in the google search engine and entered the web-world, I found, to my pleasant surprise, 8,700,000 hits.² Amazing indeed! A religion, which is considered to be one of the most traditional, taken by some to be conservative, 'anti-scientific', 'primitive' (in terms of gods and goddesses, rituals, mythology, beliefs and practices), and so on finds a reasonably good presence in the web-world, a space constructed by the most modern communication technology! Yes, Hinduism, projected to be the third largest religion in the world, has entered the cyber world in a big way. How does it 'present' itself in the cyber world? What are some of its features and orientations? What could be its possible impacts upon its followers, and others? - are some of the questions this essay wishes to explore into.

The Web-Genres of Hinduism

The most familiar and effective method we can follow to understand the nature of the presence of Hinduism in the web world is to make a phenomenological description³ of the different genres in the form of which Hinduism presents itself. (I visited 100 websites of Hinduism randomly and collected the data for this study).

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² As found on 21 November, 2007. Interestingly, Islam has the highest hits [106,000,000], followed by Christianity [45,200,000], Buddhism [21,000,000] and Judaism [15,900,000]!

³ In describing and analysing the presence of Hinduism in the cyber world, I follow the existing distinction between 'Religion Online' and 'Online Religion'. While the former dwells basically upon the availability of information on religions in the websites, the latter is concerned with the practice of religion in and through the internet. The Religion Online is purported to give data as extensive as possible so that it can meet the needs of devotees seeking information, scholars seeking knowledge, and so on. These websites, by their very presence, nurture a comparative approach towards religions. Online Religion, on the other hand, aims at the very practice of religion and aims at catering to the needs of the followers of a particular religion as well as inviting others to practise it.

Following are the prominent web-genres through which Hinduism presents itself:

- ❖ e-books on Hinduism
- ❖ Web Hindu Vidyapeeth
- ❖ Free Courses on Hinduism (Online High School, Online Associate's degrees, Online Bachelor's Degrees, Masters, Diploma, etc)
- ❖ Hindu Digicards-greeting cards
- ❖ Directories
- ❖ E-mail, blogs, and chat services on Hinduism
- ❖ Hosting free websites
- ❖ Encyclopaedias, dictionaries, lexicons, and other source materials
- ❖ FAQ on Hinduism
- ❖ Essays on Hindu themes
- ❖ Sacred Texts of Hinduism
- ❖ Audio and video excerpts of sacred texts
- ❖ Faith library and resource centres
- ❖ Pictures of religious themes including gods and goddesses
- ❖ Forum for debates and discussions
- ❖ Information on Hindu Trusts, Institutions, and finally,
- ❖ Websites soliciting Donations and Contributions

Following are the salient aspects of Hinduism presented through the web-genres:

- ❖ Hindu beliefs
- ❖ Hindu Festivals
- ❖ Hindu Gods and Goddesses
- ❖ Avatars
- ❖ Hindu mythology
- ❖ Hindu astrology
- ❖ Hindu culture
- ❖ Hindu medicinal systems
- ❖ Hindu temples
- ❖ Hindu rituals (Pujas, homam,)
- ❖ History of Hindu kingdoms
- ❖ Yogas and asnas
- ❖ Hindu priests, purohits

- ❖ Hindu social system
- ❖ Fees for religious services
- ❖ Hindu matrimonials
- ❖ Hindu diet
- ❖ Hindu calendar
- ❖ Vaastu sastra,

Online Practice of Hinduism

The study reveals that most of the websites on Hinduism have an orientation towards the practice of Hinduism. Offering puja, making a darshan of the personal deity, reciting mantras, and undertaking pilgrimages are some of the ways Hinduism is being practised in the web world. It is interesting to note that even pilgrimage, which is down to earth a physical activity, is being replaced by the simulated practice of it in and through the web world. A devotee browses through the pilgrim centres, and pays for offering *pujas* there and fulfils his/her religious duty of undertaking a pilgrimage! The day-to-day rituals like performing an arti, singing a bhajan, making a darshan, reading a scriptural text, reciting the mantras, and the list goes on... All these rituals are performed in the virtual space of the websites.

An Interpretive Understanding of Hinduism in the Cyberspace

Cyberspace Democratising Hinduism...

One of the very first and obvious consequences of the phenomenon of Religion Online is the fact of ever-widening of the universe of those who are informed of religions. The information revolution brought about by the internet is helping the followers of religions to come to know more and more about the religion that they practise. This knowledge empowers them religiously and enables them to have an enlightened practice of their religion. Hinduism Online too is enabling its followers to have an in-depth knowledge of the religion that they practice.

Looked at from another angle, this same reality of expansion of the knowledge of religions can be read as a process of democratisation of the religious knowledge. Every religion, as it develops into an

organisational structure, begins to constitute a small group of people who, with their expert knowledge of the religion, begin to exercise an authority over the multiple dimensions of the religions, including the followers of the religion. In the Indian context, especially with regard to Hinduism, such a class of experts have got formed as a separate *varna* (later on as caste), considering themselves to be superior to all other castes. Brahmins are these people, who, on the basis of their knowledge of Vedas and Sastras, claim superiority over other religions. They have been keeping the knowledge of religions as their special preserve. But, today, due to the Religion Online, their exclusive hold on the religious knowledge of Hinduism has been broken, and Hinduism, in terms of its knowledge, is getting democratised endlessly.

This process of democratisation of the knowledge of Hinduism has its impact on the institution of Hindu priesthood, and its implications for the sacral duties carried out in the Indian temples. Indian temples, traditionally, have only Brahmin priests officiating at rituals. This has been so due to the fact that they alone were enabled to read and know the scriptures and that they alone were 'recognised' as non-polluting castes of people who could officiate at sacred rituals. But now, the reality is changing. Due to the democratisation of religious knowledge, persons from castes other than the Brahmins too are empowered with Hindu religious knowledge, and therefore become capable of officiating at the temple rituals as priests, purohits, chanters, etc. This is inducing a considerable change in the recognition of social dignity for the non-Brahmin castes.

Projecting Hinduism as an Orthodox Unified Religion

The title 'Hinduism' is a recent denominator. What we have had all through the religious history of the Indian subcontinent are different religious traditions, which are known by their unique and specific characteristics and developmental trajectories. Their known history begins with Vedic Religion which dwelt upon sacrifices, and runs through the Upanishadic religion which focussed upon interior realisation through the path of knowledge, Jainism and Buddhism which emerged as heterodox religions during the pre-Christian era, Saivism and Vaisnavism - the two major theistic religions of Hinduism (several sub-sects of these two major religions included), the Sakti Cult which developed independently, Tantric

tradition which had a separate trajectory, the Bhakti religious traditions that arose within and without these major religious traditions, Sikhism which emerged as a distinct religion, the many socio-religious movements which arose at the interjection of modernity and tradition, and the innumerable local cults of godmen and godwomen which totter the length and breath of the landscape of India.

All these diverse religious traditions were attempted to be brought together at the backdrop of the advent of Christianity and the emergence of Indian nationalism. This attempt brought forth both positive and negative consequences. While a person like Mahatma Gandhi could tap the Hindu religious resources in order to enkindle the Hindu mind, there were others in whom a desire for religious nationalism to be at the service of majoritarian politics began to take roots. There were also extreme fundamentalist Hindu organisations which took shape against this background.

In today's scenario of globalisation, India is witnessing a strong current of religious nationalism being directed to serve the political agenda of rightist political force. As part of this agenda, India is witnessing a reinvigorated attempt at unifying the various strands of Hinduism. This attempt is marked by projecting a common scriptural text around which all Indic religious traditions are syndicated. Romila Thapar, an erudite Indian historian, describes this phenomenon as the formation of a 'Syndicated Hinduism'.⁴ It can rightly be observed that Hinduism in the cyberspace helps the process of syndicating the Hindu religious traditions. All the websites on Hinduism that I visited speak of one unified religion of Hinduism, with its scripture, priesthood, mythology, belief-system, etc. In this process of syndicating, we find also the religio-cultural dynamics what are known as *sanskritization* and *co-option* at work. While websites floated by local traditions tend to upgrade themselves by tying themselves with major religious traditions, those floated by major religious traditions tend to co-opt the local ones into their religious universe. The local deities are brought within the ambit of the grand Hindu pantheon.

⁴ Romila Thapar, "Syndicated Hinduism-Essays in Early Indian History," in Romila Thapar, *Cultural Pasts*, OUP, 2000.

Example of Hindu Website Organising Hinduism

Vishva Hindu Parishad

World Hindu Council, whose aim is to regroup all HINDU organisations, thus leading to Strength & Unity among Hindus, oblivious of caste & creed, also enforcing the smriti (religious injunction) of "Hindavah Sodarah Sarve"
<http://www.vhp.org/>

Folk Hinduism - Conspicuous by their Absence

We, in India, are aware of the fact that Hinduism has also a very strong folk stream of religiosity running among the base sections of the people. It runs separately from the major religious traditions that we have mentioned above. These folk traditions are marked by local deities who have their own local mythology and religious history, region-specific beliefs and rituals supported by a repertoire of oral traditions, and by shamanistic and ecstatic religious worships which are specially related to them. These traditions, besides mediating religious experiences, have been the embodiments of cultural creativity as well as social history of the base sections of the people. Some of the deities, which are known as those 'born in the thick of conflicts', speak volumes of the social experience of oppression underwent by those that worship that deity.

Strangely enough, these folk religious traditions are not to be found in the cyber space. How to explain their absence? First of all, it could be that the folk Hinduism, due to its predominantly 'primitive' characteristic, is not suitable to the kind of 'modern face' Hinduism online is intending to project to the world. (It may be opined here that Hinduism during the contemporary times is making all attempts to present itself as a modern religion, which can appeal to the modern sensitivities of human beings, especially those who are attracted by the New Age Religions.)

Secondly, the folk religions are predominantly ecstatic in nature, and they need an actual physical community for their practice. The ecstatic religiosity blossoms in an actual human context, and not in a virtual context, and therefore the difficulty of presenting them in the cyber world! Thirdly,

ignoring the folk stream of Hinduism goes well with the attempt of projecting the text-based Sanskritic Hindu tradition alone as Hinduism. It dovetails into the one-sided representation of Hinduism, which in turn, serves the religious nationalists who build their ideology on the basis of the Sanskritic tradition.

A New Sense of 'Mission'

It may rightly be said that internet has induced a new sense of mission in the Hindu mind. Hinduism, in its traditional habitat, is rather indifferent to *missionising* or spreading itself. Some Hindus even considered the very act of going out of this holy land (India) as polluting. We are aware of instances whereby the so-called missionaries of Hinduism were required to undergo prayachita, i.e. purificatory rites before joining its Hindu fold after returning from foreign lands. All these beliefs and practices inhibited so far the spirit of mission.

But, now, the cyber world has given the Hindu mind a new sense of freedom and opportunity to *missionise* itself. First of all, the opportunities are fantastic. They can introduce their religion and even invite the visitors to the websites to practise the religion. Secondly, since this invitation is only for a virtual community of Hinduism, it is not in any way threatening their social system (caste system) organised on the basis of purity and pollution. It does not, for example, offer any threat to the caste code of contracting marriages on endogamous criterion.

Freed from such dangers, and filled with opportunities, and in a very real sense, impelled by the spirit of globalisation, which urges the human mind to find itself a relevant existence in the global world, the Hindu mind is being impelled to spread its religious tradition faster than ever.

No Hindu Website condemning Caste system !

The debate on whether caste, as a form of social organisation, is part of Hindu religion, is a century old question. The following sentence found in one of the websites on Hinduism does claim that caste is an integral part of Hindu faith. It runs as "Central to Hinduism are the concepts of

reincarnation, the caste system, merging with brahman (or the ultimate reality), finding morality, and reaching Nirvana (the peaceful escape from the cycle of reincarnation).” There are many more similar websites claiming the same.

It is alarming to see that websites on Hinduism are not condemning the evil practice of caste system in the Hindu society! While the modern state of India is rightly denouncing the caste system, along with its associated practices like untouchability, purity and pollution, etc., Hinduism as it is presented in the website does not seem to be bothered about this discriminative practice of caste.

Anti-Hindu Hate Campaign ?

While browsing the websites on Hinduism, I came across a website which speaks of Anti-Hindu Hate campaign carried out through the internet. One Hindu American Foundation has hosted a website which speaks about the existence of Hinduphobia in the internet (hafsite.org). It accuses of hate mongers spreading inaccurate and false information on Hinduism. It says hate mongers speak of Hinduism as demonolatry, anti-scientific, etc. Following is an excerpt from this Hindu American Foundation:

According to statistics provided in the report, “demonic” and “satanic” are the terms most commonly used today to describe Hinduism by numerous anti-Hindu websites easily accessible on the Internet.

“The proliferation of websites promoting religious hatred is an unfortunate consequence of the universality of access to the internet,” said Vinay Vallabh, lead author of the report, and member of the Foundation’s Executive Council. “We must vigorously identify, condemn and counter those who use the Internet to espouse chauvinism and bigotry over the principles of pluralism and tolerance.”

Most of the sites accused of hate-mongering are of the Christian evangelical type. It rings an alarm in us. We have come a long way from the past, when the Christian missionaries openly denounced Hinduism as superstitious, satanic, demonolatry, and so on. Today, the Christian faith is more equanimous in its disposition towards other religions and faiths. Inter-religious dialogues are being pursued on the basis of this new disposition and newer theologies of religion. But, the evangelical tradition within Christianity looks to be doing a disservice by dwelling upon and denouncing such aspects of Hinduism. It could be that the evangelical traditions are exhibiting their own fundamentalist tendencies than being truthful about the reality of other religions. It is sad that they are utilising even the web world to pursue their agenda.

Religious Tolerance

Among the many Hindu websites browsed, I found also websites actively advocating tolerance towards other religions. A basic religious pluralism seems to under gird their advocacy of religious tolerance. Following text taken from a Hindu website is a telling example:

GOD AND NEIGHBOR

Ram Swarup, an Indian thinker puts the matter eloquently this way:

In the spiritual realm there are two categories: God and your neighbor. And correspondingly there are two ways of looking at them: you could look at God through your neighbor or at the neighbor through your God. In the first approach, you will think that if your neighbor has the same needs and constitution and impulses as you have, then his God, in whatever way he is worshiped and by whatever name he is called, must mean the same to him as your God means to you. In short, if your neighbor is as good as you are, his God also must be as good as yours.

But if you look at your neighbor through your God, then it leads to an entirely different outlook. Then you say that if your God is good enough for you, it should be good enough for your neighbor too. And if your neighbor is not worshipping the same God in the same way, he must be worshipping Devil and qualifies for conversion or liquidation.

The first approach promotes tolerance, though it gives plurality of Gods and varieties of modes in worship. The other approach gives one God and one mode of worship, but breeds intolerance. @ - *The Word as Revelation: Names of Gods*, 1980

The globe has shrunk and is now a much smaller place. Thanks to the Internet and the mass media, people in distant lands are now our neighbors. We cannot have peace in this shrunk globe so long as we insist that we are in possession of the truth and all others are groping in the darkness. Every method of spiritual growth and worship is worthy of respect. Hinduism has much to contribute to build a pluralistic global system that is peaceful and compassionate.

That there are such Hindu websites promoting religious tolerance among the people need to be appreciated. But, this is not to rule out the fact that there are also Hindu websites which exhibit religious bigotry and fanaticism.

Hindu Websites and the Indian Diaspora

Finally, it must be noted that the Hindu Websites have, among other things, a functional role of meeting the religious needs of the Indian diaspora. One of the websites reports that:

The US Census counted 1.6 million people of Indian origin living in the United States in the year 2000. This number is likely to be more than 2 million in the year 2005. Hindus also have settled in Britain, East Africa, Fiji, Trinidad, Jamaica, Singapore, Malaysia, and in smaller numbers in many other countries. Wherever Hindus have settled, they achieve high economic and professional success. In the United States, Hindus enjoy among the highest standard of living. Their religion does not come in the way of their material prosperity. India has the third largest number of engineers and scientists in the world, after the United States and Russia. Its export of computer software engineers now is global in scale.

This Hindu diaspora community is an active participant of the cyber religious world. It participates in both Religion Online and Online religion.

4. Conclusion

Hinduism has entered the cyber world in a big way. It participates actively both in Religion Online and Online Religion. Some of the salient characteristics and dynamics of Hindu cyber presence seems to be that the cyber world is introducing certain democracy in the realm of Hindu religious knowledge, even as there is an attempt at unifying the Hindu Religion. One also sees a concern for religious tolerance, and a concern to reach out to the Hindu diaspora. Surprisingly, we also find the conspicuous absence of folk Hinduism in the cyber world, and the culpable absence of condemnation of the caste system.

QUESTIONING BEHAVIOR AND COMMUNICATION PARADIGMS OF CAMBODIAN STUDENTS

Gerard Ravasco¹

Abstract

In Cambodia, Vocational Training Education (VTE) is a prime tool for the development of the country. But many Out of School Youth (OSY) who resort to Vocational Training Institutions (VTI) do not come from the most intellectually capable of standard school leavers. Helping them achieve and optimize knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to their field of study ensures the country of a more competent work force.

However, in Cambodia, even if the students seem to be self-motivated in attending classes in VTI's, they seem to show shyness and inability in asking relevant questions. (Jones 1995, 229) This hinders learning in a VTI environment. What factors could be attributed to this phenomenon?

The research gives an overview and analysis of the history of education in Cambodia. It also makes use of classroom observation, student focus group discussion, and teacher interviews. It also employs a structured demographic survey for its respondent profile and a follow up survey question.

Keywords: Vocational Training Education, Communication models, Cultural influence

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Prologue

Before I arrived in Cambodia in 1999, my friends reminded me of that famous line: "Before you set foot in that place, always remember that God was there before you." This has inspired me to walk first the road of a learner rather than a teacher of my belief. In a previous paper, "A Christian's Introduction to the Religious Blending in Cambodia,"² I believe that one can build a practical bridge between the two worlds of Christianity and Cambodian culture through working on common concerns. Being part of the Salesians of Don Bosco, a Catholic religious congregation, we have worked since the early '90's to take part in the development of the Cambodian youth through vocational training education (VTE). At present there are three Don Bosco Vocational Training Institutions (VTI) that offer skills training for poor and orphaned youth. It is in this context that the academic research that follows finds its significance.

The Locale of the Study

Cambodia is a country that has experienced turbulent periods during its recent history. Although it has made significant progress over these last few years, Cambodia is still hounded by extreme poverty brought about by many hindrances to its economic, political, and social development. In the 1998 statistics roughly 39% of the country lived in poverty, where 43% come from the rural areas and while the other 25% from the urban areas. More than 50% of the population is under the age of 20, and of these 43% are under 15. Only 11.9% of the labor force had completed primary school, 8.3% lower secondary, and 2.8% upper secondary. Children between the ages of 10 to 14 have continued to consist of 23 to 25% of the labor force since 1980. Employment can be seen in three sectors. The primary sector consists of those working in agriculture (farming, forestry, hunting and fishing), and they are 81.6% of the labor force. The secondary sector involved in industry (mining, manufacturing, factories) consists of 2.8% of the labor force. Those in the tertiary sector working in services (hotel, trade, education, health) make up 15.6% of the labor force. (MoEYS)

² This article is published at the East Asian Pastoral Review, Volume 44 (2007) No.1, and can be accessed online at: <http://eapi.admu.edu.ph/eapr007/ravasco.htm>

At present the poverty demographic has not changed much. However we find a slight shift of labor demand from agriculture to industry. Roughly 75% of the labor force is in subsistence agriculture, 5% of the labor force is in industry, and 21% of the labor force is in the service sector (Holsinger 2002, 9). This is evidenced by the sprouting of small garments factories in the capital city and the expansion of telecommunication networks of which the country previously had so little. This country believes that it needs to provide the labor force with more adaptable skills to meet the manpower needs of the country and increase the foreign investment in the industrial sector.

Whether it is for wage employment or for small enterprise development, vocational education can close that gap to meet the needs of the industrial sector and to train the unskilled labor force. Mr Sok An, the minister in charge of the Council of Ministers has emphasized this in his speech at the opening of the new National Cambodia-Korea Vocational Training School (February, 2004).

Although there have been quite a number of vocational schools that have implemented their vocational training and skills program nevertheless there is no certification testing established just yet that could verify the competency of those trained. Looking inward and analyzing the learning environment, in particular the teacher-learner communication, might give us better view on how the curriculum is implemented and absorbed in VTI's (Vocational Training Institutions).

Rationale of the Study

In Cambodia's Education scene, Vocational Training Education (VTE) is seen as a prime tool for the present development of the country. Through it more skilled workers are able to join the country's labor force through their respective competencies. University studies are still luxury commodities and are still very much inaccessible to students who could not finish their 12 years of basic education or those who could not afford their prohibitive costs. Thus many Out of School Youth (OSY) resort to Vocational Training Institutions (VTI's) as their alternative providers to knowledge and skills attainment that could ensure them of a future job placement. However because of this situation Voc-Tech Students as a group

would not come from the most intellectually capable of standard school leavers. Thus helping them achieve and optimize knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to their field of study would surely ensure the country of a more competent work force geared to its economic development.

Research Problem

Certain educational strategies like participatory and active learning based on two-way and transactional interactive communication models have proven to have beneficial effects on students of this generation. They have helped increase motivation, attendance, long-term retention and reduce competition and isolation. (Elliot 2000; Kerlin, quoting Campbell 1999) However, here in Cambodia, even if the students seem to be self-motivated in attending classes in VTI's, they seem to show shyness and inability in asking relevant questions. (Jones 1995, 229; Welaratna's article in Murray 1992) This definitely hinders learning in a Vocational Training Institutions (VTI) environment.

What factors could be attributed to this phenomenon? Could it be because of Cambodia's past that paved the way for a culture that still employs a one-way linear communication model in Training and Education? Or could it be because of the lack of training given to teachers in new educational theories and strategies that employ two-way communication and transactional interactive communication models?

Conceptual Framework:

Our conceptual framework is best expressed in the diagram that follows:

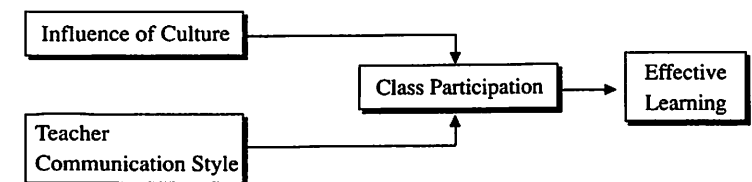


Figure 1 - Conceptual Framework

Effective learning is the goal of any type of educational institution. There could be many ways to achieve this and the classroom is a good context for effective learning. When classrooms operate with active learning, collaboration, learner responsibility and shared inquiry, they begin to operate as a community of learners (Watkins 2002, 6). The most crucial factor for class participation is the teacher. When the teacher believes that change is needed and they start with the aspects nearest to them, they can make a significant difference to the quality of learning and participation (Watkins 2002, 7). Another subtle context of effective learning is the culture in which one lives. Abuso et al. (1997, 16) synthesizes for us a definition of culture "as (1) knowledge, (2) transmitted from generation to generation, (3) learned, (4) and which everyone possesses." Thus, the culture of a place formed through its historical context provides us with information on how knowledge is assimilated or how educational processes occur.

On the negative side, these two factors, the influence of culture and the teacher communication style could also contribute to class non-participation in VTI's in Cambodia. Through an investigation of inquiries and questioning in the classroom discussions, the research will try to analyze which factor would be causal to the problem and/or which would be more predominant in its influence. The degree or the intensity of the influence will help us find communication related strategies relevant towards effective learning for the students in the VTI's.

Review of Literature: An Historical Overview of Education in Cambodia

Early Traditional Education

Even before the French arrived in Indochina in the 19th century, Cambodia already had a traditional system of education whose written evidence dates back from the late 13th century. This was recorded by Chou Ta-Kuan. He was a member of an ambassador's delegation on a diplomatic visit to Cambodia, seeking the promise of the Khmer king to pay homage to Timur Khan, successor to the great Mongol conqueror Kubilai Khan. In his report he referred to a monastic-style education. He observed that in Cambodia education was limited to boys and was carried out by Buddhist monks in wats, or temples (Ayres 2000, 12-14). While no

standards exists from one level to the next, wat-school curriculum usually consisted of reading and writing Khmer (the Cambodian language), principles of Buddhism, rules of propriety, and some arithmetic. Wat-school education also emphasized the importance of work, as students worked with monks to build and repair the temples, dwellings, roads, bridges, and water reservoirs. But in spite of the importance in the curriculum of the Khmer language, Bilodeau (1955, 21) argues that most students left wat schools illiterate because they learned only to read the [Buddhist] sacred texts and copied out the written characters. In actual fact, the texts were learnt by heart as a result of endless repetition, and the pupils were quite incapable of reading the words separately.

The *wat*-school education served a broader purpose than literacy. Beyond its curricular goals, education was intended to support social solidarity by ensuring social cohesion and the maintenance of traditional values. Wat-school education was fundamentally religious, moral, and oriented toward Cambodian "cultural values." Furthermore, education provided in wat schools was "in close agreement with the state power" (Ayres 2000, 17-18).

French Colonial Period

While in Cambodia from 1863-1953, the French discouraged the traditional Cambodian Buddhist wat schools where monks were able to provide a basic education to most of the population. The French were not earnest in providing educational alternatives through their own system and spent very little to support the existing education structure (Chandler 1998, 156). In fact, after over half century of French rule, only four Cambodians had finished the equivalent of a high school education within Cambodia (Osborne 1969, 33-36).

After the coronation of King Sihanouk and Cambodian subsequent independence from France in 1953, the number of high schools and universities increased from eight in 1953 to 209 in 1957, and in the latter year boasted an enrollment of over 160,000 (Kierman 1985, 6). The development of the education system was halted before maturity in the early 1970's as Cambodia became the victim of violent conflict both from the civil war with the Khmer Rouge in the west and the spillover of the

Vietnam war across Cambodia's eastern border. Many of Cambodia's French educated elite fled to France and Thailand during this period (Ayres 2000, 84-93).

Khmer Rouge Regime

More significant than the educated elite exodus was the Pol Pot regime's systematic execution of the educated left behind in the country from 1975 to 1979. This frightful period of Khmer Rouge occupation was witness to the death of nearly 2 million people; anyone who could speak a foreign language, wore glasses, or had been a Buddhist monk were specifically targeted for elimination. Schools were converted into prisons or animal shelters. The population was forced either into the army or onto collective farms (Dy 2003). Education everywhere in Cambodia came to a complete halt (Kierman 1985, 100; Kamm 1999, 199).

The Vietnamese Occupation

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge fell to the Vietnamese invasion forces. Although the Vietnamese tried to reestablish the educational system, the Cambodian people's priorities lay far from literacy. After the Pol Pot years, in which schools were abolished, only three hundred Cambodians with a higher education were left in the country. Many of these were employed in the varied tasks of recreating a national administration. Some were gathered to recruit teachers (almost anybody able to read, write, and do simple maths) and write new textbooks, relying on their own memories from school days and on the political guidelines laid down by the Vietnamese Communist party. The books were astonishingly ideological, and they were dedicated to the task of making enthusiastic Communists of a people who had just emerged from martyrdom under a Communist regime, and of making Cambodians admire Vietnam (Kamm 1999, 188).

Unto the Present Free Market Era

A transition period from the planned economy of the 1980's to the free market economy in the 1990's has reshaped the aim of the Cambodian education system in the light of socioeconomic realities. Still under the Vietnamese occupation in 1985, the objective of Cambodia's

education was to serve the then revolutionary socialism of Kampuchea (Cambodia) and to form new and good, hard-working citizens with good health, technical awareness and support for the revolutionary Kampuchea. Schools were to be organized as cultural centers open to all and as a system of defense against enemy propaganda (Ayres 2000, 130). But after the UN supervised general election in May 1993, the objective of the present education system was formulated as: "to develop the pedagogic, cognitive, mental and physical abilities of learners. It aims at developing among its citizens, a sense of self-confidence, self-reliance, responsibility, solidarity, national unity, patriotism and culture of peace" (MoEYS, 1999, p.9).

Cultural Analysis of the Cambodian Learning Environment

Analysis of Early Traditional Education

From the historical overview of education, let us now try to deduce some insights that could be useful in our cultural analysis of the pervading educational thought in Khmer society. As we analyze Cambodia's early traditional education let us first point out that during this Pre-colonial Khmer period the social system was one of reciprocal relationships and dependencies. This means that the individuals who constituted Khmer society, namely the king, his officials, the monks and the people, participated in a system involving a web of patrons and clients. Survival at the bottom of the hierarchy was reliant on securing powerful patrons, while surviving at the top depended on establishing a network of clients large enough to neutralize potential rivals. Also, the notion of mutual obligation did not exist. Those on top ruled, those at the bottom existed to be ruled over. The exercise of power flowed only in one direction (Ayres 2000; Chandler 1998, 89-94; 104-108).

Traditional education reinforced this social hierarchy presided over by the king and legitimized by the Buddhist monks of the country. Social regulation meant a pragmatic acceptance of the necessity of regulation for survival. In short, this social regulation was the embodiment of the hierarchical political culture and was agreed upon in principle and conduct by those it exploited (Ayres 2000, 17-18). And so, traditional education reflected and reinforced this pattern of social regulation of uni-directional authority.

Analysis of French Colonial Period

The political theme that pervaded during the French protectorate in Cambodia is neglect. The colonial period represents myriads of half-hearted and uncompleted policies and plans that were easily dropped upon realizing their costs. The French efforts in regard to education are a glaring testimony to this pattern. The French never really appeared concerned about the “development” of the Cambodian peasantry. Their token efforts at educating the peasantry, with legitimacy rather than development in mind, were never pursued with any vigor and resulted only in undermining a system of semiformal instruction perceived by its users to be both successful and relevant (Ayres 2000, 30). This implies that the traditional wat education continued and was never supplanted. Along with it inevitably and consequentially is its uni-directional mode of education.

Analysis of the Post-French to Khmer Rouge Period

In 1970, General Lon Nol backed by the United States took control in a diplomatic coup d'état and declared Cambodia the Khmer Republic (Chandler 1991, 129). It was the first time in Cambodian history that the monarchy was abolished. Almost no reforms ensued, and instead the country was plunged into civil conflict. The Communist uprising reached its peak from the East and spread fighting in rural areas. As a result, educational opportunities were shut off. The regime collapsed in 1975 and the regime of Democratic Kampuchea known as the Khmer Rouge stepped in (Chandler 1998, 209). This changed Cambodia into a revolutionary Maoist state where education was literally obliterated and turned into a dictatorial brainwashing using pre-framed ideological sayings. Hence if we may add, the uni-directional exercise of authority in educating was in its peak.

Analysis of the Vietnam Occupation

The People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) from 1979 to 1989 started to rebuild the country from the utter devastation of “year zero.” This regime was supported by Vietnam and other socialist bloc nations (Dy 2003).

Many educational institutions were quickly rebuilt. Teaching materials were supplied. Teachers and experts from the socialist blocs were recruited. However Chandler (1991, 189) points out some educational deficiencies of this situation: “Much education consisted of memorizing what the teacher said. There was little effort by many teachers to relate what they taught, at the upper levels, to student's everyday experiences. At these levels many instructors taught in languages other than Khmer, such as Russian and Spanish, which were sometimes poorly understood.”

Education of this period still consisted of the traditional one-way communication of teacher to student, not only because of the circumstances of rebuilding but also of the socialist communist influence prevalent of the time.

Insights on present educational thinking

They say that “Rome was not built in a day.” If the pervading cultural patterns of education in Cambodia have existed for centuries until the start of the 90's, then logically a period of less than 20 years would not be enough to see a stark change or difference from its long cultural historical perspective. In short, the learning environment is pretty much the same today internally even if external changes have been put in place or are continuously being planned. Let us glean at some cultural nuances of Cambodians as a people and infer some insights for our educational purposes.

We have seen throughout Khmer history that the cultural norm is to endorse harmony and the acceptance of the status quo as the proper code of conduct. That is why we see that the individual in Cambodian society is left to protect his own interests, and does so by not engaging in behavior which might challenge the entrenched prevailing view. This need to preserve personal safety works to inhibit the potential creativity of the individual to reflect on cultural needs and identify new responses and innovations which might move the society forward. In short the system does not encourage support for the creative urge of the individual to develop innovations which could help culture move forward. Thus there is no intellectual frontier to be challenged and extended and thereby generate the human capital so critically needed to modernize society. Bit (1991, 65)

further confirms that the since Cambodian society stresses acceptance of the given order as the path to a satisfying existence, it does not encourage original thought focused on either personal development or innovation in the society at large. This is why oftentimes we find Cambodian learners in a school environment of conformity rather than in a competitive search for knowledge and competency. Ponchaud (1977) further adds: "The rule of conduct in society will be: do not behave differently from others, do not push yourself forward, do not take the initiative, for fear of finding yourself alone, of disgracing yourself in front of others, being derided for possible failure, judged."

From the point of view of the teacher's leadership, we find the perpetuation of the system. Bit (1991, 70) investigates: "The role of a leader is something akin to a parental figure. The proper role of a leader is to explain and clarify what is expected of people. A leader does not draw out suggestions or involvement by the followers in searching for alternatives." And he further adds: "The teacher's relation to his student, like so many relationships in Cambodian society, is lopsided. The teacher, like the parents, bestows, transmits, and commands. The student, like the child, receives, accepts, and obeys. Nothing changes in the transmission process, except perhaps the ignorance of the student." (Bit 1991, 100; Chandler 1998)

The need for a new alternative communication paradigm

Educational institutes, among them Vocational Training Institutions (VTI's), in Cambodia should search for a new alternative communication paradigm in order to update its learning methods to this new century. Much has changed as regards curriculum and approaches in Education across the world. Cambodia, in this last decade has managed to join ASEAN and WTO. It is trying to put itself in the global map of economics. But it would not be able to do so if it does not synchronize its learning and communicating paradigms with the rest of the world. Hence the next section will provide a communication framework that could fill this need for Cambodia's learning ambience.

Learning and Communication

From teacher-oriented to learner centered

During the last decades not only theories of learning, but also theories of communication have changed their focus. One of the most important developments in learning theories is the change of focus from teacher-oriented to learner-centered approaches in education and training (Petersen 2003, 3).

Teaching focuses on the teacher as the central person in a learning situation. In traditional classroom situations the teacher is a lecturer who gives lessons, has the knowledge and transfers this knowledge to the students. The main activity is transfer of knowledge. When interaction in the classrooms does happen, it often appears as "examinations" or "quizzes." The students just have to answer the specific questions given by the teacher. Within the context of language teaching this kind of interaction is referred to as IRF questioning (initiative response feedback). This is where the teacher has the initiative to frame the question and afterwards gives feedback to the student (Van Lier, 1996). Meanwhile learning theories have shifted their focus away from this teacher-centered approach.

Learning focuses on the learner as an individual in a lifelong learning process. The learner has to develop his or her skills continually. In learner centered activities the role of the teacher is to facilitate learning and to support the individual learning process. Interaction in such kinds of learning activities often takes place as dialogues. Here consulting and guidance are highlighted rather than "teaching" the right answers. In learning situations of these kinds there is a high degree of autonomy. Individuals then should take personal responsibility for their own achievement and development. Here we find a change in both the learner-role and the teacher-role. The learner takes responsibility for his learning whereas the teacher's role changes into being a coach or a guide (Petersen 2003, 4).

Traditional one-way communication in education

The traditional model of communication, like that of Harold Laswell (1948), was one of the first real attempts among social scientists to depict the communication process. The model understands communication as a message that is transferred from one person to another. In this model, one communication partner (who) sends a message (what) to the other partner-the receiver (whom) who has to decode the message in order to understand it (Ongkiko and Flor 2003, 68-69). Very often this model is illustrated graphically like this:

The implication of this model is an understanding of communication as a one-way transmission of messages. Within a learning context this communication model tends to be the basis of the traditional classroom situation. The model indicates that the teacher (sender) - transfers knowledge (message) to the students (receivers). Hence we see a parallelism to the teacher-centered learning theory.



Figure 2 - Laswell's model of communication

Modern interactive communication in education

Modern communication theory stresses the fact that communication is an interactive process, in which the actors continuously create the communicative process in cooperation. Due to this understanding both partners (actor) in communication create a continuously two way process. Contrary to the thinking of the classical theories, the actors are not taking turns as either senders or receivers of messages but are all the time creating the communication together. Communication between the two partners is a continuous dialogue, a two way process in which both parts-the actors-develop and interact. The actors in a communication are not senders and receivers of messages but co-creators of the communication process. The actor is not a passive reactor to outside stimuli

but the active creator of his own stimuli (Yoshikawa, 1987). Graphically this communication model is illustrated in this way:



Figure 3 - Continuous dialogue communication model

The focus of the model is on cooperative work done within a communication flow. Both partners are creating the dialogue together. Communication is seen as a creative cooperative interaction and not just a transfer of messages. In accordance to learning theories this kind of theory takes a more learner-centered approach into account, where the teacher supports and guides and is often in a process of dialogue.

The Van Lier model

The diversity of different types of communication and learning approaches as demonstrated on the base of language learning activities is shown in Van Lier's model (1996):

Van Lier's Model of types of interaction

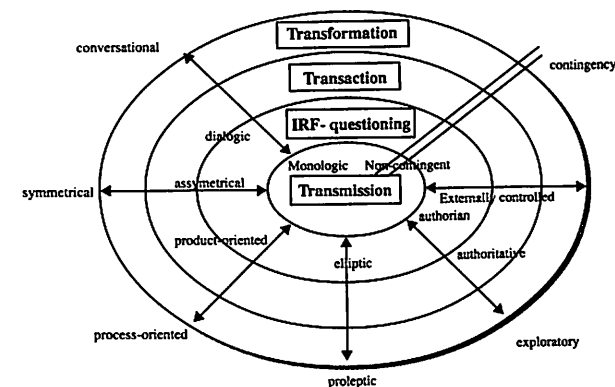


Figure 4

The model shows different kinds of teacher/learner centered approaches, which are closely connected with different forms of communication and interaction.

In the model it is seen that transmission is the most teacher-centered learning approach with monologue, asymmetrical non-contingent communication form. The focus is on the message transmission (product oriented). The learning activity has an authorial, externally controlled approach.

In the transformation of the learning situation the roles of teacher and learner have changed. Here is a symmetric, dialogue (conversational), contingent interaction. The learning activity is autonomous and self-determined and process-oriented. In the center of transformation is the dialogue or conversation as the starting point of development.

As this model shows, interaction in a learning environment can vary along a number of dimensions in a tension between diversity and homogeneity, between many voices and one voice, between autonomy and external control, between conversation and monologue (Petersen 2003, 5-7).

For the purpose of our study, we shall focus more on the main basic conceptual lines of the model. We shall try to look at the communication and learning patterns in VTI's as they move along the four-stage path of transmission, IRF-questioning, transaction and transformation.

Methodology

The methodology used employed a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods. The Triangulation method was used to give a qualitative picture. This is a combination of three methods, Classroom Observation, Focus Group Discussion and Teacher Interview, to capture what cannot be made evident using only one method. The cross-sectional survey questionnaire was employed to capture the student and teacher profiles. This questionnaire also included a survey of the student learning materials. Later a follow up survey question was added in order to confirm the triangulation results.

Findings of the Research

Student Profile

The respondents came from six different classes (skills set) from two vocational schools. The numbers of each class range from 20-30. Their education level is from grade 9-12 which means their age would range

from 17-20. One class is an all-female, three classes are all-male, and the remaining two classes have mixed genders. The students study at school for seven hours a day, six days a week. They spend an average of two hours a day for after-school hour lesson review. They have an average of a seven subject workload. Of these seven subjects, an average of five (4.83) are supplied with handouts, and one (0.83) has a textbook.

Teacher Profile

The teachers interviewed were those who taught the classes during the classroom observation. Five are males and only one is female. Only one has finished a Bachelor's degree, two have a teacher's diploma, and the other three have finished a certificate course. Three of them have been teaching for five years or more, whereas the other three are neophytes and are in their first year.

Classroom Observation

Six different classes were observed for an hour each. Quantitatively, the number and type of questions the students asked in each class were noted down. Questions were distinguished and categorized into 3 types. The first type is the *single-response questions*. This category includes clarification or procedural questions related to the subject but were peripheral to the lesson. According to the Van Lier model this would refer to the IRF (initiative response feedback) questions. The second category is the *explanation-required questions*. These questions are subject related and require further than a single word or single sentence response from the teacher. These questions require further elaboration. They are also referred to as "content" questions. This category includes challenge questions as well as information-seeking questions. The third group is the *non-related* questions. This refers to questions that may be procedural or even validating but has nothing to do with the lesson at hand.

The students posed an average of nine questions in a period of sixty-minutes. However of these questions, single-response questions averaged 3.17, non-related questions accounted for 4.17, whereas explanation required questions reached only an average of 1.67. Pearson and West (1991) found out in their research that classroom communication usually brings about 3.3 (content) questions per hour of instruction. Although their study also holds that procedural questions are the most

frequently asked just like in our findings, the content questions of the students fall below their average. Napell (1976) suggests that questioning can be a central focus in promoting the formation of conceptual competence, analytical techniques, and the creation of ideas. Although the students were inquisitive, averaging a total of 9.0 questions during the period of observation, nevertheless few questions were on the higher cognitive levels.

Focus Group Discussion

The Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were an hour each for the six classes. A summary of the discussions of the students on the way they interacted in class were recorded. Many commented that although previously in high school their teachers communicated in a very linear way, their present VTI instructors are more conscious of trying to teach in a more interactive manner. But then, they added that not all teacher-instructors do succeed in interactive communication; maybe it is because of lack of continued training and education that their teachers are unable to elicit the student's questioning capability. In addition students too put the blame on themselves for not asking or being unable to ask relevant questions and consequently failing to trigger an interactive communication in the classroom. Brainstorming the reasons for this phenomenon, they came up with these reasons. One could be that the students are afraid of the teacher (fear). Another, the student does not know what to ask (ignorance). The third reason given is that some students do not care at all to ask (indifference). A fourth, students just do not want to ask (personality). And lastly, they say that's the way we were brought up (cultural upbringing). It must be noted that not all five reasons or answers came up a hundred percent in all FGD's. The majority of these reasons were pinpointed but with different emphasis and priority.

Teacher Interview

The teachers were then interviewed individually. Almost all of them noticed a change in student behavior from that of recent years (around 3 years ago). Years back, they described, students behaved homogeneously. This means that in general they passively listened to the teacher in order to show their respect. This listening however does not mean they were not interested. On the contrary they actively followed in their minds the lesson. Once in a while only one or two in the class would ask a question in order to clarify or to verify points in the lesson. Nowadays, there seems to be

a more heterogeneous behavior in students. Many would ask questions but generally in the single response IRF questioning level or procedural questions which many times were unrelated to the lesson. Also there were those who never questioned but were lost in their own world. Students today, they remarked, seemed to lack focus than those of yesteryears. When asked what could be the reasons for their failure to ask questions or to participate better in class, they came up with the same reasons and answers as the students in the FGD's, but again in different intensity.

Follow-up Survey

From the five reasons given: fear, ignorance, indifference, personality, and upbringing, a follow up survey question asking students and teachers to confirm these factors was added. It must be noted that fear and ignorance are teacher factors, whereas personality and upbringing are culture factors. Indifference stands in the middle. An overwhelming 79.8 percent agree with ignorance or incompetence of the student as a factor for not being able to ask relevant questions. Some 71.4 percent see the student's personality as a reason for this too. Upbringing came in with 57.6 percent, indifference with 50 percent, and fear of teacher with only 41.4 percent. Graphically from these, we could see a balanced teacher and culture factor as the reasons for the student's questioning behavior.

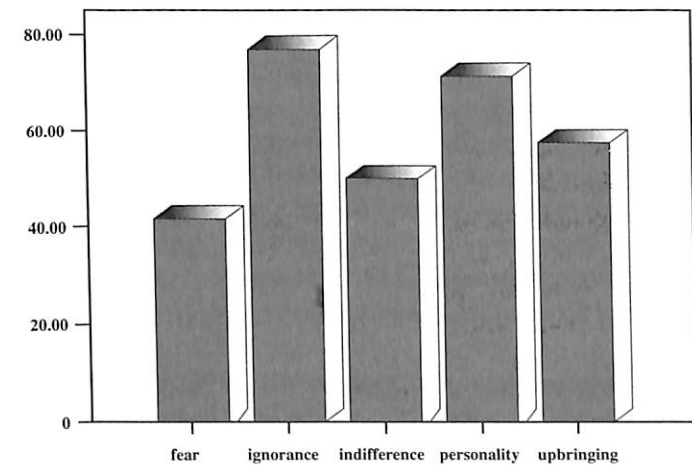


Figure 5 - Teacher or Culture Polarity Graph

Integration

From our review of literature one can see in the historical overview of Education in Cambodia a looming change of teacher strategy from the traditional linear one-way communication to a two-way and a more interactive form that will characterize the next decade. One cannot deny the influence of culture here. But it comes in two modes. The first mode, enculturation, is when from the time of his birth the individual is taught the social norms, behavior, customs and mores of the group where he belongs. The second mode is acculturation. This is when the individual or group is aware of another culture and adopts practices or values of that culture and incorporates it in their own. (Abuso 1997, 42) Throughout the history of Cambodian education we see the prevalence of the linear or uni-directional communication form as evident in the traditional wat-school, the French colonial, the Khmer rouge, and the Vietnam occupation systems of education. The past decade has seen a turn towards interactive communication in education as evidenced by UN educational policy efforts, MOEYS developmental plans, and even individual change in attitudes towards teacher-student relationships in the classroom. These periods have shaped the present day Cambodian student. Thus both what has been "encultured" and "accultured" throughout history make up Khmer culture today which is a crucial factor in Cambodian education.

A proof of this is the availability of reading materials and the attitude to it. Before education was mainly "oral" coming from the teacher (who alone read the book); hence a "monologic" classroom communication. The past decade has shown an upsurge in Khmer literature (books were destroyed in the late 70's). Students are now starting to read. VTI students in our research now have subject handouts unlike a decade ago. They now have more questions; hence a more "dialogic" classroom communication. But the quality of communication, as seen by the questioning behavior, needs to be improved. Hence the increase of textbooks per subject can be a big factor for a more effective learning.

Basing ourselves on Van Lier's model (1996), our study suggests that Cambodian education still relies on the Transmission stage-teacher-centered and "monologic" in its communication paradigm. However from the research results of our student's questioning behavior, VTI students of today are able to go through the IRF questioning stage and thus have some

form of "dialogic" communication in the classroom. The scarcity of content questions and the low intensity of interactivity in the classroom suggest sporadic attempts to enter into the Transaction and Transformation realm. Education is therefore very much teacher-centered and this factor not only encourages the linear communication paradigm but also hinders interactive class participation which is essential for effective learning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It has been established that both culture and teacher are factors that influence the questioning behavior (in particular) and communication paradigm (in general) of students of VTI's. Culture however is a complex that would be out of our immediate circle of concern since it would deal with a wider system of values, economics, politics, and other relationships. Teachers, on the other hand, would fall under our immediate circle of concern. Thus we could come up with some recommendations for them.

Teacher behavior influences student behavior. West (1991) found out that 55% of student questions were motivated by a teacher question. So if teachers desire student questions, they should direct more specific questions to specific students. Furthermore their questioning should be more relevant to content than to general matters. A general question like: "Does anyone have a question?" accomplishes little to evoke the student.

Many teachers discourage procedural or validating questions which may not concern the lesson directly but may have a say in the learning environment. Students want to adapt to this learning environment. But when they feel threatened psychologically, they are more likely to be non-participative. Teachers should make allowances for these inquiries to insure that the students would feel psychologically safe. This situation could indeed be a stepping stone from the IRF questioning stage to the Transaction and Transformation stage of Van Lier's model.

Question-asking is essentially a significant part of classroom involvement (Thomas, 1991, 98). It can not only arouse learning but can also arouse the interests of the students. Asking-questions allow students to take ownership of a course while accepting responsibility for their learning. Teachers and instructors should continue to create favorable

conditions to foster the student's inquisitiveness in order to achieve a more interactive communication paradigm necessary for effective learning.

Epilogue

As we understand more clearly the communication paradigms and educational situation in Cambodia, we gradually bridge that cultural divide. In doing so, we effectively partner with them in the development of a nation.

John Paul II affirms the role of the Catholic Church in helping to promote development through schools, printing presses, and vocational training institutions. However working directly on the economic and technical levels or plainly just contributing materially to development is not enough. Rather, the mission of religion consists essentially in offering people an opportunity not to "have more" but to "be more"- meaning to awaken people's consciences. Since people themselves are the principal agent of development, genuine development will not come primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but rather from the formation of their consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behavior. Thus, we work to "form consciences by revealing to peoples the God whom they seek, the grandeur of man created in God's image and loved by him, the equality of all men and women as God's sons and daughters, the mastery of man over nature created by God and placed at man's service, and the obligation to work for the development of the whole person and of all mankind." (John Paul II, RM, 58)

In helping the people ask those questions of which one can only reassure that there is an answer somewhere, we put them in a path of a continuous searching for the truth. And in every question asked and in every answer found, the people gradually mature in their view of life, their way of thinking, and in the process strengthen the voice of their consciences. For in the end we find that: "Questioning is the voice of conscience and the absence of one is the death of the other." (John Dominic Crossan)

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ABSTRACTS

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