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TOWARDS AN INTEGRAL ECOTHEOLOGY RELEVANT FOR INDIA.

**BY
GEORGE MATHEW.**

**PhD in Applied Theology.
University of Kent- 1995.**

**THIS THESIS IS DEDICATED TO
THE INSPIRING AND CHALLENGING
MEMORY OF FR. SEBASTIAN KAPPAN.S.J.
WHOSE DREAM IT WAS TO DEVELOP
AN INTEGRAL ECOTHEOLOGY RELEVANT FOR INDIA.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

First and foremost, I should like to express my profound and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Professor Robin Gill, who has been a real "GURU" to me, and without whose efficient guidance and invaluable directions, this task could not have been accomplished.

I am also grateful to Dr. E.C.John, Dr. K.C. Abraham, Dr. John Court, Dr. A.P.Nirmal, Mrs. Corinne Scott, and many others for their suggestions and advices I received at various stages of working on this project.

I would like to record my indebtedness to The University of Kent, St. Augustine's Foundation, and 'Ökumenisches Studienwerk.e.V' (ÖSW), to Dr. Rudolf Ficker in particular, for their financial assistance which made this research possible.

My thanks are also due to the library staff of the University of Kent at Canterbury, Franciscan Central Library, Canterbury, and The United Theological College, Bangalore for their excellent service in making the literature needed for this thesis readily available.

My appreciation and gratitude also go to those who helped me in getting the thesis printed and bound in a neat fashion.

ABSTRACT.

This thesis aims at bringing out the inadequacies of liberation theologies in responding to ecological challenges and evolving an integral ecotheology relevant for India.

Chapter 1. delineates the present Indian theological context, influenced by liberation, dalit, and feminist theologies. It argues that 'ecology' as a central category can integrate these theologies, often found divided due to ideological differences.

Chapter 2. analyses the Indian ecological context and concludes that the tribals, dalits, and women are the main victims of ecological crises.

Chapter 3. argues that liberation theology needs to revise the interpretation of its paradigm and integrate the ecologically pertinent P account of exodus into its hermeneutics.

Chapter 4. identifies anthropocentrism as a major pitfall of liberation theology and revises its doctrinal explications from an integral ecological perspective.

Chapter 5. critiques the Marxist social analysis in liberation theology, exposing the incapability of class perspective to address ecological concerns and suggests 'ecology', which can unite the concerns of the oppressed, be taken as the umbrella category.

Chapter 6. focuses on eco-feminist theology, identifying its inadequacies such as neglect of the caste factor, and a lack of emphasis on the praxiological view of the 'women-nature conflation'.

Chapter 7. points out a major weakness of dalit theology, its neglect of ecological concerns. It demonstrates how a sharper exegesis can help dalit theology uncover the ecological thrusts of its paradigm, the Deuteronomic Creed. It argues that dalit theology needs to review its antagonistic attitude towards Hindu Brahminic and Gandhian strands and incorporate their rich ecological insights.

Chapter 8. considers process theology as a system with potential insights to integrate the concerns of liberation theologies and ecotheology.

Chapter 9. works out, by examining the emerging ecotheology, an integral ecotheology relevant for India, combining the related concerns in liberation theologies and ecotheology. This is a doctrinal formulation with distinct Indian ecotheological perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION.

Ecotheology is of relatively recent origin. Traditional Christian theologies have often been pre-occupied with questions about God from a purely metaphysical perspective. The emergence of process theology in the 1950s was a breakthrough in that it contained liberative, ecologically sensitive insights. Due to its largely philosophical orientation, process theology could not exert much influence in the Third World context. Christian theology continued to be predominantly anthropocentric, even in its modern progressive forms of liberation theologies. Although liberation theologies succeeded in shifting the focus of theology from a metaphysical God to the concerns of the oppressed, the rest of creation, nature, was by and large, neglected. The problems which the earth today faces and its impact on the poor, women, and indigenous peoples who are more vulnerable to ecological crises than any other sections of a society, have seldom been addressed in a concrete manner in theological thinking until quite recently.

Lynn White's critique of the Judeo-Christian concept of creation, attributing the blame of the current ecological impasse to an unholy alliance between modern science and the anthropocentric Genesis creation account, was ground breaking. Ever since this criticism, there have been various attempts to redeem Christian theology from anthropocentrism. An ecotheological perspective began to be adopted in the areas of biblical interpretation and doctrine. This, indeed, marked a paradigm shift- a shift from anthropocentrism to cosmocentrism in theology. A new movement in theology called 'ecotheology' or 'green theology' began to emerge.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) took a lead in responding to the ecological challenges facing theology. In the 1970s, the WCC provided Christian churches with a vision of a 'Just, Participatory, and Sustainable Society'. In 1990, there was again a radical shift in emphasis when the WCC adopted the theme

of 'Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation' (JPIC) as one of its central thrusts which was forcefully articulated in the Seoul conference (1990) and in the Canberra Assembly (1991).

While the WCC continues to keep this focus on 'eco-development' (it has recently published a Reader on ecotheology), there has been a development in the form of an emerging ecotheology or green theology in the West. In the United States, for example, ecological expressions of faith and theological convictions took a post-modern twist and culminated in the foundation of the Creation Spirituality Movement, mostly associated with Matthew Fox (his Original Blessing had sweeping impact in the West) and others. Although it continues to be a powerful influential movement in the West, Creation Spirituality, nonetheless, represents an eclectic and rather too romantic vision of a 'New Age' where social justice issues in the South are not taken seriously. Finding Creation Spirituality wanting in social justice, feminist theologians like Sallie McFague and Rosemary Radford Ruether in the States and Anne Primavesi in Britain developed eco-feminist theologies where the interrelation between social justice and ecological concerns are well focused. Sean McDonagh and Ian Bradley have given specific attention to the neo-colonial dimensions of ecological problems in the Third World in their writings. On the Continent, Jürgen Moltmann's God In Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation has also been an influential work in this regard.

While these voices of ecotheology were being articulated in the West, they were heard less often in India. The latter half of this century has witnessed the strong impact of indigenous theologies like liberation theology and its variant forms like feminist theology and more recently dalit theology in India. Unlike the traditional theologies, these liberation theologies concentrated almost entirely on the concrete problems of the oppressed sections of the society. Feminist theology, after realizing that the concerns of women cannot be subsumed under the broad Marxist category of economic class, which liberation

theology used for its social analysis, developed its own theology with a focus on gender. More recently in India, the 'dalits' (those who are considered to be outside the four castes within the Hindu caste system) also found liberation theology's Marxist class analysis inadequate to focus attention on the specific reality of oppression on the basis of caste. This led to the formulation of dalit theology. All these three forms of liberation theology exert great impact on the theological scene in India today. Although they all share a common concern for the liberation of oppressed communities, differences in their specific perspectives often result in intellectual conflicts among them. Exponents of these three strands of theology find themselves often divided rather than united, causing an intellectual dilemma among progressive theologies. Although these liberation theologies have been able to shift the focus of theology to the concerns of the oppressed people, all of them have largely failed to see the ecological dimensions of theology. They often fail to notice the vital link between the worsening plight of the poor and the alarming destruction of the environment. In other words, the problems facing the environment have been grossly overlooked in these theological approaches. The emergence of green theology in the West has been dismissed by most Indian theologians as too elitist, not without some justification since Western green theology often fails to approach ecological issues from a social justice point of view. But, on the other hand, these liberation theologies, with the possible exception of some strands within feminist theology, have failed to see the connection between ecological damage and social injustice. Even when some theologians of the Latin American liberation theology school in India embarked on an ecotheological perspective in theology recently, it was done from the traditional Latin American liberation theological framework, attempting to 'add' ecology to other concerns without challenging some of the major drawbacks in liberation theology such as its shallowness in biblical exegesis and its adherence to Marxist class analysis. Dalit theology, as yet, has not taken up ecological concerns in its theological system, although

dalits along with the tribals in India are the main victims of ecological problems. It is in this context that the present thesis suggests an alternative way of doing theology in India which would bring together the related concerns of the various sections of the oppressed people (various strands of liberation theology) and the concerns of ecology (the emerging ecotheology). As process theology has a theological framework which can encompass the concerns of these theological strands, insights from process theology also form part of this critical synthesis of progressive theologies into an integral ecotheology.

Thus, the main thrust of this thesis lies in exposing the inadequacies of Latin American liberation theology (which still continues to be an influential force in India), dalit theology and, to certain extent, ecofeminist theology. The research also suggests alternative perspectives in the areas of biblical hermeneutics, social analysis, and doctrinal explications. The term 'ecotheology' is used here in preference to 'environmental theology' or 'green theology' because 'ecology' is a much more inclusive and comprehensive term. (The Greek root of ecology, 'oikos', means 'the whole inhabited earth'). The thesis concludes with an attempt to formulate an integral ecotheology relevant for India, not simply an ecotheology. The word 'integral' here denotes the importance of the central perspective used in this research, namely 'eco-justice'- an interrelated perspective of social justice and the integrity of the creation. It also refers to a theology which integrates the concerns of the poor, dalits, the tribals, and the women of these communities from an eco-justice framework.

LATIN AMERICAN LIBERATION THEOLOGY.

One of the significant achievements of liberation theology was its attempt to relate the political and social realities to the gospel message. Through the principle of 'hermeneutic circle', the exodus, the story of the struggles of the oppressed against

the exploiters, was made the paradigm of liberation for the poor and the oppressed in the Third World. But the biblical exegesis of much liberation theology, especially of the exodus event is insufficient from an integral ecological point of view. Liberation theology typically takes the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt as a historical political event, and models the political liberation of the poor on this event. Although the Yahwist (J) and the Elohist (E) accounts of the exodus do provide such a political perspective, a comprehensive view of the exodus can be more effective. For example, taking the Priestly (P) account and its Sinai covenant themes, particularly the sabbath and the jubilee year as part of the exodus tradition, can help liberation theology combine the political dimension of liberation with the ecological dimensions, as sabbath and jubilee do hold social justice and responsibility towards nature in harmony. By extending the exodus tradition to the theme of the relocation of the Israelites in Canaan, new ways of reading this account can be opened up. It certainly provides a model of a wider organization of the oppressed in solidarity. The different sections of the exploited Israelites and those exploited in Canaan, especially the peasants, the tribals, the 'apiru', the farmers, came together irrespective of their differences on distinctive perspectives in a common cause of resisting the oppressive forces. This has a message for the Indian context where various segments of the oppressed communities such as the economically poor, the dalits, the tribals, the womenfolk often stand divided on the 'specificity' of perspectives. As all these sections of the society are the immediate victims of ecological devastations, a perspective oriented towards 'eco-justice' can unite these forces together, against their oppressive forces.

The perspective of the poor and the oppressed adopted in liberation theology is still largely anthropocentric in that it fails to regard the importance of the rest of the creation, nature, in its theological thinking. (The only major exception to this trend is Leonardo Boff's latest attempt to adopt a

cosmic perspective) Major themes in liberation theology such as liberation, sin, preferential option for the poor, Christology, soteriology, and eschatology are explicated here to bring out the anthropocentric treatment and the neglect of ecological dimensions of these themes. In the light of this evaluation, it is argued that as the concerns for the poor and nature are interrelated, from a biblical and theological point of view, liberation theology should extend its horizons to include the cosmic dimensions alongside social and political aspects of theological themes. The cry of the oppressed needs to be linked with the groaning of the whole creation. Salvation must be related to Creation. The liberator Christ must also be seen as the Cosmic Christ, the Christ from the shoot of Jesse.

Latin American liberation theology should transcend the Marxist class analysis of society, if it is to integrate the ecological dimensions of oppression. Apart from its inadequacies to deal with other forms of oppression, such as caste, gender, and race, class analysis is also insufficient to deal with the problems of ecology. While Marxist class analysis does help to expose the exploitative structures of Capitalism and its development patterns, liberation theology could not find out the handicaps of a Marxist or traditional socialist model of development which is also directed towards economic growth through big industrialization and limitless production. In this process the ruthless exploitation of natural resources were grossly overlooked. Marx never accorded any intrinsic worth to nature, but considered nature as a mere 'object' to be subjugated by humanity for its own purposes. (Even in the latest book of Boff, Ecology and Liberation, Boff does not see the inconsistency of defending Marxist class analysis and his advocacy of an ecological paradigm). While it is true that ecological destruction is often the result of poverty, in today's context it is also true that ecological destruction is a cause of poverty and exploitation which liberation theology has failed to comprehend. Ecological dimensions were never part of liberation theology's socio-political analysis of society.

Strangely enough, a theology which claimed to be the voice of the poor neglected the concerns of the environment, the destruction of which threatens the survival of the very people liberation theology vowed to defend. In other words, liberation theology, due to its adherence to Marxist class analysis, failed to realize that the exploitation of nature, which occurred in both capitalist and traditional socialist development processes, has been one of the root causes of poverty and suffering rather than their solution. This calls for an ideological suspicion of both Capitalism and dogmatic Socialism.

ECO-FEMINIST THEOLOGY.

Like other forms of liberation theology, feminist theology has also exerted considerable impact on theological circles. The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of full humanity in women. This thesis does not attempt an explication of feminist theology as such, but seeks to see how feminist theology addresses ecological questions. It also identifies areas where feminist theology may need to modify its ecological perspectives to form an integral ecotheology.

One of the problems with feminist theology is that it is not uniform. It has different strands such as Liberal, Socialist and Romantic feminism. Not all of them treat ecological issues. It would be more precise to say that a few feminist theologians, such as Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sallie McFague, Gabriele Dietrich and Anne Primavesi, have dealt with ecological issues from a feminist theological perspective. The social feminists have tried to look at the problems of ecology from a liberative perspective. They have identified the traditional dualistic principle as the basis of oppression of women and nature. Feminists have reinterpreted the Christian doctrines from an ecological angle. This research delineates these eco-feminist explications. Ecofeminists like Rosemary Radford Ruether adopt a combined perspective of class and gender in dealing with ecological concerns. (While in Ruether, we see the tendency of

reducing everything to classism and sexism, in Vandana Siva and Maria Mies, everything is reduced to patriarchy). Although it has certain strengths, especially in dealing with the capitalist and patriarchal systems in the West, its inadequacy in the Third World context, especially in India, is quite evident, as the category of caste is integral to an Indian integral ecofeminist theology. Whilst ecofeminists in the West have neglected the crosscurrent of caste between patriarchy and class in India, dalit thinkers in India, have by and large, neglected the dimensions of ecology. Western ecofeminism also often overlooks the perception that women are the real victims of ecological destruction. This praxiological dimension is vital in an Indian ecofeminist theology. Thus, the thesis calls for an integral ecofeminist theology in India where the interconnected concerns of women (particularly dalit and tribal women), caste, and ecology form the basic framework.

DALIT THEOLOGY.

Dalit theology is yet another variant form of liberation theology which is taking deep roots in India. Although it is essentially a variant form of liberation theology, its distinctiveness lies in the fact that dalit theology concentrates exclusively on the plight of the 'untouchables' or the 'outcastes'. Unfortunately the ideological clash between the priority of 'class' (as evident in liberation theology) and 'caste' (as argued in dalit theology) has resulted in the polarization of these two strands of progressive theologies.

The focus of the thesis vis-a-vis dalit theology is to point out the real inadequacy of dalit theology in its present form, i.e. its total neglect and some times apparent rejection of ecological concerns. Some of the proponents of dalit theology tend to write off ecological questions as elitist and Western problems. This is the paradox of dalit theology. While, dalit theology contends that the majority of dalits are landless labourers and small scale farmers, and also that the tribal

people of India should form an ideological common ground with dalits, the neglect of environmental matters is strange, especially since the tribals who form about 30 per cent of the Indian population live in harmony with nature and do depend on the environment for their basic needs like food, water, and shelter. The destruction of the environment in the form of ruining the tropical rain forests where the tribal belt are concentrated, means that these people are culturally and economically uprooted to make way for the so-called mega industrial and energy projects. It is to be noted that dalit theology also affirms that dalits, the tribals, and women are the most oppressed sections of the Indian society. It is striking, therefore, to note the insensitivity of dalit theology towards ecological issues, whilst it is true that the above mentioned sections of the society are the immediate victims of the current anti-environmental 'developmental' projects. The thesis also suggests that the existing framework of the dalit-tribal solidarity should be further expanded to form an ecological perspective, as these two sections of society are the worst affected by ecological destructions. It is also important in a context where the issues of the tribals (and of dalits) are integrally related to the struggles for the right to ownership of land, which, in turn, is an integral component of ecological movements in the Third World countries like India. Dalit theology, being a theology of identity, often expressed in oral tradition in the form of myths and legends which are rich in ecological insights, can easily develop such an ecological framework. As in the case of liberation theology's interpretation of the exodus event, this research provides a more comprehensive and ecologically significant interpretation of the Deuteronomic Creed, the paradigm of dalit theology. It also challenges dalit theologians to take a fresh look at Hinduism (the Brahminic tradition) and Gandhi (two areas that dalit theology views antagonistically) because both have so much to offer on ecological concerns. By critically integrating the rich ecological insights in the Hindu Brahminic traditions, such as Sankara's Advaita (non-dualism), Ramanuja's concept of the

world as God's body, the cosmotheandricism in the Vedas and Gandhiji's resistance to the ideology of industrialism and his vision of decentralised and village oriented development model, it is argued that dalit theology can become more genuinely 'Indian' and integral.

THE ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PROCESS THEOLOGY AND ITS POTENTIAL IN INTEGRATING LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND ECOTHEOLOGY.

Process theology has been one of the radical developments in conceptual studies which has had considerable impact on both philosophy and theology. The ecological as well as the liberative dimensions of process concepts and doctrines, and its potential to integrate liberation theology and ecotheology to form an integral ecotheology are brought out in this thesis. Process thoughts are concrete and praxis-laden. The ecological significance of process themes like 'interdependence' (the universe and everything in it are interrelated) and 'prehension' (the process of absorbing from other entities) are very obvious. Process thought does not dichotomise between the 'living' and the 'non-living' in a sharp manner, but only differentiates them in terms of degrees of novelty. The doctrine of God as 'processive', over against the 'omnipotent' and 'changeless' God of traditional theologies, the 'lure' of God, the 'persuasive love' and the dipolar nature of God, and panentheism are again socially significant as they have clear social and ecological overtones. Another area which is dealt with here is process theology's common grounds with the liberation theologies. Process theology shares the common concerns of social justice and liberation of the oppressed with other political theologies. The difference though, is that unlike liberation theology, process theology does not confine justice and liberation to the realm of humanity alone, rather it is extended to the whole created order. Concern for nature is parallel to the commitment to the causes of the oppressed. Thus it is argued that the ecological sensitivity of process thought can correct the anthropocentrism of liberation theologies. Although process

theology does affirm the intrinsic worth of nature, it is not treated in a quixotic manner. On the other hand, it also applies positively a discriminatory criterion of values or rather degrees of values of different beings when choice is to be made in terms of social justice. This framework helps to transcend the elitism of some of the expressions of ecological theology which separate social justice to the poor from the ecological balance. Process theology also makes the point clear that changing the structures of relationship among human beings alone cannot solve the problems of the environment (a major pitfall of liberation theology). Ecology and economy are interrelated. This is the prospect which process theology offers - a synthesis of radical metaphysics, sociology and ecology in theology.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRAL ECOTHEOLOGY RELEVANT FOR INDIA.

While it is urgent that liberation theologies take ecological questions seriously and relate them to the concerns of social justice, it is equally important to evaluate the strengths and the weaknesses of the emerging ecotheology or green theology. Therefore, this thesis also looks at the way the new theological thinking, inspired by the emerging ecological consciousness, attempts to reformulate traditional Christian theology in a new and challenging way. The emerging ecotheology re-interprets the traditional Christian doctrines of God. The thesis also brings out the limitations of ecotheology as it stands now; such as the failure of mainline Western ecotheology to relate a concern for the integrity of creation to the social justice issues of the poor in the Third World (as evident in the major works of Matthew Fox and the Creation Spirituality Movements). The recurring concept of 'stewardship' in green theology is also analyzed and found to be inadequate. For example, the 'stewardship' image can still retain anthropocentric and instrumental connotations, rather than according intrinsic worth to nature. The principle of 'kenosis' is suggested as an alternative paradigm which would, on the one hand, affirm the biblical 'dominion' of humanity over the rest of creation, but

on the other hand, would also argue that like Jesus Christ, humanity is called to empty itself of its dominion in showing responsibility towards and respect for the rest of creation.

Against an alarming ecological scenario and the perplexing theological context in India, there is an urgent need to find an alternative theology of ecology which can assimilate and synthesise the related concerns of ecology, the poor, womenfolk, dalits and the tribals. This thesis, therefore, works out a reformulated theology by combining the related concerns of the above discussed strands of theology in a cohesive manner, predominantly from a doctrinal perspective. For example, the doctrine of God of the integrated ecotheology combines the insights of panentheism, images of God as 'mother', God as 'Rice', and the liberator God, as all of these carry elements of ecological sensitivity and social justice. The doctrine of Christology, to cite another example, combines the notions of 'Christ, the liberator', the 'Cosmic Christ', and the doctrine of Creation, a synthesis of the ideas of creation as a continuous process of ordering the chaos, the sabbath as the 'feast of creation', a critical employment of the 'stewardship' image vis-a-vis the 'kenotic' idea. The doctrines of Sin, Soteriology and Eschatology are also worked out in the same manner. Each doctrine is approached from a distinct Indian ecotheological perspective, bringing out its relevance for India. This research, in short, by reinterpreting and reformulating the liberation theologies, works out the principal ingredients of a genuine integral ecotheology relevant for India.

PART.1.

THE INDIAN CONTEXT.

CHAPTER 1. THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT IN INDIA TODAY.

THE BRAHMINIC PERIOD.

There have been sweeping and radical changes in the Indian theological arena, especially during the last two decades. Until then, Christian theology in India remained too metaphysical and almost exclusively other-worldly oriented. In other words, the Christian theological exercise was basically done following the Western systematic, rational and philosophical system. Then came the search for an 'Indian Christian Theology' which tried to reflect on the Christian faith vis- a- vis the Hindu religious Scriptures and teachings, making extensive use of the Sanskrit language as well. One should acknowledge the contributions of the Hindu religious thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy¹, M.K. Gandhi², Swami Vivekananda³, etc who had contributed much to

¹. Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1833) is popularly known as 'the Prophet of Indian Nationalism'. In Roy, the Christian Church was dealing with the modern secular phase in an Indian form. He was a Protestant Hindu, and later moved away from the monistic and polytheistic tendencies of traditional Hinduism which, then, was made under the impact of Western liberalism. The appeal of Jesus Christ to Roy was basically to his Protestant mind. Already attracted by the Islamic monotheism, Roy was also influenced by the monotheism and the ethics of Christ. The teachings or the 'precepts' of Jesus Christ were more important to him than the historical events Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Being a unitarian, he considered the idea of Divine Incarnation ('avatarism') in any religion, and the concept of Trinity as irrational. Roy is also known for his strong stand against the evil social practices prevalent then in India such as 'sati' or the practice of widows ending their lives in the funeral pyre of their husbands.

². M.K. Gandhi (1869-1948), the Father of the Indian Nation, was deeply influenced by the ethical teachings of Jesus Christ, particularly those contained in the Sermon on the Mount, which 'endeared' Jesus Christ to Gandhiji. He tried to unify the teachings of Gita and of the New Testament. Jesus Christ inspired him as 'the supreme teacher of non-violent resistance' to evil. Jesus Christ was a supreme martyr, the supreme 'satyagrahi'. The cross was the symbol of 'satyagraha' ('non-violent resistance') and Christ was the supreme exemplification of the eternal law of 'ahimsa' (non-violence). To Gandhiji it was 'dharma' (ethics), not Christianity, which was the means of Truth which he believed was the same in all religions. Truth was synonymous with God.

the Indian Christian theology. This school of theology which operated from an Indian religious perspective continued with people like Keshab Chandra Sen⁴, Nehemiah Goreh⁵, Brahmabandhab

"There is no other God than Truth", he believed. (A Gandhian theology of liberation is emerging in India today).

³. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) was the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He presented 'Vedanta' (of Sankara) as a universal religion, reinterpreting it contextually, and also enriching it with the Christian idea of social justice. He later founded the Ramakrishna Mission. With him, the 'Vedantic Advaitaism' became the leading system of religious thought in India. He used Advaita (the mystic oneness with the absolute) as a framework to integrate Jesus Christ and Christianity in India and Hinduism. He also propagated the concept of 'ishtam' (taste)-each individual has his/her own particular taste- to promote inter-religious harmony. Jesus Christ was, for him, the Vedantin, the Yogi, who realized himself as God in his Spirit. Swami Vivekananda rejected the 'ethical Christ' for the 'mystic Christ'.

⁴. Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) and his followers founded the 'Brahmo Samaj' in 1866, introducing elements from many religions in order to establish an 'eclectic church'. He developed the idea of the 'New Dispensation of the Spirit' and wanted to build the 'Church of the new Dispensation'. This was to be built round his own inspiration. Whilst Roy moved away from traditional spirituality represented by the 'bhakti' (devotion) mysticism, yoga, and incarnational theology; Sen symbolised a new movement within Neo-Hinduism, a new appreciation of the traditional Hindu mystic spirituality. He sought to disassociate devotion to Jesus Christ from historical Christianity and tried to interpret it as the fountain of creative reformation of Hinduism and the culture of a New Universal Religion of the Spirit.

⁵. Nehemiah Goreh (1825-1954) was a Brahmin scholar of the Hindu scriptures. After his conversion to Christianity, he wrote prolifically on Christian theology, also refuting the Hindu theological systems as well as Roman Catholicism. He saw the Hindu theism of the 'Brahmos' (the 'theistic religion', a society founded by Roy which later became the 'Brahmo Samaj') as the offshoot of a reformation of Hinduism through the influence of Christianity. He saw this theism as a 'half-way house' and therefore unstable. Hence he argued that it had to move forward to a much fuller appreciation of Christ and Christianity or go backwards to the traditional Advaita of Sankara. He also denounced all attempts to discover the 'hidden work of Christ' in Hinduism. (Later K.M.Banerjee pioneered this school of theology which found its classic expression in Raymund Panikkar's The Unknown Christ of Hinduism)

**Upadhyaya⁶, V.Chakkarai⁷, A.J. Appasamy⁸, J.N.Farquhar⁹,
Pandipetti Chenchiah¹⁰, and later with P.D Devanandan¹¹,**

⁶. Brahmabandhab Upadhyaya (1861-1907) was a fellow student of Swami Vivekananda. He became a Christian 'sanyasi' (monk) and advocated indigenous ways of theologising and monastic life. He brought into currency the use of the name 'Sat-chit-ananda' (truth, mind, and bliss) for the Christian concept of Trinity. (Earlier Sen and Mohadev Govind Ranade had found this concept useful for the understanding of the Holy Trinity). He found an analogy of these component parts of the Sanskrit name for God to the Christian Trinity; 'sat' corresponding to the absolute existence of the Father; 'chit' to the Logos; and 'ananda' to the Holy Comforter. One of the controversial facets about his theology was his upholding of the Hindu caste system, and his insistence that Christianity must accept it. He even underwent 'prayachita' (penance) to rejoin his caste. Whether or not he repudiated Christianity later and rejoined Hinduism is still debated.

⁷. V. Chakkarai (1880-1958) was a Hindu convert to Christianity. He held on to the 'bhakti' tradition, which was centred around the cross and suffering of Jesus Christ. To him, Christology was the starting point for theology. The concept of 'avatara' (incarnation) was central to his Christology. Unlike the Hindu 'avatars', the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ was not static or temporary (as and when needs arise as in the case of some of the incarnations in Hinduism), but a permanent and dynamic one. The avatara of Christ did not end on the cross, not even with his ascension. Jesus Christ is still incarnate through the power of the Holy Spirit.

⁸. A.J. Appasamy (born 1891.) is considered to be a pioneer of indigenous Indian Christian theology. He also sought to interpret Christianity as 'bhakti marga' (the way of devotion) and its philosophical expositions as found in Ramanuja. His unique contribution to Indian Christian theology is his conception of Logos vis-a-vis the Hindu idea of the immanent God, the one who rules within, the 'antaryamin' (the indweller). He too had a radical concept of Jesus as the avatara of God. Although he was a follower of Ramanuja philosophy, he rejected Ramanuja's views on transmigration, caste, image-worship etc.

⁹. J.N. Farquhar (1861-1925) went to India under the London Missionary Society (LMS) and is known for his 'fulfilment theory' which found its classic expression in his The Crown of Hinduism (1913) in which he interpreted Mat.5:17 ("I came not to destroy but to fulfil") as meaning Jesus Christ was the fulfilment of Hinduism which also meant, according to Farquhar, that Hinduism, ultimately, must be replaced by Christ and Christianity.

¹⁰. P. Chenchiah (1861-1929). A member of the so-called 'Rethinking Christianity' group, Chenchiah believed that Christianity and its mission needed to be devised in a new way

Raymund Panikkar¹², S.J.Samartha¹³, and M.M. Thomas¹⁴.
Although this particular strand of Indian Christian theology was an authentic effort to understand the meaning of the person and

that was suited to the aspirations of the people of India. To him, the real faith consists in believers coming into direct experiential touch with Christ ('anubhava'). He emphasised the historicity and humanity of Jesus Christ (Jesus as 'permanently human'). The faith-union with Christ is the essential basis for the Christian life which Chenchiah called 'the Yoga of the Spirit'. He considered the Hindu 'sastras' (scriptures), instead of the Old Testament, as the 'preparation evangelitii' for the people of India.

¹¹. Paul Devanandan (1901-1962). Devanandan's contributions in the area of Hindu-Christian dialogue are immense. He emphasised the need to understand deeply the inner working of Hinduism, the varieties of modern Hinduism and the different shades of meanings its terminologies have etc to evolve an Indian theological expression of Christian faith. He radicalised the meaning of 'conversion' in terms of 'rebirth' which makes human beings a 'a new creation' in Christ.

¹². Raymund Panikkar, a Spanish born Indian Christian theologian is well known for his The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Interpreting such texts as Acts.14:16-17 ("He left not himself without witnesses") and Acts.17:23 ("Whom therefore, you ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you"), Panikkar concludes in this early book of his that Christ is present in Hinduism, and because of this latent presence of Christ, Hinduism has been an effective means of salvation.

¹³. Stanley J. Samartha was the director of the W.C.C's Inter-faith Dialogue Commission. He is one of the leading Indian Christian theologians today. While Panikkar represents (along with many others) a Christo-centric theological approach (especially in relation to other religions), Samartha stands for what is now known as the 'theocentric' approach where the starting point is God (the absolute) which is a common denominator in many religions. One Christ, Many Religions expresses this dimension of theocentrism clearly.

¹⁴. M.M. Thomas has a very important place in Indian Christian theology. His theology cannot actually be classified due to the vast number of concerns he deals with such as social justice, liberation, interfaith dialogue, evangelism and mission and many others. His theology is mainly marked by a 'radical Christocentrism', rooted in an equally strong commitment to social justice to the oppressed. His concept of 'humanization' is akin to the concept of 'liberation' popularized by the Latin American liberation theology. Dialogue in his theology extends beyond the sphere of religions and faiths to the level of ideologies of secular nature as well.

work of Christ and his message from the Indian religious perspective, the main drawback of this theological system was twofold:

(i) They were mostly Brahmanic in nature - drawing mainly from the Brahmanic Hindu traditions and Scriptures which are now considered to reflect somewhat anti-dalit stances.

(ii) It remained so metaphysical that it was found to be inadequate to address the social problems of the people, although the theology of M.M.Thomas among the above mentioned theologians can be considered as an exception as his theology is known to be praxiological.

The same criticism is also levelled against the various experimentations being undertaken in the field of indigenisation of worship in India. It is often argued that they accommodate lot of symbols and practices from the Brahmanic Hindu tradition and also use the Sanskrit language which is considered to be a Brahmanic and elitist language.

As A.P.Nirmal, one of the leading proponents of the emerging 'Dalit Theology' in India explains, the Indian Christian theology tried to work out its theological systems either in relation to the Brahmanic Advaita philosophy of Sri Sankara or in terms of the Vishishta Advaita philosophy of Sri Ramanuja. Commenting on the caste factor in these theological contributions Nirmal says:

It was also true that most of the contributions came from caste converts to Christianity. Therefore, it was quite natural that most of them perpetuated within Christian theology, "Brahminic" tradition oriented approach to the theological task in India.¹⁵

¹⁵. A.P. Nirmal, "Towards A Christian Dalit Theology" in A.P. Nirmal (ed), A Reader in Dalit Theology, Gurukul, Madras, p.54.

To put it in other words, this early Indian Christian Theology did not evolve out of the day to day life experiences of the Indian mass and therefore, in effect, remained an elite intellectual exercise like the Western systematic theology of the Enlightenment period, totally cut off from the ordinary experiences of the poor and the marginalised in India.

THE LIBERATION MOVEMENT.

It was against this context that two decades ago Indian theologians began to take up the questions of socio-economic justice seriously. Latin American liberation theology had made its appearance by then and had a considerable influence over the Third World. India too came under the grip of liberation theology's persuasive influence. The impact of liberation theology was so powerful that it soon struck a chord with the struggling masses in India concerned for a just society.

A visible offshoot of this wave of liberation theology and its use of the Marxist tools of social analysis was the mushrooming of the Christian Social Action Groups all over India. People like Sebastian Kappan, Samuel Rayan, Russel Chandran, K.C. Abraham, Paulos Mar Paulos, Geevarghese Mar Osthathios are the most noted Indian exponents of liberation theology. Its chief attraction was the 'liberation motif' which was deemed highly relevant in the Indian social context, characterised by social injustices. Like Latin American liberation theology, the liberation theologians in India also found the Marxist social analysis very conducive to grapple with the Indian social realities. Of course, it must be added that there have also been attempts at formulating non-Marxist forms of liberation theology in India. M.M.Thomas's theology, by and large, can be considered as more of a Gandhian orientation rather than of a Marxist one, although he also makes critical use of Marx in his theological works. Ignatius Jesudasan's A Gandhian Theology of Liberation which advocates a non-violent theology of liberation is also worth mentioning here.

Although the impact of liberation theology in India was very great, it also came under severe criticism later. Unlike in Latin America, where the main criticism of liberation theology came from the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church and from the ultra evangelical quarters, in India positive and constructive criticism came from within the progressive theological circles as well. In many ways, liberation theology remained an imported theology from Latin America. In other words, liberation theology was received as a 'potted plant', potted, of course in the Latin American soil. There were no serious efforts to replant it in the Indian soil. It also means that in following the Marxist economic class perspective for social analysis, Indian liberation theologians also failed to identify the age old oppressive system of caste as the root cause of the social oppression in India. The 'dalits' or the so called 'untouchables' (those outside the four castes within the Hindu religion) were overlooked when the Indian liberation theologians spoke about the 'poor' in rather too general terms and from an exclusive economic perspective. A.P.Nirmal expresses the same concern when he says:

The real life context was overlooked by our Indian Third World theologians and they continued to engage in the Latin American liberation rhetoric.¹⁶

He goes on to say:

whether it is the traditional Christian theology or the more recent Third World theology, they failed to see in the struggles of the Indian Dalits for liberation, a subject matter appropriate for doing theology in India.¹⁷

The main reason for the grave neglect of the caste system as the

¹⁶. Ibid., p.37.

¹⁷. Ibid.

real social problem in India today by the Indian liberation theologians is their adherence to the Marxist socio-economic analysis which Latin American liberation theology also made use of, at least in the early stages of its development. They identified poverty and therefore the divide between the rich and the poor as the crux of the problem in India without properly analyzing the more fundamental factors like caste which contribute to social injustices like poverty.

Once again in the words of A.P.Nirmal:

The Latin American liberation theology, in its early stages at least used Marxist analysis of socio-economic realities... the haves and the havenots. The socio-economic realities in India, however, are of a different nature and the traditional doctrinaire Marxist analysis of these realities is inadequate in India. It neglects the caste factor which adds to the complexity of Indian socio economic realities.¹⁸

THE EMERGENCE OF DALIT THEOLOGY.

The debate whether 'class' or 'caste' should take primacy in social analysis led to the formation of a caste based liberation theology in India which is now known as 'Dalit' Theology. ('dalit' in Sanskrit refers to the 'oppressed' or the 'torn asunder', referring to the out castes here), thus making a new phase in the Indian theological context - a theological endeavour to reflect on Indian realities from a genuine Indian perspective, i.e, from the perspectives of the dalits, the most oppressed sections of the Indian society. Dalit theology is still in the making. Although, generally speaking, dalit theology can also be considered as a variant of liberation theology of Latin America, it does have radical divergences from the Latin American form of liberation theology which was

¹⁸. Ibid., p.56.

basically 'imitated' in India. While liberation theology considers the biblical account of the 'exodus' as its paradigm, dalit theology looks upon the specific Deuteronomic Creed (Dt.26:5-12)¹⁹ as its basis. For the dalits, this creed is an affirmation of their identity as God's people and of their consciousness as 'once no people' and as people who have undergone pain and affliction. In dalit theology, 'pathos' takes precedence over liberation theology's 'praxis', although dalit theology also takes the praxiological dimension quite seriously. It is not only the 'history' that is the most important factor (as it seems to be the case in liberation theology) but also the myths and the legends that are part of the history and culture of the dalits. In focusing exclusively on the concerns of the dalits, dalit theology adopts a certain 'methodological exclusivism' (as in Black Theology in the United States). It must be said in this connection that dalit theology also seems to employ a kind of 'Christian exclusivism' when it leaves out the dalits who belong to the other religious communities, especially those in Hinduism. In place of liberation theology's Marxist social analysis, dalit theology, rejecting Marxist tools as being totally alien to the Indian social system, relies on B.R. Ambedkar's ²⁰ caste analysis of the Indian society. A.P.Nirmal, M.E.Prabhakar, James Massey, Dhyanchand Carr, V.Devasahayam, Abraham Ayrookuzhiyel are some of the pioneers of dalit theology which is steadily gaining momentum and has already exerted considerable impact on the Indian theological scene.

Although dalit theology has proved to be a corrective theological system, in many ways, to the Latin American brand of liberation theology, it is also not free from limitations.

¹⁹. "You shall make this response before the LORD your God, "A wandering Ar-a-me'an was my ancestor... so that they may eat their fill within your town". (Dt.26:5-12)

²⁰. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar who drafted the Indian Constitution is considered to be the 'father' figure of the 'Dalit Consciousness' in India. His differences with Gandhiji on the issue of caste system is taken up vigorously by dalit thinkers and theologians.

Dalit theology shares the inadequacy of almost every other liberation theology, i.e. it also adopts an anthropocentric perspective by neglecting the concerns of the environment from its theological purview. As in the case of Latin American liberation theology, dalit theology also failed to recognise the vital link that there is between ecological devastation and social injustices in the Third World countries like India, thus proving to be wanting both in theological reflection as well as social analysis. Liberation theologies claim to be a theological system of reflection on their respective 'social context', but failed in analyzing these contexts in a comprehensive manner. Perhaps the only exception to this rule are some forms of feminist theology which, of course, is rather subsumed under the broad category of liberation theology in India. Feminist theology is yet to make a powerful impact as an individual and independent theological system in India because the tendency of liberation theology including dalit theology has so far been to 'integrate' the concerns of women in their theologies.

THE CHALLENGE OF ECOLOGY TO THE INDIAN THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT.

The realization that the concerns of ecology have so far been overlooked, has now opened possibilities for a new phase in Indian theology. There is a need to widen the scope of the search for justice, in order that it can encompass the problems of nature in such a way that these problems are related to the problems of the poor and the exploited, the need for an integral ecotheology from a specifically Indian liberative perspective a theology which would integrate the concerns of the poor, the dalits and the nature. There is now, in India, an ever growing awareness of this urgent need. The following quotations illustrate this new quest:

Daniel. D.Chetti remarks:

Among the new challenges to the theological tasks in India, issues relating to ecology are of paramount

significance. Environmental degradation caused by massive pollution of air, water and land, threatens the very life of the earth... Theological and ethical issues underlying this are of urgent concerns to theological reflection and education in India... What is required is a paradigm shift in theologising. We have only started the inquiry and invite the theological community to take up this challenge.²¹

The above plea was made at a Conference on 'Ecology and Development: Theological Perspectives' held at the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary in 1991. Presenting a paper on the relation between 'Ecology, Ecumenics, and Economy' at the Conference, A.P.Nirmal described the radical changes that the Indian theological scene has witnessed in the last two decades and called on the theological community in India to move forward and break with the anthropocentric treatment of theology and to move from the "human face of theology" towards the "cosmic face of theology". He said:

First of all, we must note that our contemporary understanding of theology itself has undergone tremendous changes. No longer do we understand theology as "the Science of God", the "Church Dogmatics", or the "Church Doctrines"... Increasingly we are understanding theology in relation to human life in its totality. The dignity of human person, human rights, human liberation, human development, communication, social analysis, women's concerns, the dalit liberation, the people - all these have become theological issues... We may characterise this whole business as the "Human Face of theology"... the trouble with such themes... is that they generate the anthropocentric paradigm of theology. We would have

²¹. Daniel D. Chetti (ed), Ecology and Development: Theological Perspectives, Gurukul Theological College, Madras, pp.III-IV.

to move away from the "Human Face of theology" to the "Cosmic Face of theology".²²

The above views are very much representative of the new urge among the theologians of the liberation perspective in India to include the problems of ecology as well into the realm of liberation theology. K.C.Abraham who is a staunch proponent of the liberation school of theology in India, has expressed the urgent need to widen the horizon of justice and liberation in liberation theology to take up the concerns of ecology seriously. According to him, the problems of the poor and the concerns of the environment are inextricably intertwined and, therefore, they need to be looked at from an integral liberative perspective, that is from the perspective of 'eco-justice'. According to him:

The cry of the poor, the groaning of creation, is for justice and that is the focal point of our theology and our spirituality that relates to cosmic, creational concerns... The justice concerns the right relationships between human beings and human and other segments of creation. Broadening the understanding of justice to embrace the ecological concerns- eco-justice- is called for.²³

K.C.Abraham does recognise that liberation theology has to face this new challenge of ecology and in his view the challenge therefore, is for liberation theologians to adopt an ecological perspective. Abraham further says:

The precedence of ecological perspective has posed

²². A.P. Nirmal, "Ecology, Ecumenics and Economics in Relation: A New Theological Paradigm" in Bennet Benjamin (ed), Towards An Ecological World View For The Mission Of The Church, N.C.C.I. Nagpur, p.42.

²³. K.C. Abraham, "Liberation: Human and Cosmic" in Daniel D. Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.77.

new challenges to even the radical theologies like liberation theology. It is rightly observed that a true liberation will be possible not only by involving ourselves in struggles to liberate the oppressed human beings from the exploitation but also by a conscious and concerted effort to liberate the bonded earth from the over exploitative attitudes of human beings.²⁴

This seems to be the line sometimes adopted by Indian theologians of the liberation school, i.e. to include the concerns of nature within the concerns of liberation theology. In other words, it can be considered as an attempt to 'extend' liberation theology by 'adding' ecological problems also to its purview. However, mere extension of ecology in itself does not and will not answer the potential questions raised about the inadequacies of the framework of liberation theology. (For instance, Leonardo Boff's latest work on Ecology and Liberation does precisely this and hence also fails to convince). However, the concerns of ecology cannot simply be added to other social problems that need theological reflection without traditional liberation theology itself undergoing methodological changes in the areas of its anthropocentric treatment of theological themes, its hermeneutics, and its use of the Marxist social analysis. (It needs to be noted here that it was the influence of the traditional Marxist framework that led the liberation theologians to denounce ecological concerns as elitist and purely Western and capitalist.)

It follows from this that as far as liberation theologians in India are concerned, there is an evident realization that the original Latin American liberation theology is wholly inadequate to meet the new challenges posed by ecology, and that there need to be efforts to revise it, by enlarging the scope of liberation

²⁴. K.C. Abraham, "A Theological Response to Ecological Crisis" in Bangalore Theological Forum, Vol. XXV, No.1, March 1993, pp.7-8.

by 'including' the concerns of nature to those of the poor. As Pushparajan puts it:

A new search for a just society from the view point of the Christian faith is becoming the central task of today's theological reflection. A Liberation theology of Nature is in the offing.²⁵

But this approach does not lead us on to an integral ecotheology, unless liberation theology of the original Latin American orientation undergoes a much more fundamental soul searching and an integral restructuring and reformulation in the above mentioned three important areas. viz. its anthropocentric treatment of theological themes, its insufficient hermeneutics of the Scripture, especially of the exodus event, and its use of the Marxist social analysis.

In a context where social and economic oppression of the poor goes side by side with ecological exploitation, 'liberation' of the 'oppressed' cannot be achieved without addressing the ecological dimensions of exploitation. As yet this integral perspective is not reflected in liberation theology. Its theological formulations of doctrines are done in an anthropocentric manner. Nature is the 'new poor' or the 'new oppressed'. In this context, liberation theology's maxim of 'preferential option for poor' where 'poor' is understood in an anthropocentric manner, is far from relevant today. It needs to be replaced by a 'preferential option for victims', 'victims' here including nature as well. The hermeneutics of liberation theology also betrays this anthropocentrism. The exodus model, its paradigm, is interpreted in a narrow sense neglecting the ecological and cultural aspects of liberation present in the wider canvas of exodus. Liberation theology's adherence to Marxism also needs change. Marxism has little to offer on ecological problems. Its class analysis is incapable of

²⁵. A. Pushparajan, Ecological World-View For A Just Society, ISPCCK, New Delhi, 1992, p.7.

addressing the Third World realities where the exploitation of people and environment is characterised by other important categories such as caste, patriarchy, and consumerism. Marxism being a materialistic and non-ecological philosophy oriented towards industrialism is not helpful in bringing out the ecological dimensions of economic exploitation. In a context where this link is fairly established, liberation theology will not do justice to the concerns of eco-justice if it follows an anthropocentric and Marxist economic perspective. Hence the need for liberation theology to adopt ecological perspective as a central concern.

David Scott also echoes this concern:

Not only must the whole array of Liberation theologies be taken to task... for their manifest anthropocentrism, but so too Marxist ideology, from which many of them draw their analytical tools.²⁶

This thesis endeavours to undertake precisely this.

Perhaps the only theologian of the Latin American liberation theological orientation who tried to reformulate liberation theology along these lines, at least with regard to its anthropocentrism and Marxist analysis, was Sebastian Kappan who died recently. (Kappan, although he used to be heavily influenced by Marxism in his early years of theological reflections, however, always made manifest his ecological concerns in his characteristically simple life style). In an article which he wrote before his premature death he criticised both the Marxists and the Indian theological community for overlooking ecological concerns:

They (Marxists) welcome the development of the

²⁶. David C. Scott, "Some Theological Reflections on "A Theological Response to Ecological Crisis" in Bangalore Theological Forum, op.cit., p.16.

productive forces of science while harmful consequences on the existing relations of production. This is the line followed by eco groups of Marxist persuasion.²⁷

In not criticising the dogmatic Marxist stance on ecology, the Indian liberation theologians have left an important task unattended. As Kappan expressed this concern:

Indian theologians have still to address themselves to the challenges posed by actual and potential ecological destruction.²⁸

Paying tribute to this great vision of Kappan, this thesis tries to take up the challenge which Kappan had begun and sadly could not accomplish, i.e. to develop an integral ecotheology relevant for India.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE FUTURE DALIT THEOLOGY.

Dalit theology shares the same burden of guilt of ignoring the ecological concerns in its theological reflection. This is, indeed, a serious neglect of realities as the dalits together with the tribals in India (there are attempts going on to evolve a common ideology for the dalits and the tribals in India) form the main victims of ecological devastations in India. A.P.Nirmal seems to be the sole exception to this criticism as he has begun to adopt an ecological framework, although he is yet to relate the concerns of the dalits with those of nature. I should hasten to add here that Nirmal, in an interview given to me, said that he was already engaged in writing a book on dalit theology which would include the concerns of ecology as well. Apart from

²⁷. S. Kappan, "The Asian Search For A Liberative Theology: Theology and Transformative Praxis" in T.K. Oommen (ed), Bread and Breath: Essays in Honour of Samuel Rayan S.J., Jesuit Theological Forum Reflections 5. Bangalore, 1991, p.104.

²⁸. Ibid.

Nirmal's rather 'late wisdom' on ecology, dalit theology, on the whole, has so far largely ignored the concerns of ecology. Besides, there are also echoes among some of the 'dalit voices' that sound very much ecologically unfriendly, arguments that ecological concerns have nothing to do with the dalits, and that it will be counterproductive for the dalits to take up the ecological concerns. To cite an example, V.T.Raja Shekhar Shetty, editor of the journal Dalit Voice said in an article entitled, "Beware of the three Latest Aryan Stunts to Enslave Us: Development, Ecology and Feminism":

Environment, nature, ecology have become yet another latest stunt of the Upper caste to fool our people.²⁹

Against this context of dalit theology's neglect of ecological concerns, this thesis attempts to give a critique to dalit theology as well, pointing out the link between the oppression of the dalits and the tribals in India and the destruction of the environment in the name of 'development'.

It follows from this that for liberation theology in India, or for dalit theology to be integral and credible, they will have to adopt a basic ecological world view and perspective which offers a much more comprehensive and fundamental theological approach. This integral ecological approach is fundamental because one can have only social justice established or just distribution accomplished or poverty alleviated when there are earth's resources available and when they are well taken care of. Moreover, while the prevailing theological and ideological tension between 'class' and 'caste' only helps to further divide and polarize the progressive theological streams in India, an integral ecological perspective can help unite the radical theologies in India while at the same time the specificities and

²⁹. V. T. Raja Shekhar Shetty, "Beware of the three later Aryan Stunts to Enslave Us: Development, Ecology, Feminism" in Dalit Voice, April 16-30, Bangalore, 1991, pp.4-5.

the distinctiveness of each theological system can be adhered to. This, then should mark the new phase of Indian theological scene -the emergence of a cosmic theology of liberation - an integral ecotheology relevant for India of tomorrow.

CHAPTER 2. THE ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT IN INDIA.

INTRODUCTION.

Having looked at the Indian theological context against which the integral ecotheology is to be developed, this chapter attempts to look at the ecological context in India. This is important because any socially significant theology has to be a theological reflection arising out of the concerns of its social context.

Ecology is a much talked about subject today. However, the Third World countries have, until recently, been reluctant to take up ecological issues seriously and tended to write them off as purely Western capitalist problems. But the new awareness that the environmental problems are not just the results of social injustice, especially poverty, but that poverty is also caused by environmental degradation often carried out for the sake of the so called 'developmental projects', has persuaded some within the Third World to view the ecological concerns seriously. For example, when the rain forests are destroyed to make way for the nuclear plants or big dams which would only benefit the industrial sector and the urban rich, it is the poorer sections of the society, particularly the tribal people, who live in close proximity with the forests, the fisherfolk, among them their women who have to pay a heavy price. Or when the cultivation of staple food is replaced by cash crops, as happens in India today at an alarming pace, it is the traditional farmers and landless labourers who have to suffer the consequences. This chapter attempts to look at the present ecological scenario in India and tries to bring out the inextricable link between environmental destabilization and the social and economic marginalisation of the poor.

THE ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS IN INDIA- THE STATE OF INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT.

Water.

India's ground water resources are almost ten times its annual rainfall. But the scenario has radically changed with over 170,000 tube wells added every year in the 1970's, leaving the dug wells of the poor dry. Pollution of water is one of the crucial ecological problems in India. It is estimated that about 70 per cent of all the available water in India is polluted. Except two, all the rest of the high-altitude lakes in India, are dying owing to high level pollution. The slow but steady death of Kashmir's Dal lake threatens the livelihood of over 50,000 fisherfolk living there. The following data confirms the startling crisis India's water resources face today.¹

New Delhi's sewage system dumps more than 200 million litres of untreated waste into the Yamuna river per day. When the river enters New Delhi, its waters are already polluted at a rate of 7,500 coliform organisms for every 100 ml while the World Health Organization's (W.H.O.) standard for public drinking water requires that it should be free from coliform, a common bacteria. When it leaves, it carries with it a highly hazardous content of 24 million coliform per 100 ml. The same story holds good for almost all the major thirteen rivers in India. And out of about 132 industrial plants that pump water to the Ganges, hardly twelve of them possess waste treatment plants, keeping vast stretches of the 600 km long Ganges river highly contaminated. While the progress in sewage treatment is considered to be extremely slow, that in the urban sewage system is no better. Hardly 114 towns are partly sewaged, covering

¹. Joseph Putti (ed), The Fair Deal, A Resource Book On Value Education in Social Justice, Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, 1993, p.268.

about 26 per cent of urban population. ²

Kerala, a southern state in India has a notoriously poor record for checking the industrial pollution of its waters. Various studies reveal³ that fourteen coastal Municipalities or Corporations from Trivandrum, Kerala's capital to Kasargodu, a northern town, discharge as much domestic sewage as to consume about 750 tones of oxygen a day from the coastal water. There are about 200 medium and large scale and over 2000 small scale industries in Kerala which directly pollute the water. They, together discharge 2,6702 m³ of effluent a day. In Kuttanadu alone in Kerala, about 1,000 tonnes of pesticides are used for each crop. Mass fish kills have been reported from all the rivers that flow adjacent to industrial areas in Kerala. Places like Chaliyar, Periyar, Chithrapuzha etc. in Kerala are now considered to be unable to support the natural number of fish in their waters.

Major rivers in the State of Karnataka, namely the Kavery, Kebim, Tunga and Tungabhadra, are contaminated with high density of Carbon dioxide emitted from nearby industrial establishments. This is found to be increasing each year and is upsetting the ecological balance of the region. This has affected the livelihood of over two million inland fisherfolk. For example, 30,000 fishermen in Hooghly rely on the 'hilsa' fish catch during the monsoon season. Now their earnings have decreased by about 60 per cent.⁴

². T.N. Khoshoo, Environmental Concerns and Strategies, Indian Environmental Society, Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, 1984, p.43.

³. U.K. Gopalan, "Impact of Ecological Changes and Over Exploitation of Fisheries Resources" in Seminar, March 25, 1989, pp.6-7.

⁴. A. Pushparajan, Ecological World-view for a Just Society, I.S.P.C.K, New Delhi, 1992, p.43.

Dams.

Huge dams are today one of India's most controversial ecological concerns. The energy and water planners often overlook the number of poor people affected and displaced when they plan out mega hydro electric power plants and canal irrigation projects. The usual governmental response has been that "some one has to suffer for progress", whilst the truth remains that these 'some ones' are always the tribals, the poorest and the most vulnerable sections of the society.

T.N. Khoshoo describes the damage the dam buildings have done to the Western Ghats.⁵ The Western Ghats, in fact, offer a good example of wasting wealth through large dams. The Western Ghats which stretch close and parallel to the western coast of India for more than 1600 kilometres form the main watershed in the Peninsular India and 58 major Peninsular Indian rivers originate from them. The total ground water potential in this area is estimated at 1,19,000 mm³ and the tappable ground water potential at 10,050 mm³. This abundant water resource has been heavily harnessed for power generation and irrigation. Already 49 major or medium irrigation schemes have been completed and fifty more are under investigation.⁶

The environmental and the social costs of large dams in the Western Ghats have been immense. Utilization of water resources through large dams here has resulted in excessive submersion of valley forests in the river catchments. At the same time, the dam construction activities have led to irreversible fragmentation and quantitative degradation of the remaining vegetation which also affects the flow of the rivers. The hydrological cycles in many regions have been affected by inter-basin diversion of waters for irrigation and power generation. Adverse and drastic impacts are felt along the Western side of

⁵. T.N. Khoshoo, op.cit., pp.41-46.

⁶. Ibid., p.42.

the Ghats where the drainage channels are very short. The basin of river Periyar in Kerala offers a classic example of this. It has a drainage basin of 672 sq. km, draining the highest reaches in the entire Western Ghats. Kerala generates more than 60 per cent of its power from this river alone and more than 80 per cent of Kerala's heavy industry is concentrated along its banks.⁷ Eleven major dams have already been completed in this river, resulting in the loss of 60 per cent of its forests cover since 1942. Once again the poor are the real victims. Rapid deforestation due to encroachments and fire damage, extensive plantation of tea and cardamom in the catchment forests and bad 'foresteing' have affected the stream flow of the river so badly that during the last five years, after December, when the stream flow gets slowed down, the sea water moves 20 miles inland along the river channel forcing the nearby factories which depend on the river for its water to be closed. These industrial lay-offs alone amount to the loss of hundreds of crores of rupees every year, besides keeping the poor people out of work. The agricultural crop damage and long term damage to the soil and to the ground water resources are immense.

As already seen, the forest cover bears the real brunt of dam projects in several ways. In the Himalayan valleys, the contractors, who come to clear the forests which are going to be submerged, end up cutting down trees even in the unaffected areas. The forests also get cleared for the construction of approach roads, residential quarters and for storage of building materials. The destruction of forests radically affects the very life and culture of the tribals as their life styles are inextricably interwoven with the forests. With large dam installations in the rain forest areas, the tribal population gets displaced. Landless labourers, marginal farmers, share croppers and those who live on collecting and selling the forest produces are forced to pay a heavy price. Compensation, if it is given at all, for land and houses is grossly insufficient.

⁷. Ibid. p.45.

It is not paid for the loss of employment and disruption of livelihood. The small farmers who supplement their meagre income by ranching cattle are hard hit as they are bereft of enough grazing land in their new settlements. They are often forced to sell off their cattle at uneconomic prices. The former Agricultural Commissioner D.R. Bhumble points out the ecological problems as well as the dangers associated with mega dam projects when he says:

...from the experience of major and medium irrigation works in India, it is evident that its benefits in the arid areas, though spectacular for the first ten to twenty years, gradually get reduced and a considerable portion of the land gets deteriorated because of water logging and salinity... It is time to halt the expansion of these programmes.⁸

The Sardar-Sarovar Plant: A Case Study.

The Sardar Sarovar Project (SSP) is part of the controversial large Narmada Valley Development Project, comprising of 30 large, 130 medium and 3000 small dams on the Narmada river and its 41 tributaries. The SSP is expected to irrigate 1.8 million hectares of land in Gujarat and 75,000 hectares more in Rajasthan and has 1450 MW of power as its installed capacity. It is also expected to provide Municipal and Industrial water to over 8,000 valleys and 135 towns and to the industrial units.⁹

On the other side, the project will submerge about 13,700 hectares of forest and almost the same amount of agricultural and non-agricultural land in the main reservoir. Madhya Pradesh,

⁸. The State of India's Environment 1984-85: The Second Citizen's Report, Centre For Science and Environment, New Delhi, 1985, p.111.

⁹. Narmada Bachao Andolan: Towards Sustainable and Just Development; The People's Struggles in the Narmada Valley, NBA, October, 1992, pp.4-5.

Gujarat and Maharashtra will be the worst hit states, especially Malwa and Nimad in Madhya Pradesh. Malwa is known for its fertile land. The local wisdom has it:

You find roti (bread) and water at every step.¹⁰

This is very important because the ruling class and the technocrats always project, for these areas, an image of 'backwardness' to get such large projects through.

Displacement.

The SSP will cause the largest ever displacement associated with any such project in India. The number of people to be displaced will be around one million of which the tribals will contribute about 150,000, from about 245 villages in the submergence zone spread in the three states. The canal network, supposed to be the largest in the world (it will use up 150,000 hectares of land for canals) is expected to affect 170,000 peasants of whom at least 25,000 are severely affected and the rest partially affected.

The proposed sanctuary in lieu of the ecological cost in the SSP is to dislodge over 42000 tribals from about 108 villages in the state of Gujarat. Thousands of families will lose their land as well as their livelihood due to the acquisition of land for catchment treatment and resettlement. Large scale eviction of landless share croppers or labourers for private lands of absentee landlords that are also being taken for resettlement is also anticipated. The tribals around the 2769 hectare forest land near Taloda also face the same fate as their resource base, even their lands, is expected to be devoured towards resettlement plans. Some sections of the society like craftsmen,

¹⁰. Anupam Misra, "Strangers in their Homeland: The Narmada Controversy" in Anil Agarwal et.al (ed), The Fight For Survival: People's Action for Environment, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi, 1987, p.15.

boatmen, artisans, do not even figure in the government list of the affected. A World Bank estimate itself admits that there are at least two million tribals in India who face resettlement to make way for hydro-electric projects.¹¹ This is indeed distressing especially when the Indian government has such a poor record on rehabilitating its people.

Several studies by various agencies such as the Centre for Social Studies (CSS) reveal that none of the agreements have been stuck to by the authorities. For example, the evicted people from eight to ten villages in Gujarat have been disintegrated in 130 places. Not even a single displaced village has been fully resettled. People from Godhar and Vadgan villages were forcefully ousted during 1991 monsoon season, when they were threatened of partial submergence due to backwater effect caused by the continued dam construction. Many have been cheated or given non- cultivable or water logged lands in compensation.

The destruction of the extraordinarily rich nature in the Narmada region and the loss of precious flora and fauna will lead to waterlogging and salinity in the command area. SSP alone will drown about 13,744 hectares of forest along with 2,769 hectares of forest in Taloda. Over 40,000 hectares of forest is estimated to be submerged in NSP, the feeder dam of SSP.¹²

The people engaged in non-agricultural activities such as fishing are deprived of their right to compensation. The extinction of the famous 'hilsa' fish, found only in the region, will be a heavy blow to the fisherfolk. There are about 750 families along a 150 km river stretch, downstream of Braach town, who rely on catching hilsa fish for their livelihood. The SSP is destined to interfere with the hilsa migration and will render the 750 families of fisherfolk virtually unemployed.

¹¹. Vanaja Varma, "Global Developments and Indigenous Peoples" in Voices, A Journal on Communication for Development, Madhyam Communications Publications, Vol.1, No.3, 1993, p.21.

¹². Narmada Bachao Andolan; op.cit., p.23.

The Uprooting of the Culture.

The tribals are not only uprooted from their homeland, but from their very culture and faith as well. They have gods and goddesses in their homeland surrounding the forests that cannot be shifted or resettled. Neither can their aesthetic value of beautiful environment. There were in the Narmada region at least 12 different empires and various civilizations that have flourished over the last 7,000 to 8,000 years.¹³ Narmada is also one of the most revered rivers in India which has been home for thousands of medieval temples and masjids, ghats and pilgrim centres. In other words, it has been nurturing and sustaining a culture and a faith over the centuries. The famous 'Narmada Parikrama' (Procession around the Narmada on foot) is one of its distinct features which will be disturbed by the proposed SSP.

The Neo-Colonial Dimensions.

The role of the Multi National Companies (MNCs) and the World Bank (WB) in this project, as in almost all other mega 'developmental' projects in the Third World, is clearly evident. The World Bank came up with the financial aid and since 1973, the work on this project has been going on almost unhindered, thanks to the W.B. help, despite popular mass movements against this project. As Aupama Misra puts it, it has to do with the 'Multi National Culture' which is sweeping India.¹⁴ The economic muscles such as the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) and the World Bank finance such projects which they know will devastate the most vulnerable, the tribal belt in India. It must be remembered that mega projects of the dimensions of Narmada could never be executed in the Western developed countries. As Vanaja Varms expresses, the IMF and the WB help only to,

convert the Third World natural wealth into

¹³. Anupam Misra, op.cit., pp.1-5.

¹⁴. Ibid., p.17.

consumptive items such as hamburgers, disposable cartons, toilet paper, disposable diapers and even tomato sauce.¹⁵

What is said about Narmada vis-a-vis its impact on the poor and the tribals holds good for other dam projects as well. For example, two dams in Bhopalpatnam and Inchampalli in the central part of India are expected to affect 75,000 tribals and 0.172 mha of forests.¹⁶ Or to give another case, the Rihand dam which was constructed in 1962 displaced about 150,000 tribals of the Singrauli basin.

Alternatives.

Considering the enormous potentials for small hyroelectric projects in India, it can easily be concluded that the pursuit after the mega dams projects are totally unnecessary and undesirable. There are, in fact, thousands of places in the hilly regions of India where micro hydro electric power generation ranging from few kilowatts to several megawatts are feasible and could very well serve the remote rural settlements. Unfortunately this possibility has been left largely untapped. It is interesting to compare the Indian situation with that of China. China has over 88,000 micro hydro power stations, with a total installed capacity of 6,929 MW in 1980 which actually supplied almost 1/5 of all the power consumed in the rural China that year.¹⁷

¹⁵. Vanaja Varma, op.cit., p.20.

¹⁶. Mohan Hirabal Hiralal, "Dammed Rivers and the Dammed Tribals" in Anil Agarwal et.al (ed), The Fight For Survival, op.cit., p.5.

¹⁷. The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.110.

Over fishing-another reason for water pollution and extinction of marine wealth.

Overfishing is seen as a serious ecological problem which is closely associated with modern fishing techniques, threatening the very survival of the traditional fisherfolk. The fishery resources in tropical waters are characterised by a diversity of species and low level of productivity and a great deal of stability.¹⁸ This makes it extremely difficult for the fish to cope with fluctuations in the environment.

Mechanization of shrimps trawling has contributed to the incredible growth of the industry in the context of an insatiable demand for shrimps for overseas markets. This has affected the livelihood of the traditional fisherfolk in a very dramatic way. In Kerala, for instance, the traditional fisherfolk have been fishing in inshore waters for over a thousand years. They have adopted indigenous methods and their own craft and gear congenial to their environment and to the variety of fish. Their nets would have different meshes for different species whereas the mechanised vessels use a single net which traps fish indiscriminately. With the mushrooming of the mechanised vessels and trawling, the traditional fisher folk are squeezed out of their share of fish.

The Centre Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) has undertaken several studies on this issue. One of their studies on prawns in Kerala, show that between 1973-80, the catch per unit effort declined from 82.6 kg per hour to 7.6 kg per hour and the total production of prawns in Kerala declined from 86,000 tonnes in 1975 to 22,400 tonnes in 1981.¹⁹ This loss has been compounded by an increase in water pollution as well. This startling caution is echoed in a report of a study conducted by

¹⁸. U.K. Gopalan, op.cit., p.3.

¹⁹. Thomas Kocherry and Thankappan Achari, "Troubled Waters: Mechanisation and Kerala's Fisherfolk" in Anil Agarwal et.al (eds), op.cit., p.158.

the CMFRI. It said:

Eight industrial units in Durgapur (North India) pump wastes that are equivalent to the sewage from a city of one million population. Fish kills are a daily occurrence in summer. The (Hooghly) river is heading towards an ecological disaster.²⁰

Atmosphere.

The main air pollutants in India are sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon dioxide, lead, and hydrocarbon. These are emitted mainly from mines, power plants, industries and motorised transport. The quantity of sulphur dioxide released into the atmosphere has almost tripled in the last fifteen years. The following data reveal how alarming the present scenario looks today.

- Of the 48 Indian thermal stations surveyed in 1984, 31 had taken virtually no pollution control measures and only six had even their pollution control equipments properly functioning.²¹

- New Delhi's half a million vehicles emit 400 tonnes of pollutants daily.

- In the city of Bombay, the effluent spewed out into the air are estimated to be about 2,971 tonnes of which 52 per cent came from automobiles, 2 per cent from the use of domestic fuels and the rest from industries.²²

Thermal power stations cause, among other environmental problems, serious air pollution. Singrauli (2000MW) and Korba

²⁰. Ibid., p.160.

²¹. The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.121.

²². Joseph Putti (ed), op.cit., p.270.

(2100MW) thermal stations in India are posing grave environmental damage. Open cast coal mines produce clouds of dust after blasting operations. Diesel burning trucks used for transportation add to the problem. Although Indian coal is considered to have a low sulphur content (0.35 per cent), it does not make it risk-free because of its high ash content (30 per cent). Besides, coal combustion also leads to the emission of a number of harmful gases, especially sulphur dioxide which is responsible for causing acid rain.

Wood smoke, produced while cooking, besides polluting the air with carbon monoxide, also causes severe health hazards to people, especially to women from the lower income group. Strong evidence for the ill effects of wood smoke came from a survey on a heart disease called Cor Pulmonale, caused by the enlargement of the right lower chamber of heart, leading to a heart failure due to lung disorder. The survey found that there was a surprising resemblance in the incidence of this disease between men and women, even though 75 per cent of men were smokers of tobacco as compared to 10 per cent of women. Almost all women surveyed belonged to the lower group. The fact that women generally have less haemoglobin than men make them more vulnerable to anaemia.

Related to the atmospheric pollution are the menacing problems of the Green House Effect or Global Warming, Acid Rain and the Depletion of the Ozone Layer.

The Green House Effect.

In 1961, John Tindal, a scientist, warned about the green house effects of carbon dioxide²³ which basically was that the excess of concentration of carbon dioxide increases the heat of the atmosphere.

²³. Yogendra Srivastava, Environmental Pollution, Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, 1989, p.18.

This effect of carbon dioxide is called the green house effect. It suggests that the temperature of the planet is affected by certain gases in the atmosphere. Carbon dioxide now has a concentration which is 25 per cent greater than what it was at the start of industrial revolution. Increasing burning of fossil fuels may be one of the direct causes of green house effect. About half of the carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere is estimated to remain there. Due to the fast growing industrialization process and commercial agriculture, the emission of CFCs and carbon dioxide and other green house gases like methane, nitrous oxide, and low level ozone are on the increase. The ever increasing deforestation along side rapid industrialization and other developmental projects reduce the amount of trees which would otherwise absorb the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It is expected that there will be temperature rise of 2 to 4 degrees celsius during the early decades of the next century. This could be even 6 degrees celsius at the polar regions.²⁴ This would cause melting of ices at the poles leading to rise in sea levels. The worst affected countries would be the low lying countries like Bangladesh. There has been debate among scientists about this issue ever since its first prediction.²⁵

²⁴. Duncan Blackie, The Environment in Crisis: The Socialist Answer, A Socialist Worker's Party Pamphlet, London, 1990, p.32.

²⁵. Stephen H. Schneider outlines four principal objections to the likelihood of greenhouse effect raised by the critics of the greenhouse theory. They are the following:

(i). The scientific basis for projecting future climate change is uncertain and, therefore, responsible scientists would not dare propose immediate policy responses.

(ii). Those who argue that a hundred years or more of unprecedented climate change (Schneider calls this 'the greenhouse century') is being built into the future are 'environmental activists' whose immediate concern is to destroy the free market system.

(iii). Decade-to-decade temperature changes over the past hundred years are not consistent with the climate model predictions of the consequences of increasing greenhouse gases. Hence, the model projections could be exaggerated.

Acid Rain.

The growing industrialization and the ever increasing burning of oil and coal and the resultant air pollution has, over the years, altered the atmospheric composition in the Northern hemisphere. Industries and oil and coal combustion together release sulphur dioxide into the atmosphere. Mixed with water in the clouds it then falls as rain or snow or mist. The fall of sulphur dioxide contaminated rain is known as Acid Rain. Acid rain in fact was the factor which caused tension in the bilateral relations between the United States and Canada when Canada found that more than 4.5 million tonnes of acid reaching Canada came from the U.S., i.e. from the heavy industries and coal burning firms in the States. About 48,000 lakes in Ontario in Canada were identified as incapable of maintaining life within 18 to 20 years if acid precipitation continues unabated.²⁶

India is not free from the hazards of acid rain. Besides the peril it would cause on the occupational environment of India's 4,000 chemical factories, it will worsen the pollution of air which is already on a steady increase in India. Between 1970 and 1985, the quantity of sulphur dioxide released into the air has tripled.²⁷ India's industrialised cities like Delhi, Bombay, Nagpur and Pune are reported to have had acid rain.

(iv). It is far too expensive to do anything about global warming.

Stephen H. Schneider, Global Warming: Are we entering the Greenhouse Century?, Cambridge, 1990, pp.288-289.

(According to Schneider, there are many scientists who hold that at the current level of research efforts, the scientific community will not be able to provide definitive information over the next decade or so about the precise timing and magnitude of century long climate changes.)

²⁶. A. Pushparajan, op.cit., p.45.

²⁷. Ibid.

Ozone Layer Depletion.

Ozone is the gas which performs the vital function of protecting us from the ultra violet rays of sun. About 95 per cent of the sun's ultra-violet rays are absorbed by a thin layer of ozone which lies in the stratosphere. Without this layer, all things would be exposed to damaging levels of radiation. The main gases that cause the depletion of the ozone layer are the CFCs, the HCPs, methane, nitrous oxide, and methyl chloride.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that every 1 per cent decrease in the concentration of ozone will lead to 5 per cent increase in the number of non-malignant skin cancers and a 1 per cent increase in the malignant cases. It also estimates that a 25 per cent increase in the 'biologically active' ultra-violet radiation (UB-V) will lead to a 25 per cent decrease in many crop fields.²⁸

Besides the chemical industrious effluent, there is the role of the last explosions of thermonuclear bombs by the U.S. and the former Soviet Union in 'puncturing' the stratosphere. The heat produced by a nuclear explosion results in the formation of nitric oxide molecules when the atomic cloud arises. As Dr. Ikte expresses concern about the survival of the future environment:

too many punctures could destroy critical links of the intricate food chain of plants and animals and thus shatter the ecological structures that permit man to remain alive in this planet.²⁹

It follows that if the existing nuclear stores are used, it would create a large amount of nitric oxide which might damage the ozone leading to further depletion of the ozone layer.

²⁸. Duncan Blackie, op.cit., p.31.

²⁹. Norman Cousins, "Who Owns the Ozone?" in Richard Falk et.al (ed), Towards A Just World Order, West View Press, Boulder, Colarado, p.484.

Forests.

Forests are central to the civilization, culture and faiths in India. Most of the South Asian religions and cultures have been rooted in the forests. The forests are worshipped as Aranyani, the goddess of the forest, as the main source of life and fertility. As far as the tribals of India are concerned, the forests form the very context and condition of their survival. The ecological insights of the tribals should not go unnoticed. As Vandana Siva argues, ethno-botanical work among the Indian tribals uncovers the deep and systematic knowledge of forests among them. The variety in the forest food used in India emerges from this wisdom. It is believed that a young illiterate boy of 'Irula' tribe from a settlement near Kolagiri identified 37 varieties of plants and gave them Irula names and found out their different uses.³⁰ All of this points to the fact that a threat to the forest cover in India, in effect, is a threat not only to the environment of India but also to the culture, civilization and faith of the people of India.

Some Facts.

India has already lost a considerable amount of forests. Worse still is the fact that the remaining forests are fast declining. According to the projection of satellite pictures, India is losing forests at the rate of 1.3 million hectares per year which is eight times more than what was given by the Forest Department during 1984-85.³¹ A panoramic look at the various parts of India presents a gloomy picture of India's forest wealth. It is warned that the Gangetic plain will turn into a desert in 15 years, unless a massive reforestation programme is initiated. The paper industry all over India has destroyed much

³⁰. Vandana Siva, Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India, Kali for Women, London, 1989, p.59.

³¹. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, "The Chipko Andolan: Forest Conservation Based On People's Power" in Anil Agarwal et.al (ed), op.cit., p.45.

of the forest cover. For instance, in Karnataka, the paper industrial companies have destroyed all the bamboo tree cover in the state and have now turned to the last remaining major forested frontiers in India, the North East.³² The same story holds good for Assam and Meghalaya, two of the North Eastern States. Trucks leaving the Khasi hills with loads of timber from Western Khasi hills are a daily scene. According to the available records at the Forest Office at Kohima, 15 truck loads of timber were being supplied out side of Nagaland every day during 1986-87.³³ The poor are the worst hit by this. They used to construct their houses with the timber from the forests which is no more available to them. The loggers also destroy the forests by constructing temporary roads and path ways for elephants to carry the wood. Anil Agarwal describes the present scenario of timber logging which is often done with the support of the rich and the ruling class, when he says:

illegal timber felling is today a major activity in the country, undertaken with full support of political interests. Stealing a few dozens of trucks of timber is the surest and the easiest way to become rich.³⁴

Most of the Western Ghats forests were tropical evergreen in nature, consisting mostly of soft wood species. In an effort to increase revenue from forests, extensive mixed forest were converted to monoculture teak wood in the 50's and the 60's. The paper industries put considerable pressure on bamboo reed, in the process, thwarting the traditional tribal life styles which relied on these natural produces. To keep up with the pace of the industrial demands, large areas of Western Ghats forests in

³². The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.366.

³³. Thungjamo Lotha, M.Th. Thesis, 1991, U.T.C. Bangalore, p.47.

³⁴. Ibid., p.50. (quoted from the Second Citizen's Report. p.372).

Kerala and Karnataka were clear felled and transformed into eucalyptus plantations which is said to have long term adverse effects on the soil. Much of India's remaining forest cover has artificial monoculture plantations, leading to loss of biological strength. Thousands of other life species like birds and insects are also affected as they are deprived of their habitat due to the monoculture plantations.

Social Forestry In India.

One of the distinctive features of India's present policy of Social Forestry is the mushrooming of the monoculture plantations. For example, 80 per cent of all seedlings supplied under the Social Forestry programmes so far are of two exotic varieties, leucaena and eucalyptus. The latter, in particular, has had disastrous impact on the environment as it tends to absorb the ground water and eventually dries up the soil and adversely affects the water, soil and agricultural activities of the rural poor. In Karnataka, large areas of rich natural forests have already been reduced to eucalyptus plantations under the World Bank sponsored Social Forestry scheme, ignoring the warnings of the rural poor that this would eventually dry up their wells and render the soil infertile and kill many of their plants. The social discrimination of the forest policies is evidently expressed by W.P.Suresh in the following words:

The Forest Conservation Act is meant to 'blame the victims', the rural poor alone for deforestation, and denies tribal access to forest produce, but permits entry to industries and contractors who pose a greater threat to Environment.³⁵

Following such forest policies and Acts, in other words, only helps to restrict the movements of the tribals and the dalits and hands over enormous licence to the forest and police

³⁵. W.P Suresh, "We Should Stop Playing God" in Ecology and Spirituality, India Peace Centre, Nagpur, p.19.

officials.

The Feudal and Colonial Legacies.

The Forest Acts have been anti-poor, especially anti-tribal, ever since the feudal times in India. During the feudal era, the tribals were enslaved by the migrants. With the plunder of resources for 'development', during the British colonialism, the feudal system gave way to a colonial system and the Imperial Forest Department was formed. The Forest Act of 1864, empowered the British empire to declare any agricultural land covered with trees as government forests. Thus areas that had been tribal homelands could be declared 'government property' and the tribals could easily be evicted. The Forest Act of 1878 was no better. It even went further in providing for the classification of forests into 'reserved', and 'protected' and 'illegal' forests. Thus the right of the rulers over the forest resources was reasserted.

The Indian government, as seen above, since Independence, followed their colonial master's forest policies. As C.R.Bijoy puts it:

it must be recognised that ever since the British rule, forest policies and laws have been ecologically destructive in character, catering to the imperialist designs of development.³⁶

Or as the remarks of P.R.Trivedi indicate, the role of the multi-national agencies in the formation of India's forest policies should also be addressed:

The process of commercialising the forest resource base that has led to the widespread deforestation in the country today is the motive force behind the

³⁶. C.R. Bijoy, "Voices of the Submerged; Adivasis and Forests" in Voices, op.cit., p.4.

government's afforestation programmes being carried out with the full support of the foreign aid agencies. India's afforestation is, thus, anti-people as is its deforestation.³⁷

The Chipko Movement- A Classic Case to illustrate the link between the Forests and the Marginalised.

The Chipko Movement in North India is well known and illustrates how integrated the lives of the poor, especially of the tribals and their women, are with the forests.

The Himalayan region in India is full of high mountains and valleys. This region is known for its rich vegetation, flowers, pastures, and glaciers. It keeps the balance of atmospheric circulation over much of the Indian subcontinent. It gives rise to the Ganges, Yamuna river system with tributaries like the Bhagirathi, Alakanda, Sharda and others and these rivers are born out of glaciers. When they pass through the mountain valleys, covered with forests, they gather water for thousands of streams before they enter the plains to become the source of life for millions of people. Gradually the rain water from the forest gets released to the rivers and the forests help to prevent soil erosion.

But large scale destruction of forests took place, despite people's protests, in the last three decades. In 1960's, a huge number of trees were cut down under a working plan. This increased the intensity of the 1970 floods in the Alakanda river which swept away 6 car bridges, 16 foot bridges, and 25 buses. Thousands of people and animals were killed. 604 houses and 500 acres of crops were destroyed in about 101 villages.³⁸

³⁷. P.R. Trivedi, Gurdeep Raj (eds), Environmental Ecology, Akashdeep Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, p.203.

³⁸. Chandi Prasad Bhatt, op.cit., p.48.

Against this exploitation and the destruction of the forests, the people of the Himalayas, waged a war. The people concerned belonged to the backward class in the Central Himalayan areas. They raised their voice, for the first time, through their organization, The Chipko Movement (the movement to hug trees to save them). They proclaimed that once their forests were taken away, their lives were lost. The undetachable link between the village life and forests operated at two levels:³⁹

(i) through the maintenance of ecological balance.

(ii) through traditional practices.

The Chipko People submitted a six point memorandum to the authorities and pledged to defend their forests even unto their death. Particularly notable was the participation of women of this region in this struggle, suggesting again that it is the women who suffer the most among the marginalised due to deforestation.

The women of Reni village in 1974 called the forests their 'mayaka' (mother's home). They warned the officials of the consequences of deforestation and declared:

This forest is our mother's home. If forest is cut, the soil will be washed away. Landslides and soil erosion will bring floods which will destroy our fields and homes, our water sources will dry up, and all other benefits we get from the forest will be finished.⁴⁰

Forests-integral part of Tribal Culture.

The Chipko movement was one of the few environmental movements

³⁹. Ibid., p.47.

⁴⁰. Ibid., p.51.

which actually managed to stop the government from anti-people policies and projects. Deforestation has triggered an adverse chain reaction on tribal economy and culture. The forest dwellers depend on forests for their food, fodder, fertilizer, construction materials, medicines and so on. Most of the traditional craft like basket weaving, and mat making are also dependent on the availability of the raw materials from forests. It is in this context that the present forest policies hinder the easy life of the tribals. For example, the increase of the reserve forests entails a decrease in the unclassified forests where the tribals have many rights. When the protected forests are turned into the reserved category, the tribals have much less access to the forest produces. Thus it eventually leads to the depletion of food resources and to the starvation of tribals, besides the climatic and ecological imbalances deforestation causes.

A study by Almas Ali reveals that average intake of food among the tribals in Phulbani and Kelahandi in Orissa is much below the standards set by the Indian Council of Medical research (ICMR). The study also gives a list of 83 edible items available in the Madhya Pradesh forests, most of which are today either scarce or have disappeared.⁴¹ Lack of availability of herbal and traditional medicines further deteriorates the health of the forest dwellers.

There are several beliefs and practices associated with the tribal life culture by which they are able to preserve the ecosystem. Philip Viegas and Geeta Menon describe some of them.⁴² For example, the concept of 'sarna' which refers to a few sq.kms of forest in which the initiation of the tribal teenagers took place. This is also considered to be a place where the spirits of their ancestors reside and is associated with the very

⁴¹. Philip Viegas and Geeta Menon, The Impact of Environmental Degradation on People, I.S.I, New Delhi, 1989, p.57.

⁴². Ibid., pp.58-64.

identity of the tribe. Therefore, no one is expected to take sickle or axe into this area.

Such practices of protecting the entire eco-system is also observed in other parts of India. The most well known among them, probably, are the 'devaranya' (God's grove) and 'nagaranya' (abode of cobras) in Karnataka and Kerala. Peepal and Mahus trees cannot be cut as they are the abodes of the tribal goddesses. So is Bel which is the abode of God Shiva and Neem which provides good health and Sahada which is supposed to prevent misunderstandings between the brides and the bridegrooms. Sal and Mahua (which are economically important trees as well) and animals like tiger of whom the number is fast decreasing, are also the totems of some of the tribes and hence they are protected. In Dhenkanal district of Orissa, the villagers appoint watchmen to protect forests from fire, thus showing their concern for the environment.

Women, among the tribals and other marginalised sections, form the most exploited section of the society. Due to the practice of the division of labour, normally women are expected to collect fuel, fodder, to fetch water and do the routine household works. In most cases these works are done over and above the normal work they do as agricultural labourers, as cultivators or as daily wage earners. Often women are forced to work for more than 16 hours a day. As Philip Viegas and Geeta Menon express the plight of women poignantly:

It is not uncommon to see pregnant women work till the last few hours before their delivery and once again resume work two three days after delivery.⁴³

The indiscriminate denudation of forests further worsens the plight of women. Due to deforestation, women are compelled to walk about 6 to 8 kms every day to fetch water and collect fuel.

⁴³. Ibid., p.68.

With scarcity of food women tend to give less food to the female members of the family to ensure that the boys and men are fed relatively adequately. Deforestation also forces men to migrate to urban areas in search of jobs. With the migration of men, women's work load is further escalated. All of this points to the fact that the destruction of forests disturbs the lives of the poor, tribals and women acutely.

SOIL AND BIO-DIVERSITY.

Desertification of fertile land in India has been identified as one of the serious ecological catastrophes today. The process of irreversible change of soil and vegetation of dry land towards aridisation leads to the destruction of biospheric potential and desertification of the land through destabilization of the delicate hydrological balance.

Official figures available tell us that between 100 million and 150 million hectares of land area in India is being fast desertified.⁴⁴ Each year, 2.5 mha, i.e. 1 per cent of India's land area gets desertified. (about 1.5 mha by deforestation and the rest by mining, water logging, soil salinisation etc.)⁴⁵

Soil Erosion.

Linked to the problem of desertification is the increasing phenomenon of soil erosion. The plant life is dependent on a fragile and thin layer of top soil. Due to poor agricultural practices and deforestation this thin layer of soil is being fast eroded. It is estimated that the amount of top soil that is eroded in six months is more than what is required to build

⁴⁴. Anil Agarwal, "Between need and greed- the wasting of India; the greening of India" in Anil Agarwal et.al (ed), op.cit., p.169.

⁴⁵. Ibid.

all the brick houses across the nation!⁴⁶

The Thar desert has an area of 31.7 mha spread over Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat. Of this, about 22.8 mha is already highly vulnerable and another 6.0 mha moderately vulnerable to desertification. It should be noted that this desert is one of the most thickly populated arid zones in the world. It is also overgrazed by livestock. Land use increased from 28 per cent in 1951 to 54 per cent in 1971, losing 25 per cent area with vegetation cover of pasture in the process.⁴⁷

Mining adds to the problem of desertification, especially in arid or semi-arid zones where restoration of the fragile ecosystem is bound to be slow. Much of the mining activity is done in the forest areas resulting in deforestation and soil erosion. Underground mining is also damaging as the timber trees are used for supporting the roofs of the mine galleries. Some of the intensive mining centres in the Central Eastern India actually lie in ecologically sensitive areas. For example, the Chota Nagpur Plateau and the Maikal range feed five major rivers. The Bharat Aluminium Company operates Bauxite mines at Amarkatak, the source of the Narmada river and the highest point in the Maikal range. One can see bald brown hills here, standing in marked contrast to the high green covers of forest in the slopes of the unmined hills.⁴⁸

In Khasi Hills in the North East India, it is found that the top soil is being washed away at the rate of 80 m tonnes per year.⁴⁹ Chirapunchi, which is about 1290 ms above sea level where once coal mining flourished, is now exhausted due to over exploitation. It is fast turning into a desert. Drinking water

⁴⁶. Joseph Putti (ed), op.cit., p.265.

⁴⁷. J. Venkateswaralu, "Ecological Crisis in Afro-eco Systems" in India's Environment: Crisis and Responses, p.97.

⁴⁸. The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.21.

⁴⁹. W.C. Khongwir, op.cit., p.21.

here is already in short supply because of deforestation. The once thick oak forests have now been denuded. Underground water pockets have disappeared and the soil has become arid and lost its nutrients. Deforestation here has also led to the destruction of the habitat of rare wild life. For example, the Hoolock apes, once abundant and only found here in India and Horn Bill bird, a rare species, are now extinct.

Commercial Agriculture and the impact of the Green Revolution.

The Russian scientist, N.I.Vavilov has identified India as one of the eight so-called countries of crop plant origin. About 166 crop species and 320 wild relatives of crops have originated in India. Arguably, India has also the world's largest diversity of livestock with some 26 breeds of cattle, 40 breeds of sheep, 20 breeds of goats, and 18 breeds of poultry. All of the world's eight buffalo breeds are also found in India.⁵⁰

But with the Green Revolution, sweeping changes have occurred in India over the last few decades. The Green Revolution promoted the so-called high yielding varieties and encouraged monoculture in place of inter-cropping and cash crops in place of the indigenous seed varieties. It also meant a heavy increase in the use of chemicals and pesticides. One could see the collaboration of the Multi-Nationals and the powerful elite ruling class in India in the so called 'Green Revolution' and its impact on the ecology and economy of the poor.

By the mid 60's, the Indian agricultural policies were geared to promote the new 'miracle seeds' in order to face the crisis of agricultural impasse. Vandana Siva exposes the real face of the Green Revolution in India in her book The Violence of the

⁵⁰. Ashish Kothari, "Reviving Biodiversity" in Seminar, 418, June, 1994, pp.46-47.

Green Revolution.⁵¹ Experts from America came to India to change the Indian agricultural research and policies from an indigenous and ecological model to an alien and 'high-tech' one. It concentrated on the 1/10 of the cultivable land and on one crop, wheat, initially. By 1965, India and Pakistan together had ordered 600 tonnes of wheat seed from Mexico. By 72-73, 16.8 million hectares were planted with dwarf wheat and 15.7 million hectares were planted with dwarf rice across the Third World.

The dwarf gene was very well suited to the technology of the Green Revolution of which the basis were intensive inputs of chemical fertilizers. This marked a shift from the indigenous perceptions of production and control of seeds, because, for centuries, the peasants and farmers in India had produced seeds on their own home land, choosing the best breeds, storing and replanting them. They used to let nature take its course in the enrichment of life. This indigenous method gave way to private property oriented production and a use of seeds, protected by patents and intellectual property rights. Peasants as natural specialists gave way to the 'expert scientists' of the MNCs. The characteristic feature of the 'High Yielding Varieties' (HYVs) is that they are highly responsive to certain inputs such as fertilizers and irrigation. The HYVs perform much worse, in fact, than the indigenous varieties, in the absence of fertilizers and irrigation. Facts and figures speak for the ill effects of the Green Revolution, illustrated so well in the case of Punjab.⁵²

The Green Revolution put much of the common lands which had been forests and pastures under agricultural crops. With the spread of the Green Revolution, grazing lands and forests were broken up for mono culture cultivation. 84 per cent of the geographical area of Punjab today is cultivated in comparison to only 42 per

⁵¹. Vandana Siva, The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics, The Other India Press, Goa, 1992, pp.12ff.

⁵². Ibid., pp.83-116.

cent of India as a whole, leaving only 4 per cent of Punjab now under forests. In addition, the new chemicals and fertilizers have destabilized the ecology and created pest outbreaks and diseases. The increasing soil erosion and degradation of land area also are the results of the new cropping patterns of the Green Revolution.

The crop lands are now constantly kept under soil depleting crops like wheat and rice instead of rotating them with soil building leguminous crops like pulse.

As Kang cautions:

This process implies a downward spiralling of agriculture land use- from legume to wheat to rice to waste land.⁵³

These facts are illustrated by the following statistics.⁵⁴

Punjab had 2,552,248 acres under jowar and 3,218,248 acres under bajra in 1982-83. These cereals occupied 41 per cent of India's food grain area in Punjab then. During this period, wheat was cultivated only in 6,734 acres and rice in 775,367 acres. 84 per cent of the areas is under rice now.

The recycling of nutrients is broken in two ways;

(a) the introduction of dwarf varieties reduces the organic material available to recycle into the soil directly or through the fodder cycle.

(b) it demands higher nutrient uptake leading to the build up of toxic chemicals in the soil and causing micro nutrient deficiencies.

⁵³. Ibid., pp.109-110.

⁵⁴. Ibid., p.110.

It affects the soil fertility very badly. The removal of pulses from the cropping pattern takes off a major source of hydrogen from the soil. Reduction of millet leads to decline in fodder and therefore farm yard manure which is essential for soil fertility.

The Second Green Revolution in Punjab.

The Green Revolution described above did not go far enough in solving the food crisis in Punjab and in other parts of India. To face this new impasse, Punjab adopted a new Green Revolution. It decided to stop concentrating on staple food altogether which was only good for the domestic markets and to go for luxury foods and cash crops aiming for export markets, thus initiating a further move in the direction of the commercialisation of agriculture. This meant a new dependence on imported 'high tech' inputs of seeds and chemicals.

The salient features of this new 'technological fix' were three-fold:⁵⁵

(i) replacing wheat and rice produced for domestic markets with fruits and vegetables for the export of processed foods.

(ii) replacing the Green Revolution technologies with new biotechnology, integrated more deeply with form chemicals as well as with the food processing.

(iii) total neglect of staple food as a primary objective of public policy.

Employing more toxic chemicals and pesticides and herbicide resistant varieties (part of bio- technology) is suicidal for Indian farmers, especially when the facts reveal that thousands of farmers die every year in India due to pesticide poisoning.

⁵⁵. Ibid., p.198.

In 1987, about 60 farmers in one of Andhra Pradesh's cotton growing areas, committed suicide by consuming pesticides because of debts incurred for pesticide purchase. Apart from killing people directly, pesticides and herbicides also kill people's sources of livelihood. For example, bathua, a vital leafy vegetable, considered to be very rich in Vitamin A, which grows as an associate of wheat has been destroyed. As bathua becomes a major competitor of wheat, it has been declared a 'weed' which is now killed by herbicides and weedicides. This is in a context in which 40,000 children go blind every year in India due to Vitamin A deficiency.

In Andhra Pradesh, an estimated 75 per cent of rice varieties has already been lost. In the North East, several varieties of sugarcane have been replaced by a single hybrid variety.⁵⁶ All these put a heavy burden on the poor. For example, the traditional paddy fields provided not only rice but also fish, frogs and other elements of bio diversity which formed vital parts of the diet of the rural communities, especially the tribals. Modern paddy fields, using fertilizers and pesticides kill these resources. All these point to the fact that the shifts from traditional agriculture to cash crops oriented commercial farming marginalises the poor and benefits only the rich. This also marks a transfer from the colonial policies to a neo-colonial agriculture system which only caters to the needs of the world markets and not to the needs of the hungry in India.

Colonialism had taken away the rights of the farmers to the land and to full participation in agricultural production. For example, the British introduced the 'landlordship' ('Zamindari system') which allowed land to be diverted from growing food to cultivating indigo and opium and to extract revenue out of it. Now, neo-colonialism, through the Green Revolution and biotechnology, and by offering technology as a substitute to nature

⁵⁶. Ashish Kothari, op.cit., p.48.

itself, bypasses the goals of equality and sustainability. As the TNCs try to gain monopoly over seeds which have been a common resource of the local communities, there is a 'seed satyagraha' initiated now in India to resist these attempts. These struggles are particularly against the emergence of the new discriminatory patent laws and intellectual property rights. Under these laws, the Third World's bio-diversity is being treated as the common heritage of the whole world, instead of being treated as the common property of the local communities. Moreover the modified bio-diversity is sold back to the Third World in the form of seeds and drugs, now, of course, priced and patented. Thus, the property rights in the area of bio-diversity pose the ultimate threat to the farmers, herbalists and the tribals. (it may be noted that the US did not sign the bio-diversity treaty at the Rio Earth Summit) As Vandana Siva argues, the Third World farmer has three types of relationship to bio-diversity.⁵⁷

- (i) The farmer is the supplier of the gemplasm to the TNCs.
- (ii) The farmer is a competitor in terms of innovations and rights to genetic resources,
- (iii) The farmer is a consumer of the technology and industrial products of the TNCs.

The patent protection of the TNCs reduces the farmer to a supplier of free raw materials and makes him/her more dependent on industrial supplies for important inputs like seeds.

The shift from staple food to cash crops has long term impacts. Thousands of rural women who make their living by making baskets and mats, using wild reeds and grasses, are divested of their livelihood as the increased use of herbicides annihilates seeds and grass. Marginalisation also occurs when there arises a

⁵⁷. Vandana Siva, "Free Trade for Whom?" in Seminar, Annual 1993, 413, Jan.1994, New Delhi, p.40.

desperate demand for cash to meet their family needs. Now that their demands can only be met by the market with money, as the traditional systems like barter system will evoke no response and respect. When large scale agriculture absorbs labour, land and resources, the subsistence agriculture which the rural women are used to, suffers from neglect. After the Green Revolution, the proportion of women among farmers in India has gone down from 45 per cent (1951) to 30 per cent (1971) while the participation of women labourers increased from 31 to 51 per cent over the same period.⁵⁸

INDUSTRIALIZATION.

'Industrialize or perish' has been the watchword of the economic development since the second Five Year Plan in India. Paradoxically enough, industrialization has turned out to be one of the most threatening factors, contributing to the environmental imbalance in India today as in other countries. Industrialization remains, among other things, one of the root causes of rapid deforestation in India. For example, the paper industry alone consumes 70 per cent of its raw materials from the forests.

India now has about 4000 chemical factories. These pose risks not only to the workers (due to insufficient security measures in most of the cases) but also to the people living near these factories and to their immediate environment on account of the pollution it causes. In 1980, 10,000 workers were injured in accidents and 100 people were killed in India.⁵⁹ At least 70 per cent of the pesticides produced here had been either banned or severely restricted in the Western countries. The findings of a WHO sponsored study which analyzed the food samples across the country found, to their astonishment, that 50 per cent were

⁵⁸. Sally Sontheimer (ed), Women and the Environment: A Reader, Earthscan Publishers Ltd. London, 1991, p.11.

⁵⁹. The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.193.

contaminated with pesticide residues, with 30 per cent exceeding permissible limits.⁶⁰

The Bhopal Tragedy.

Probably, the worst ever chemical industrial disaster has occurred in Bhopal in India. In 1984, December, the unprecedented tragedy occurred. It was caused by a massive gas Methyl-Iso-Cyanate (MIC) leakage from the Union Carbide pesticide plant, an American Multi National Company. Over 2500 people lost their lives. Apart from this heavy death toll, there are evidences of blindness, lung and respiratory illness among people, a high degree of foetus damage among pregnant women. Loss of animals, birds and insects are still not estimated.

The Union Carbide had bypassed many fundamental safety regulations. It was actually situated in an area which was declared unsuitable for the plant under the 1975 development plan. Further more, there is clear cut evidence that this MNC had been negligent in plant maintenance.

Women continue to suffer the ill effects of the gas leak. Many pregnant women either had to resort to abortions or had to give birth to deformed children. Even today, many women face uncertainties about pregnancy. A study which was undertaken in 1988 revealed that a considerable proportion of women had developed gynaecological diseases like leucorrhoea (94%), pelvic inflammatory diseases (79%) and excessive bleeding (46%). Many women had to undergo divorce lest they should conceive abnormal foetus. 65 per cent of the workers in the Bhopal slum areas experienced a drop in income ranging from 20 to 100 per cent.⁶¹ As one described it:

⁶⁰. Ibid.

⁶¹. Irene Dankelman and Joan Davidson, Women and Environment in the Third World: Alliance for the Future, Earthscan Publishers Ltd, 1993, p.98.

The Bhopal plant is the symbol of India's fascination with High Technology and Green Revolution.⁶²

Thermal plants also account for a major share of environmental degradation in India. South Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh is being fast 'developed' as the power base in India. Against the current production of 23,000 MW for the whole country, the area alone is being geared to produce 10,00 MW of power from its thermal stations.⁶³ Being a tribal belt, these industrial thermal units are set to disturb the tribal life, destroy the forests, cause soil erosion, air and water pollution.

A proposed thermal plant at Kayamkulam in Kerala, will have serious ecological consequences. It relies on coal from mines in Orissa. Although the coal is cheap, its ash content is supposed to be very high, about 50 per cent. This thermal plant will burn about 1000 tones of coal per day, producing about 500 tonnes every year. All of this ash will be dumped into low lying fields nearby which are prone to flooding during the monsoon seasons. The following are some of the grave risks this plant will offer;⁶⁴

(a) with 1000 tones of coal being burned every day, the atmospheric temperature will increase considerably.

(b) the air within 25 Kms radius of the plant will be polluted by dust and smoke. Strong winds here will spread the pollutants widely.

⁶². The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.193.

⁶³. C.S. Kumar and A.K. Singh, "Environment, Development, and Poverty in South Mirzapur Region" in B.P. Chaurasia (ed), Environment Degradation and Global Awakening, Chugh Publishers, Allehabad, 1993, p.19.

⁶⁴. John T. Fernandes, "Jeevante Nilanilpinu Haritha Rashtreeyam" (Malayalam) in M. Kurien (ed), Paristhithi: Sabhayude Dharmam. (Malayalam) ("Ecology: Responsibility of the Church"), A Kerala Council of Churches Publication, Kottayam, 1990, p.75.

(c) the pollution will affect the plant and animal life of the area. This is going to be a growing threat, as small scale factories like Titanium factory have already contributed to the pollution of the area.

(d) The leachate contained in the ash pollutes the soil and the under ground water. It could even cause radiation.

Above all, growing industrialization leads to a phenomenon which is a very serious concern in India today - urbanization. People, especially the rural poor tend to migrate to the urban cities in search of work. This, besides putting pressure on the rural women who are left behind by their men, also further endangers the already worsening environment of the urban cities in India.

THE ENERGY SCENARIO.

Energy plays a vital role in the process of human development because all developmental activities require energy. There are different kinds of sources of energy, namely the renewable energy sources like solar, wind, geo-thermal or the non-renewable sources such as gas, coal and oil. Since energy is a vital input in the process of production, a crisis of energy for development becomes a vital issue in the Third World. Much more important is the crisis of energy for survival in these countries with the poor facing difficulties in meeting their basic needs like food, clothing and shelter. India, one of the less developed countries, also faces this crisis of energy for development and survival.

India is essentially an agricultural country. About 70 per cent of its Gross National Product (G.N.P.) comes from the rural sector. 70 to 80 per cent of its population lives in the rural sector which comprises of more than 500,000 villages. However, hardly 15 per cent of it is electrified. This is just one aspect of the growing disparity between the rural and the urban energy sectors. The vast majority of the rural poor still depends on

the biomass source, mainly firewood, agricultural waste and dung cakes. Drinking water is still carried in pots by rural women, walking long distances and lifting it manually. They still rely on kerosine oil for lighting. Commercial energy in the form of electricity, L.P.G. and Petroleum play only a minor role in the life of the poor villagers. On the average, non-commercial energy contributes about half of the total energy in the developing world.⁶⁵

Biomass being the main source of energy for the vast majority of the poor, industrialization and other large developmental projects that cause large scale deforestation, prove to be the greatest threat to the survival of the poor in India. The shortage of wood and the subsequent price rise of wood hit the poor hard. For example, besides the difficulties that it causes for cooking, the craftsmen (tribals) in South India find it difficult to make toys profitably or for the Karnataka villagers to buy new bullock carts. According to a survey, the urban Indians purchase 14 to 20 million tonnes of firewood every year. This is worth Rs.500 crore which is more than the money the government spent on afforestation in 30 years, that is between 1950 and 1980.⁶⁶ The urban poor are thus made to suffer from high price of firewood and are forced to spend about 20 per cent of their meagre income just on it.

Neglecting the traditional sources of energy, India still carries on with non-conventional sources like thermal power and nuclear power, overlooking the social and the environmental costs. 30 to 40 per cent of natural gas is being wasted away every year, which if saved and used, can save huge amounts of public money, especially when natural gas like oil happens to be a rare commodity in India.

⁶⁵. Jose Goldenberg et.al (eds), Energy For A Sustainable World, Wiley Eastern Limited, New Delhi, 1988, p.197.

⁶⁶. The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., pp. 165-266.

India may have about 83 billion tonnes of coal resources. 26 million tonnes have already been proven.⁶⁷ But it has fairly large ash content and also that its geographical distribution is quite uneven. The ecological consequences of using coal, especially in thermal plants in terms of contributing perhaps to Global Warming and pollution is startling.

As far as oil is concerned, India has very limited sources. India imports about 17 million tonnes of oil from South Africa and the Middle East.⁶⁸ The existing oil resources in India are expected to be exhausted by 2010 A.D.⁶⁹ Oil and gas have the same environmental hazards as those of coal, although the former ones are less pollutive than the latter.

Nuclear energy has in fact made a rather late start in India. India has about 52,000 tonnes of thorium.⁷⁰ Paradoxically enough, India has not developed the thorium cycle in nuclear technology and instead continues to rely on imported uranium. Nuclear power accounts for hardly 3 per cent of power generated in India. While sharing the ecological disadvantages with other non-conventional sources of energy, nuclear energy possesses the additional threat of pollution due to radiation as happened at Chernobyl.

POPULATION.

Closely related to the question of energy is the issue of population. Increasing population all over the world is a matter

⁶⁷. V. G. Bhide, "Energy For Rural India" in Sharma, K.D. and Qureshi, M.A. (eds), Alternative Technology, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, 1979, p.93.

⁶⁸. Ibid.

⁶⁹. Indian Express, (Bangalore), March, 1990, p.7.

⁷⁰. Raja Ramanna, "Inevitability of Atomic Power In Indian Power Programme" in R.K. Pachuri(ed), Energy Policy For India: An Independent Policy, Macmillan Company of India Ltd, Delhi, 1980, p.224.

of grave concern, especially in the developing countries. The issue is all the more serious in India. It is estimated that every human being requires food equivalent between 2000 and 3000 kilo calorie per day. India's population is set to double from that of 1971 by the year 2000.⁷¹ This will naturally increase a demand in food production. Thus a population problem is also a problem related to energy and hence an environmental issue as well.

The facts about India's growing population is a matter of serious concern. It is estimated that by the year 2010, one out of every seven people in the world would be an Indian.⁷² The population of India has increased from 350 million in 1951 to 658 million in 1958. The present population in India is about 850 million.⁷³ But along with this population increase, the food production has not kept pace. Moreover, the land and the non-renewable sources are finite as well. Hence, in order to have a development which is truly sustainable, the population growth needs to be related to the resource base in India, as these additional people will require housing, transportation, communication, and industrial products which all require energy in large quantities. It is also to be noted that every finite eco-system has a certain carrying capacity and the earth is no exception to this rule. Figures vary as to earth's carrying capacity for human beings from 500 million to 12 to 14 billion.⁷⁴ There is supposed to be a time lag of 60 to 70 years after birth rates drop and equal death rates and when the population is controlled steadily. Because tomorrow's mothers are already here today, population growth will not cease with parents opting only for two children. It is because the population growth is not easy to control, all countries should

⁷¹. Russel Mills and Arun.N. Toke, Energy, Economics, and the Environment, New Jersey, 1985, p.339.

⁷². Joseph Putti (ed), op.cit., p.271.

⁷³. T.N. Khoshoo, op.cit., p.8.

⁷⁴. Russel Mills and Arun N. Toke, op.cit., p.341.

do something urgent now so that at least the later generations will find the earth a better place to inhabit.

The traditional argument against the need to curb population growth is that it is not the number of people which is the problem in the Third World, but the unequal distribution of resources among them. The reason given, per se, is absolutely true. The Malthusian economic argument that population growth is a major cause of poverty, is irrelevant in the Third World contexts because it confuses consequences with causes.⁷⁵ This purely economic reading of the direct link between overpopulation and decline in economic growth is as yet unproven. But it does not mean that the present level of population growth can, in any way, be sustainable. As the population issue is also an ecological problem, not just a social issue, it cannot be approached from a purely economic perspective, as the capitalists and the orthodox left tend to view it. Representing the capitalists, the US delegate James Buckley at the Cairo Conference on "Population and Development" suggested that population will stabilize if free trade and market forces are allowed to rein freely. This exclusively economic argument and its subsequent model of 'development' vis-a-vis large scale industrialization has been a cause of poverty in the Third World, and not its solution. This approach also comfortably overlooks the unjust structures of exploitation that exist in the Third World and seeks to maintain the existing unjust status-quo. On the other hand, the Marxist structuralist's views on population growth is equally misleading. Its traditional position that once 'real development' is achieved for the working class, then population will automatically decrease is far from convincing. This can be seen as the flipside of the capitalist argument, as the Marxists also consider large scale industrialization and economic progress as key to 'economic development'. Both models are anti-

⁷⁵. Tom Hewitt and Ines Smyth, "Is the World Overpopulated?" in Tim Allen and Alan Thomas (eds), Poverty and Development in the 1990s, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.95.

environmental and hence "anti-development", seen from the perspective of sustainable development, as both the systems resort to unlimited exploitation of natural resources for 'development'. As the connection between ecological hazards and social injustices like poverty is now fairly well established and as poverty and social inequality are today rightly viewed as both the cause and the effect of environmental degradation, the population issue needs to be approached from an integrated perspective which combines the social, economic and the ecological perspectives.

By the end of this century, India's population is set to reach the one billion mark. Food for all will be an even more serious issue than it is today. India produced about 180 million food products last year. Even then about 230 million still live under poverty line. Against this background, it is astonishing to note that India has yet to formulate a population policy. A draft policy which is prepared is yet to be debated and is expected to take more time before it is introduced in the Parliament.

It is true that affluent societies bear a large share of responsibility for making the population problem a global one. Although the developed countries have achieved dramatic decline in birth rate, their continued wasteful production and consumption patterns threaten the common environment which worsens the problems facing the less developed and developing countries. This seems to demand that the rich nations adopt more just strategies and introduce a process of 're-development'.⁷⁶

Summary.

The analysis of the Indian ecological scenario here has sought to establish the crucial fact that the most marginalised sections of the society, the tribals, dalits, and their womenfolk, form the real victims of ecological hazards in India.

⁷⁶. Paul Abrecht (ed), Faith, Science and the Future, Church and Society, W.C.C. Geneva, 1979, p.155.

The mega 'developmental' projects like huge dam projects (for example; the Sardar Sarovar project), Nuclear projects (like Kaiga power plant), apart from causing deforestation and other ecological problems like pollution, also uproot the culture and threaten the very survival of the indigenous communities. The neo-colonial elements in these projects in the form of the involvement of the IMF and the World Bank are also evident. The victimization of the vulnerable sections of the Indian society has been manifested in the popular people's movements such as the Chipko movement (basically a tribal women's movement to protect their forests). The impact of commercial agriculture (often called 'the Green Revolution') on the fertility of the indigenous soil is also a matter of grave concern. The Bhopal tragedy clearly and tellingly exhibited the real cruel face of 'industrialism' at the expense of the workers and their environment. The energy scenario in India also needs careful attention as the tendency today seems to be characterised by an overreliance on the conventional non-renewable energy resources like nuclear, thermal, and oil which are also ecologically unfriendly. In their place, it is argued that India must turn to renewable resources like biomass, solar, wind, tidal, and small scale hydel projects. Population is yet another serious environmental problem India faces today. Although it is unwise to attribute all social and economic problems in India (or in the Third World, for that matter) to the growing population, it is also vitally important to realize that population growth in India at the current pace cannot simply go on, as the carrying capacity of earth is limited. Hence the struggles for social justice and strategies for population control must go together, as uncontrollable population growth would put increasing pressure on the environment for resources for the growing population.

PART. 2.

**THE FAILURE OF LIBERATION THEOLOGIES IN
RESPONDING TO ECOLOGICAL CHALLENGES.**

**CHAPTER 3. IS 'EXODUS' AS THE PARADIGM SUFFICIENTLY EXPLORED
IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY?**

INTRODUCTION.

In Chapter 1, we have seen that the Latin American liberation theology has had a powerful impact and influence on the theological scene in India. Hence, in an effort to work out an integral ecotheology relevant for India, this chapter looks at the inadequacies of Latin American liberation theology in dealing with the environmental concerns of today. This section pays particular attention to the hermeneutics of liberation theology, bringing out the insufficiency of liberation theology's interpretation of its central paradigm, the exodus event.

Latin American liberation theology (hereafter referred to as liberation theology) provided a new way of reading or re-reading the Scripture, that is, reading the Scripture from the perspective of the poor and the oppressed. The Latin American Christians reflected their own life situations and experiences in the biblical mirror. The new methodology of 'experience-text-experience' later came to be known as the 'hermeneutical circle'. It was Juan Luis Segundo who developed this theme in greater conceptual detail. According to Segundo:

the hermeneutical circle is the continuing change in our interpretation of the Bible which is dictated by continuing change in our present day reality, both individual and societal... the circular nature of the interpretation stems from the fact that each new reality obliges us to interpret the word of God afresh, to change reality accordingly and then go back and to re-interpret the word of God again and so on.¹

¹. Juan Luis, Segundo, The Liberation Theology, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1977, p.8.

Unless our interpretation of the Scripture changes with the problems, the problems remain untouched or will receive some old and conservative treatment which is even worse. The 'hermeneutic circle' provides theology with a 'here and now' criterion for judging the societal situations. Here the two basic pre-conditions are;²

(i) profound and enriching questions and doubts about our new situations.

(ii) a new interpretation of the Bible that is equally profound and enriching.

It was as a result of this new way of reading the Bible that liberation theologians found the relevance of the exodus event in the Latin American context.

THE EXODUS- THE PARADIGM OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY.

When the grass root basic Christian communities (C.E.Bs) began to look at the Bible through their own eyes, the account which caught their attention most was the exodus story. Hence Gustavo Gutiérrez wrote:

the exodus experience is paradigmatic. It remains vital and contemporary due to similar historic experiences which the people of God undergo, (because), the exodus is the long march towards the Promised Land in which Israel can establish a society free from misery and alienation. Throughout the whole process, the religious event is not set apart.³

Enrique Dussel explains what liberation theologians mean by

². Ibid., p.9.

³. Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, S.C.M.Press. Ltd, London, 1988, pp.89-90.

'paradigm':

By 'paradigm', we mean the generative matrix or 'schema'...., the structure which forms fundamental categories...originates a fixed number of relations which become generative, not only of a theology, but also of the every day hermeneutic of the Christian people's faith.⁴

The 'categories' in the exodus paradigm are the following:⁵

- (i) Egypt/ the Pharaonic class, the dominators, the sinners.
- (ii) the slaves, the exploited, the just.
- (iii) the prophet, Moses.
- (iv) the God who listens and converts.
- (v) the passage through the desert, the passover, and the trials.
- (vi) the Promised Land.

This enabled the Latin American Christians to see themselves as the journeying Church or as a movement from a state of oppression (Egypt) to a state of freedom and liberation (the promised land). The focus of liberation theology is on a historical God who hears the cry of the oppressed, who intervenes in history to identify with and to liberate the poor from the yokes of oppression. Hence they draw enormous amount

⁴. Enrique Dussel, "Exodus as a paradigm in liberation theology" in Concilium, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, Feb.1987, p.84.

⁵. Ibid., pp.85-86.

of inspiration from passages like Ex.3:8.⁶ The influence of the exodus story can be noted in a critique which a group of bishops in Brazil made against the military dictatorship in 1973. The particular pastoral letter was entitled "I have heard the cry of my people"-an echo of the exodus account- and thus framed the message with the exodus motif.

Describing the model of 'correspondence of terms' vis-a-vis the hermeneutic circle, Clodovis Boff pictures the exodus event in relation to the Latin American context graphically, as follows,⁷

Exodus	= (theology of) liberation.
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Enslavement of the Hebrews.	oppression of people.

Thus the Latin American Christians found parallel historical situations in the Bible which gave them a biblically founded vision to move forward towards their liberation. As Philip Berryman puts it:

the exodus is not simply an event, but a pattern of deliverance that provides a key to interpreting the present experience.⁸

The exodus, thus, has become the paradigm for the Latin American liberation theology-a model of salvation in liberation theology. With the socio-political dimensions of the exodus event,

⁶. "Then the LORD said, "I have heard the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their task masters. Indeed I know their suffering and I have come down to deliver them...and the Jebusites". (Ex.3:7-8)

⁷. Clodovis Boff, Theology and Praxis, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1987, p.143.

⁸. Philip Berrymann, Liberation Theology, Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond, I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, London, 1987, p.50.

liberation theology hopes to transcend the sacred-profane distinction, characteristic of traditional theologies. According to Alfredo Fierro, a Spanish theologian, the exodus was nothing less than a liberative revolution in its strict sense - a rebellious struggle against imperialism. The theological significance of this struggle is that it is carried out under the inspiration of faith. More importantly, it brought into existence a nation of a people-the Israelites-who began to serve as the bearer of God's promises. This leads Fierro to say:

Either theology is an Exodus theology or it is not Christian at all.⁹

Norman Gottwald offers a critique of liberation theology's lack of precision in biblical exegesis, especially of the exodus account. This critique is very important for an integral ecotheology, for a synthesis of socio-political liberation and ecological concerns. It may be noted here that the aim of this critique is not to see whether a political form of liberation is biblical on the basis of the exodus event, as there have already been many studies on this. Rather the focus here is to bring out the limitations of liberation theology's perception of political liberation in its neglect of ecological dimensions due to its confinement of liberation to a partial view of the exodus tradition, i.e. the exodus as merely the deliverance from Egypt without linking it with the related themes of the covenant and the settlement in Canaan.

First, though, a summary of what Gottwald has to say on the exegesis of liberation theology on the biblical exodus account.¹⁰ In liberation theology, the exodus event is taken to

⁹. Alfredo Fierro, "Exodus event and interpretation in political theologies" in Norman K. Gottwald (ed), The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1983, p.476.

¹⁰. Norman K. Gottwald, "The exodus as event and process. A Test case in the Biblical grounding of liberation theology" in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (eds), The Future of Liberation

be a political event of liberation of Israel from the yoke of Pharaoh. Gutiérrez himself makes it clear in the following words:

The liberation of Israel is a political action. It is a breaking away from...experiences which people of God undergo.¹¹

Dussel also airs the same perception.¹²

First of all, it should be noted that the exodus event can be seen in different ways. It may be understood as an event or as a series of events or as a process.

As an event, in its limited sense of the term, it can refer to the exit of the Israelites from Egypt in their crossing of the sea. In its wider and comprehensive meaning, it could point to the whole complex of events described in the book of Exodus; from the oppression in Egypt to the giving of the law at Sinai and even beyond to encompass the events narrated in the book of Numbers through Joshua as far as the relocation of the Israelites in Canaan.

As a process, however, it refers typologically, to the movement of a people from a state of oppression to a situation of liberation; from a collective life determined by others to a state of self-determination. This movement is seen as involving risks and uncertainties as consequences of the process of venturing to usher in freedom and liberation. This entails the possibility of actuality of socio-political revolution.

Theology: Essays in Honour of Gustavo Gutiérrez, Orbis, Maryknoll, 1989, pp.253-158.

¹¹. Ibid., p.250.

¹². "The liberation of Israel is a political action. It is the breaking away from a situation of despoliation and misery and the beginning of the construction of a just and practical society..." in Enrique Dussel, op.cit., p.86.

Liberation theology seems to have adopted this view of the biblical exodus, that is exodus as a historical event where God acts in history decisively on behalf of the poor. Alfredo Fierro who is a critic of liberation theology's shallowness of biblical exegesis himself, airs the same view when he says:

The Exodus, by contrast, is a matter of fact, not a key for representation and interpretation. It must be considered in terms of its historical reality [emphasis mine] before one attempts to speculate on its symbolic import.¹³

First of all, it has to be said that the historicity of the exodus events cannot be proven beyond doubt. These events are set forth in the Bible in a mixture of literary genres.

The extent to which we can locate 'historical events' within this melange of mythico-symbolic origin is a matter of dispute.¹⁴

It can be said in addition that the exodus event cannot be seen as a single cohesive unit, according to historiographic conventions. As biblical scholars warn, the book of Exodus cannot be read as if it was meant primarily to be a historical record. It is, rather, as J.P.Hyatt puts it:

...a deposit of Israelite's traditions which were developed and transmitted over a long period of time, beginning before the Yahwist lived ...and going down to the date of P, perhaps in the fifth century.¹⁵

¹³. Alfredo Fierro, op.cit., p.477.

¹⁴. Norman K.Gottwald, "The exodus as event and process...", op.cit., p.253.

¹⁵. J.P. Hyatt, The New Century Bible Commentary. Exodus, Marshall, Morgan, and Scott Publishers Ltd, London, 1980, p.37.

It is, in other words, the record of the faith of Israel concerning the period of the exodus from Egypt. The Exodus is, therefore, not a history of Israel in any strict sense. It is a delineation of the meaning of the history for the people of Israel- an interpretation of its faith or:

It is also a significant exposition of a remembered [emphasis mine] history and of the faith that culminated in the ideas it contains.¹⁶

In any case, for liberation theology, it is not the historical veracity of the exodus events what matters, but the scope of the exodus event for a liberative hermeneutics. In the words of Jose Croatto:

The exodus event... it does not matter how much of what is related actually 'happened'...released and releases meaning to the extent that it enters into a process of hermeneutical circularity with socio-historical practice.¹⁷

According to Croatto, the dynamic way in which the exodus theme is expressed over and over in the Bible illustrates the fact that it is the meaning of the exodus rather than the historicity of the event which is of paramount import. This, then, is the norm of liberative hermeneutics of the exodus.

However, there is a definite truth in the claim that the exodus is a 'fact of history', in its literary and theological sense, in that the whole Jewish faith is centred around this event.

¹⁶. J. Coert Rylaarsdam, in George Arthur Buttrick (ed), The Interpreter's Bible, Vol.1, Abingdon Press, New York, 1952, p.836.

¹⁷. José Severino Croatto, "The Socio-historical and Hermeneutical Relevance of the Exodus" in Concilium, op.cit., p.126.

According to Gottwald, there are four different horizons in the exodus narrative¹⁸ of which two horizons are very important here for our purpose. One of them portrays the exodus as a socio-political event. Yahwist (J) and Elohist (E) accounts present the exodus as a revolutionary movement of the people of Israel, moving towards freedom. There are even images of militant revolution such as 'holy war'.¹⁹ But this is not the whole story. The Priestly (P) version gives an entirely different picture altogether. The emphasis of the P account is on the religious and the cultural nature of the community in this movement rather than on the socio-political nature. In the words of Gottwald:

The measured narratives of P, together with its great corpus of ritual law, give the picture of a worshipping community going forth in religious procession, a kind of 'Salvation Army' on the march.²⁰

It is not so much the 'national state' or the political dimension of the Israelite movement which is highlighted in the

¹⁸. Norman K. Gottwald, "The exodus as event and process...", op.cit., pp.254-256.

(i) that of the hypothetical participants in the events reports.

(ii) that of the Israelite social revolutionaries and the religious confederates in the highlands of Canaan in the twelfth and eleventh centuries.

(iii) that of the Israelite traditionalists in monarchic times who conceive Israel of the Exodus experience as an essentially national entity in transit toward its secure establishment as a state of Canaan.

(iv) that of the late exilic and post-exilic restorers of Judah as a religious and cultural community that had lost its political independence.

¹⁹. "The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to keep still". (Ex.14:14) Other references include Ex.15:1-12; 13:18 etc.

²⁰. Norman Gottwald, "The exodus as event and process...", op.cit., p.258.

P narrative. Rather, it is more a law abiding community of Jewish believers that is more focused in the P account. The community is not defined by the territorial or political structures, but by a set of religious and ethical norms and practices that are clearly set out in the Torah, revealed during the exodus march to the promised land. As Gottwald sums up:

Where as in all the preceding horizons (J and E) the political dimension of the exodus is very clearly present or presupposed, for P, it recedes into the background in favour of a delineation of a religious and cultural perspective.²¹

There are some important insights in this critique of Gottwald. There is a real sense in which liberation theology can see the exodus as a model for socio-political liberation, as in the J and E accounts. But to view the exodus event also from the perspective of the P account in such a way that it complements the perspective of J and E, is to open up new vistas for an integral ecotheology. Taking the P account seriously would also mean taking up seriously the covenant which God made with the people at Sinai, on their journey towards liberation. One of the important laws covered in the covenant on the exodus road is the sabbath linked to the institution of the jubilee year, which integrates the concerns of the poor (preferential option for the poor) and concern for the land and nature (preferential option for life). By complementing the J and E thrusts on socio-political aspects of liberation (which is already taken up by liberation theology) with the Priestly stress on the covenant which includes ecological concerns as well as in the sabbath and the jubilee institutions, an integral ecotheological framework can be established.

Gregory Baum also considers this alternative reading of the exodus as an important breakthrough. This reading focuses not

²¹. Ibid.

only on the political dimensions of the exodus events, but also on the cultural and religious (cultic) aspects. Appreciating liberation theology's political reading of the exodus account, Baum also expresses the following concern:

There is, however, another reading of the exodus story; one that emphasised the long march through the desert, the new Law given to the people...what went on the desert was spiritual transformation.²²

In other words, to see the exodus event in a comprehensive manner which is not confined to the act of liberation from Egypt, but encompasses the giving of the law at Sinai (the covenant tradition) and also the events leading to the final relocation of the exodus people in the promised land, can open up new ways of interpreting the exodus tradition. As has happened in the biblical tradition, liberation theology also has separated the exodus event from the Sinai themes or the covenant. It is not only that Yahweh delivered the people from Egypt but also that he made a covenant with them.

According to Gottwald, it is quite possible that the Levites brought only the exodus-settlement themes with them when they entered Canaan. It would have been some other member(s) of the United Israel who introduced the Sinai theme or the covenant and the law, either separately or in combination. The separation of the exodus- settlement (history) tradition from the theophany-covenant-law (Sinai) traditions, according to Gottwald, was:

not a separation based on two entirely different conceptual worlds and two entirely different festival programs but rather a separation based on a difference of function...within one ideologically and

²². Gregory Baum, "Exodus Politics" in Concilium, op.cit., p.113.

cohesive schedule of festivals.²³

In other words, the cultic element is the unifying force of these two traditions. The aim of the Sinai tradition (covenant-law) was to bring the community into direct relation with the sacred realm through divine instructions and to establish the basis of the corporate life by affirming the values and norms for day to day life. To put it in other words:

the historical themes were what the people understood about Yahweh's activity in their previous experience, whereas the theophany-covenant-law modal actions were what the people did in Yahweh's presence to conform themselves to his sovereignty.²⁴

Seen in this way, it is clear that the two themes of the exodus and the covenant cannot be separated from each other except in a proximate functional way. Ideologically, Gottwald maintains that the Sinai tradition formed the encompassing cultic-ideological substructure and the historic themes (exodus-settlement) were the elaborated superstructure within it. In other words, the exodus broadened and rationalised the outlook of a community already (re)established by the covenant traditions. All of this makes it clear that the 'historic' traditions such as the exodus and the settlement should not be looked at in isolation from the covenant tradition, which, in fact, is the unifying force.

Walter Brueggemann also agrees with the above line of Gottwald. According to Brueggemann, research on the social unit of early Israel provides a way by which more emphasis can be placed on the covenant tradition as an ideology and as a form of social

²³. Norman Gottwald, The Tribes Of Yahweh. A Sociology of Religion of Liberated Israel. 1250-1050 B.C.E., S.C.M.Press, London, 1979, p.90.

²⁴. Ibid., p.98.

organization. Unfortunately, most of the studies done on the covenant themes have been from a literary form-critical perspective rather than from a sociological point of view. The covenant, approached from a sociological point of view, holds Brueggemann, provides ground for:

a systematic, ethically and religiously based conscious rejection of many cultural traits of the late Bronze Age urban and imperial culture.²⁵

Hence Brueggemann concludes that the covenant themes are more politically radical and historically pertinent to early Israel than has often been recognized, as it provides a political novum in history and a radical break with the urban culture. The following discussion on the covenant, focusing on the account of the tabernacle, the sabbath and the jubilee against today's ecological context, attempts to establish precisely the same view which would be a pointer for liberation theology to integrate the 'historical' exodus theme with the radical covenant theme.

THE TABERNACLE: THE PRIESTLY WRITER'S ENVIRONMENTALISM.

Eric E. Elnes brings out the ecological thrusts of the P account, especially its account of the tabernacle construction.²⁶ In his view, there is no dichotomy between humanity and nature or between the social and the natural in Hebrew thinking. And this interrelation comes out quite clearly in the P account of the creation of the tabernacle, described in Ex.25:31 and 35-40.

According to Elnes, one can note that P's overall composition begins with the creation of the universe and reaches its climax

²⁵. Walter Brueggemann, "Trajectories in Old Testament Literature and the Sociology of Ancient Israel" in Norman K. Gottwald (ed), The Bible and Liberation, op.cit., p.311.

²⁶. Eric E. Elnes, "Creation and Tabernacle: The Priestly Writer's Environmentalism" in Horizons, vol.16, No.2, pp.144-153.

with the creation of the tabernacle. It is interesting to note the parallels that exist between the P account of Moses's construction of the tabernacle (Ex.24:15-18) and the creation account in Genesis, especially in terms of its seven-day scheme of creation. God's glory ('kabod') covers mount Sinai for six days and on the seventh day, God calls Moses to the clouds to reveal Himself. God's commands to Moses regarding the construction of the tabernacle also have a seven fold structure. The divine instructions are divided into seven segments, each introduced by the formula "And LORD spoke and said to Moses". The first six commands (speeches) concerning the actual construction of the sanctuary correspond to the six days of creation. The seventh speech, which is a command to observe the sabbath, reminds us of the day of God's rest (creation's as well), after the act of creation. Actually the reason given to observe the sabbath, according to the seventh speech, refers back to the creation account.²⁷

The parallels do not end here. The tabernacle, constructed by Moses is dedicated on the first day of the first month. This reminds us of the first day of creation and the day in which the waters began to abate from the flood:

Thus it is linked both to the creation of the world and its preservation.²⁸

The P writer has formulated the first creation account in the Bible in such a way to show that God allows the natural order itself to enjoy some degree of autonomy. God commands nature to participate in the process of creation. The tabernacle, like the earth's vegetation and animal life, is not created out of nothing ('creatio ex nihilo') by the word of God. According to P, God's creating activity is done through intermediaries (here

²⁷. "It is a sign forever for me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed". (Ex.31:17)

²⁸. Ibid., p.149.

Moses, in the construction of the tabernacle) who carry out God's commands to create. They are also dependent upon and related to other entities within the network of creation. Abundant productivity is the result of such co-operative efforts.

In the tabernacle account, human beings are functionally differentiated and are highly interdependent. Empowered by God, they empower each other in a creation process. The tabernacle is, thus, the product of human interaction. Nature and culture sprung from this fertile ground. The negative prospect of this theology is that when this interaction is lost, nature and culture can/will be disrupted. The P account illustrates this dangerous prospect with its account of the flood where the earth is destroyed through the distortion and break down of human interrelationships. Hence the relevance of the P theology, which as Elnes puts it as following, also serves as a message for liberation theology:

According to P, the social and ecological spheres are bound together in a vast web of relationships that must be considered together...Environmentalism and social justice may be more clearly linked than is often recognised... Seen from this angle, our concern for the poor may not be far removed from our concern for the air, the waters, and flora and fauna which inhabit the earth alongside us. If either are neglected, both will suffer. Such is the way of nature and culture, according to P.²⁹

This is the message of the institutions of sabbath and jubilee. The environmental message of the festival of 'sukkot' (tabernacle) is brought out also by Jonathan Sacks.³⁰

²⁹. Ibid., p.153.

³⁰. Jonathan Sacks, Faith in the Future, Darton, Longman and Todd, London, 1995, pp.152-154.

According to him, no other Jewish festival brings out more clearly the closeness of nature to humanity than Sukkot does. It is more than living in the tabernacle which exposes humanity to nature. The ritual of 'sukkot' or 'the four kinds' is also very significant ecologically. According to the Torah, people are commanded to take with them 'the fruit of the goodly tree', branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook. Then they shall rejoice before the Lord for seven days. (Lev.23:40) The fruits of nature are an integral part of the synagogue service. During the Hallel (the psalms of praise), people hold these fruits and branches of trees and wave them, as they move around the synagogue. The participation of nature in the worship of its creator comes out in this festival. It is also reminiscent of the ecological significance of the palm sunday service in the Christian tradition.

SABBATH.

There is a strong case for relating the exodus to sabbath in the Bible. Moltmann, in his book, God in Creation, has pointed out this. The Deuteronomic version (Ch.5:15) gives the exodus tradition as the reason for keeping the sabbath.³¹ This is also expressed in Ex.20:11.³²

This Deuteronomy passage uses the verb 'observe' instead of a mere 'remember' in the exodus text, thus bringing out the importance of keeping the sabbath.

The sabbath day is considered to be a day of cessation from labour which eventually became a day of religious observance.

³¹. "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD your God brought you from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day". (Dt.5:15)

³². "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it". (Ex.20:11)

The origin of the concept of the sabbath is still a matter of debate. According to von Rad, from the perspective of the history of religion, it seems to fall into the category of *dies nefasti*, the 'days of taboo' during which people refrained from important tasks, as these days stood under baneful influences. There may also be a connection with the Babylonian 'sapattu', the fifteenth day of the month - the day of the full moon. The Israelite's observance of the sabbath as the day of full moon is not proven. All that remains of the sabbath in Israel is that it is a day of rest, assigned by God. Although it was not considered to be part of the festivals, the sabbath later became a 'status confessionis' and was regarded as a 'sign of covenant'.³³

Ex.31:10-13 presents the sabbath as a 'perpetual covenant' and connects it with the Priestly idea of Yahweh's resting after six days of creation. This is the first instance where P sets down a commandment to observe the sabbath, although P has already spoken of its observance in the account of the gathering of manna. (Ex.16:22-26).

According to Jonathan Sacks, the Hebrew Bible considers the sabbath as educating the people about environmental responsibility. First and foremost, the sabbath reminds us of the truth that this world is a creation and that in the ultimate sense it belongs to God, and we can only be guardians of the universe. Sabbath, in other words, is a day of environmental awareness. But Sacks' exposition of the sabbath in terms of human responsibility towards nature today is not only misleading, but also bears the hallmarks of capitalist ethics. He writes on the meaning and implications of sabbath:

One day in seven we must renounce our mastery over nature and the animals, and see the earth not as something to be manipulated and exploited, but as

³³. Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology, Vol.1, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh and London, 1962, p.84.

something of independent dignity and beauty.³⁴

It seems to follow that human beings are justified in exercising their 'mastery' and exploit nature on six days a week, as long as they refrain from it on the seventh day. The meaning of the sabbath has to be understood beyond that because the sabbath is not simply a day of rest. It is, as already noted, related to the event of creation. It was an ordinance instituted and exemplified by God. As Moltmann argues, it is not simply a day of rest after six days of work, rather the whole work of creation was performed for the sake of the sabbath- or it is the feast of creation, as Franz Rosenzweig puts it.³⁵ The completion of God's creation consists in God's rest ('menuha') through which God brings sanctification and blessing. After creation God comes to 'himself', not without creation but with it. Thus, God's rest becomes creation's rest as well. The creation shares the joy of the Creator. Therefore, God not only creates creation but also allows the creation to co-exist with God. This means that God's revelation is not only through creative activity (one might think of liberation theology's obsession with the historic intervention of God in this connection) but also that God's revelation can be felt even in God's rest. Moltmann links this also with redemption and salvation. The sabbath as the completion of creation and as the revelation of God's co-existence in creation points beyond the sabbath itself, namely to a future in which God's creation and his revelation will be united. This is redemption. Therefore, Moltmann says, redemption is both 'eternal sabbath' and 'new creation'.³⁶ which is not only for human beings but also for the entire creation, as the sabbatical year and the jubilee year point out. From this perspective he calls the sabbath the 'divine ecology'. Humanity is not strictly the 'crown of

³⁴. Jonathan Sacks, op.cit., p.136.

³⁵. Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, The Gifford Lectures 1984-1985, London, 1985, p.277.

³⁶. Ibid., p.289.

creation', but the 'divine sabbath' is. In other words, humanity along with the rest of creation is 'crowned' and sanctified by the sabbath. Thus, it can be said that the sabbath rules are 'life-centric' rather than 'anthropocentric'.

Ex.23:10-13 clearly brings out this life-centric ethics. Here, mercy is shown not only for the poor but for the 'beasts' as well. The sabbath exists for the benefit of the ox and the ass.³⁷ According to Coert Rylaarsdm, the concern even for the beasts here shows that the famous final words of the book of Jonah³⁸ were not unique and remind one of the inclusion of the cattle in the historic scene at Bethlehem. The integral bond between humanity, especially the poor and nature is well brought out here. In the words of Moltmann:

the sabbath rules are God's ecological strategy to protect the life which God had made with its rest and its rhythm of time....³⁹

Ex.23:11 has two interesting words which are very suggestive. According to Brevard. S. Childs, two verbs in this verse, 'smt' ('let drop' or 'remit') and 'nts' ('leave' or 'abandon') are almost synonymous. The word 'smittah' is used elsewhere as a technical term for remission of debts. In a context where the link between international debt crisis and ecological havoc is well established, the passage is very relevant. The concern that domestic animals also need rest, as workers and slaves do, occurs also in the Decalogue. Thus, we can see an enlarging of the concept of the 'oppressed' which includes the enslaved poor and an endangered nature. Liberation theology, by linking the exodus event with the covenant tradition can follow suit, that

³⁷. References: Num.22:28ff; Prov.12:10; 1Cor.9:9 etc.

³⁸. "But God said to Jonah, Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?...and also many animals?". (Jonah 4:9-11)

³⁹. Jürgen Moltmann, Creating a Just Future, S.C.M., London, 1989, p.66.

is, widen the meaning of the category of 'poor' by seeing the earth also as part of the oppressed. As Sean McDonagh observes, Ex.23:10-12 does bring together:

Respect for Yahweh's sovereignty, care for the earth, concern for the poor, sensitivity to the needs of both wild and farm animals....⁴⁰

A.C.J. Phillips⁴¹ brings out the concern for animals in Exodus. Ex.23:12 enacts that both human beings and animals are to have rest from daily work. As they are no longer under the oppressive yoke of Pharaoh but under Yahweh, they (the servants, aliens, and servants) are all able to enjoy their freedom. This is the integral vision of liberation that a comprehensive vision of the exodus seen in connection with the covenant offers. And such a vision provides a perspective which will approach the liberation of the poor and of nature as part of one and the same struggle.

According to Martin Noth, Ex.23. gives, at once, a social reason for the regulations of the sabbatical year. This means that the wild growth of the fallow year is to be at the disposal of the poor (those who have virtually no stake in the soil) and of the wild beasts (those not in the ownership and service for humanity). This way the wild beasts are not restricted to what human beings give them or leave over from their crops.⁴² Lev.25:6-7, on the other hand, gives another reason, that the land should have a 'time of rest'- a sabbath for Yahweh. The Deuteronomic version (Dt.5:15), as already seen, is unique in that it has no counterparts in the Old Testament. According to

⁴⁰. Sean McDonagh, The Greening of the Church, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1990, p.127.

⁴¹. A.C.J. Phillips, "Animals and the Torah" in The Expository Times, June, 1995, Vol.106, No.9, p.262. In this article, Phillips also dwells on the theme of vegetarianism and the concern for animals contained in the P narratives of the Pentateuch corpus. (pp.260-265)

⁴². Martin Noth, Leviticus, Old Testament Library, S.C.M.Press Ltd, 1962, p.185.

von Rad:

...here the commandment is based on Israel's bondage in Egypt which it must remember as well as on the need of toiling man and beast for rest.⁴³

The reference to Israel's slavery in Egypt as a social basis for the observance of the commandment is typically Deuteronomist, where, it is rather associated with the P account of creation. All of this points to two reasons for the care for the earth. One is that the land should have its original rest (the intrinsic worth of the nature is affirmed) and the other is a concern for the liberation of the poor (the social justice perspective is also implied in the jubilee year)- an attempt to re-establish a just social order, not out of the mercy of the rich, but as part of God's own demand for justice.

The experience of the exodus should remind the people of the sabbath- 'the feast of creation'. In other words, the theology of the exodus and the theology of the sabbath and the creation theology should go together. Perhaps in the true biblical tradition, as the people of Israel reflected on their Creator God when they experienced the liberator God through the exodus, liberation theology should now integrate the exodus theology with the creation theology. Taking the exodus tradition in a comprehensive manner, that is by linking the exodus with the sabbath, this door can be opened up, because, in the biblical tradition, creation and the sabbath do go together. The God who liberates the oppressed is also a God who rests. The God who acts in history is also a God who reveals in nature. The God of the poor is also the God of the land (nature). The liberator God is also the creator God. As Moltmann puts it:

The exodus experience and belief in creation make it clear that the God of the exodus is the creator of

⁴³. Gerhard von Rad, Deuteronomy, Old Testament Library, S.C.M.Press Ltd, London, p.58.

the world and that God the creator is also the God of the exodus.⁴⁴

This, then, overcomes the exclusive anthropocentrism (preferential option for the poor is still anthropocentric) of liberation theology, for the sabbath naturally leads to the jubilee year which again links a concern for social justice with care for nature. The sabbath and rest are not only for humanity but for nature as well. (Lev.25:1-7).⁴⁵ The sabbatical year thus corresponds to the jubilee year.

THE JUBILEE YEAR.

'Yobhel' in Hebrew means a 'ram's horn' or the 'sound of a horn'. Hence the jubilee year could refer to the year of the trumpet. Lev.25 which explains this institution, is a beautiful integration of the concern for the poor and the earth. G.J. Wenham divides the book of Leviticus into the following sections.⁴⁶

Ch.1. - Introduction.

Ch.2-22. - The Jubilee-A Sabbath for the Land.

Ch.23-38. - The Jubilee and the redemption of Property.

Ch. 39-55. - The Jubilee and the redemption of Slaves.

The main objective of the jubilee is to prevent the utter ruin of those in debt. In biblical times, a man who incurred a debt that he was not able to repay could be forced to sell off his land and even his personal freedom and become a slave. If this

⁴⁴. Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation; op.cit., p.285.

⁴⁵. "The LORD spoke to Moses on the mount Sinai... You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned wine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land... all its yield shall be for food". (Lev.25:1-7)

⁴⁶. G.J.Wenham, The Book of Leviticus, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 1979, pp.316-322.

was left unchecked, it could result in great social inequalities and strife. Israel was no exception to this possibility. Had the jubilee commandments been followed, the eighth century prophets would not have had to challenge the injustices they confronted among the people. The jubilee year prevents any one from selling himself or his property permanently. In effect, one can rent his property or his labour only for a maximum period of forty nine years and in the jubilee year the land reverts to its original owner and the slave is freed. It, thus, re-establishes the equality at the time of creation. Of course, the jubilee year as an institution remained as an ideal which was hardly realized in Israel. But as Wenham argues, the failure to implement an ideal does not necessarily invalidate the possibility of implementation.

The social justice element of the jubilee year is inextricably related to its ecological dimensions. The jubilee year is also portrayed as a sabbath for the land. (Ch.2-22). In fact, the jubilee laws begin with a reminder of the sabbatical year. (vv.2-5; from Ex.23:10-11) As a man works for six days and rests on the seventh day, the land can also be tilled for six years and then should be allowed to lie fallow on the seventh year so that the poor and the slaves can eat.

The theological principle underlying the jubilee is that the land must not be sold off permanently, for the land is Yahweh's. (Ps.24:1) This would mean that the natural resources of all kinds can only be used with a sense of accountability to God. Or as John Austin Baker, in his commentary on Lev.25 urges:

...humanity must be controlled by respect for the intricate character of the natural order and cannot violate it by technology for their own ends without expecting at least long term retribution.⁴⁷

⁴⁷. Our Responsibility For the Living Environment, A Report of the General Synod Board for Social Responsibility, Church House Publishing, London, 1986, p.18.

According to Sharon H. Ringe, the two portions of the Covenant code that are integrally connected to the jubilee are Ex.21:2-6 and 23:10-11. In these laws, the way God as liberator involves the freeing of the slaves and the granting of 'rest' for the land. In the former text, the term 'Hebrew' with its ambiguous history, refers to the relationships of these laws to Israel's story of liberation. In the latter text, the theme of God's sovereignty is explained in the context of Israel's life as an agricultural society. (Unfortunately, the ecological dimensions of the jubilee law is hardly emphasised by Ringe. She sees only a humanitarian aspect within the covenant)

It is not even clear whether all of the land of a particular crop rotation is envisioned. In any event, the purpose of the fallow year is humanitarian.⁴⁸

In his commentary on Ex.23:10-13,⁴⁹ Martin Noth maintains that the sabbath day and the jubilee year presuppose a 'return to the original state' - a 'restitutio in integrum'.⁵⁰ Jubilee year in Hebrew means total liberation (a d ror) with the connotation of 'freeing from burdens' in a feudal context. It has strong ecological connotations as the 'original rest' (as at the time of creation) should be given back to the land, undisturbed by the hand of humanity. In a context of intense commercial farming, with increased use of chemicals and pesticides, all of this is still relevant. It may be noted that in Nehemiah and in Maccabees, these laws were enforced (Neh.10:31; 1Macc.6:49,53). Yahweh insists that these laws should be kept. Bringing out the ecological implications, Sean McDonagh holds that the jubilee

⁴⁸. Sharon H. Ringe, Jesus, Liberation, and the Biblical Jubilee: Images for Ethics and Christology, Overtures to Biblical Theology, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1985, p.19.

⁴⁹. "For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield; but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the poor of you may eat;... and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed". (Ex.23:10-12)

⁵⁰. Martin Noth, Exodus, Old Testament Library, S.C.M.Press Ltd, 1959, p.189.

laws were meant to silence the grumbling of the greedy Israelites who would wish to forgo these restrictive instructions. In their selfishness, they would want to work the land every year, irrespective of the danger that this might exhaust the soil's productivity and thus render it useless.

The modern social context is not alien to this biblical milieu. Many ecologists argue that modern agriculture is totally insensitive to the environment. Industrial agriculture is completely tied to the cash economy and respects only economic considerations. Lands are taken out of production due to over supply of certain commodities in the free markets. Much of the Third World country's soil is being destroyed through industrial agriculture which leads to ecological devastation and deprivation of the poor. The jubilee year, thus, warns that unless the environment on which the poor depends for their livelihood is taken care of, their liberation will not be achieved. In this sense, Lev.25, as Wenham maintains, is a sequel to the Exodus. For instance, in Leviticus, wherever the exodus from Egypt is mentioned, it is always presented as a motive for the observance of the covenant and the law (Lev.11:45; 18:3; 23:43). At the heart of the exodus, therefore, is the Sinai covenant. All that follows in the exodus is a working out of this Sinai theme of covenant and the law.⁵¹

If liberation theology takes seriously the concept of the sabbath and the subsequent theme of the jubilee year, then it must also link it with the similar thrusts expressed in the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. Martin Noth in his exposition of Lev.25, where both the sabbath and the jubilee year are dealt with, holds that the jubilee year deals with the slaves and indirectly with the question of debts. But, above all, it deals with the restoration of rights to ownership of the land. (It may be noted here that even Robert V.Andelson and

⁵¹. G.J. Wenham, op.cit., p.29.

James M. Dawsey in their book⁵² From Wasteland To Promised Land: Liberation Theology for a Post-Marxist World while analyzing the failure of liberation theology in not taking up the issues of 'rights to ownership of land', fail to bring out the ecological significance of sabbath and jubilee. They have looked at them from a strictly humanitarian perspective, in terms of the issues of land rights for the poor. Except for a passing reference to the 'environmental concerns', there is no attempt made in this book to link ecology with the issues of land ownership).

Ecological issues in Latin America, as also in other parts of the Third World, are very much linked to the issue of land rights of the poor, especially of the indigenous and tribal communities. Almost all the large 'developmental projects' which are anti-environment also involve forceful displacement of large communities of the poor and indigenous people from their home lands and in most cases they are given barren waste lands instead. For example, the Machadinho dam, on the Uruguai River is only one of 22 dams proposed by Electrosul in Brazil. About 18,000 people are expected to be dislocated from this region. In Asia, the Sardar Sarovar Dam in India will forcefully evacuate some one million people of the tribal belt in North India. This is true of almost all the so-called developmental projects, suggesting a close connection between social justice and ecological balance.

The sabbath and the jubilee are increasingly relevant themes in the Third World context, including Latin America where the debt trap by the I.M.F and the World Bank is a real threat. It is the I.M.F. and the World Bank who finance, through their loans, the so called large developmental projects like huge dams and nuclear reactor schemes, destroying the rain forests and evicting the indigenous population from their home lands,

⁵². Robert V. Andelson and James M. Dawsey, From Wasteland To Promised Land: Liberation Theology for a Post-Marxist World, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1992, pp. 84-85.

causing pollution of air, water, and soil in the process. Ultimately it leads to a huge debt crisis. As already established by several studies, the international debt crisis is shattering the poor and the earth. As Sean McDonagh says, the debt crisis is like an endemic plague in the Third World today. The so-called 'structural adjustment' and 'belt-tightening' programmes of the I.M.F. and the World Bank worsen the plight of the Third World. Attempts to repay the debts are, in fact, strangling the poor and wrecking the earth, as these debts can only be paid back by taking the food away from starving mouths and destroying the environment. Cutting or scrapping agricultural subsidies, forceful shifts to cash crops for the sake of export (as the soil is not used to cash crops and industrial farming, the fertility of the soil is endangered), and currency devaluation are all designed to stimulate local industries to produce goods which will be competitive in the international open markets. This kills the agricultural sector, impoverishes small scale industries causing unemployment, poverty and ecological devastation. When the earth is disfigured and rendered useless, it naturally leads to penury as:

...no life can be built on eroded wastelands, toxic rivers, or lifeless oceans.⁵³

The international debt crisis is contributing to a massive destruction of the rain forests in Asia, Africa and Latin America. According to Peter Montagnon, forty per cent of all prescriptive drugs in the U.S. are derived from the tropical rain forests. While the poor in the Third World pay for it, the rich in the First World enjoy the fruits. It is in this context of the international exploitation of the Third World that religious leaders like Bishop De Jong of Zambia have called for a cancellation of their country's foreign debts. They find the sabbath and the jubilee Year in the Old Testament a strong

⁵³. Sean McDonagh, The Greening of the Church, op.cit., p.21.

biblical foundation for their demands.

A similar situation in the Latin American context where foreign debt crisis is smothering the poor and the earth, where both the poor and the earth are simultaneously exploited and cry for liberation, liberation theology would do well to integrate the social justice issues with those of the environmental problems. It is this similarity of contexts that makes Fr. Eugene Thalman say that the present debt crisis is not unlike the situation which the year of Jubilee addressed to Israel because as Cardinal Arnns of Sao Paulo put it:

Thousands die in the Third World because the money that would be used for the health care and food is sent outside these countries to pay the debt.⁵⁴

Liberation theology, therefore, in the context of the so-called 'hamburgerization of the rain forests' and the consequent victimization of the poor in Latin America, should integrate the exodus hermeneutics with that of the sabbath and the jubilee year and therefore of creation as well, so that 'liberation' becomes integral. Economy and ecology are integrally related as poverty and ecological destruction are. This is the challenge for liberation theology in the future - to widen the horizon of liberation from socio-political dimensions to encompass the ecological aspects too, to relate the cry of the oppressed with the groaning of nature.

This, however, would require, on the one hand, a sharpening of the exegesis of the biblical context and on the other hand, a much more precise and comprehensive social analysis of the Latin American (the Third World context) milieu. As already seen, in both these areas liberation theology should undergo serious introspection. Or else, as Gottwald warns:

⁵⁴. Ibid., p.35.

the shallowness of penetration into the subject matter may issue in an 'unhermeneutic circle' in which neither the biblical 'then' nor the contemporary 'now' is adequately illumined.⁵⁵

THE SETTLEMENT IN CANAAN AS PART OF THE EXODUS EVENT.

The exodus does not end with the 'escape' of the Israelites from Egypt. A comprehensive view of the exodus should include the Sinai theme as well as the events leading to the relocation of the people in Canaan. The purpose of this comprehensive view of the exodus here is to bring out the insights it offers that liberation theology failed to recognize so that an integral ecotheology can be based on this view. Where liberation theology does treat these events, the biblical exegesis once again shows shallowness. For example, as Gottwald points out, one can find, alongside claims about the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt, naive references about the Israelites as 'nomads' or about the 'conquest' of Canaan that proceed as if the initial liberation from Egypt which liberation theology dwells on, does not require a re-formulation of views on the socio-cultural formulations of the Israelite tribes and their relation to the Canaanites. Gottwald therefore asks:

How are we to make sense of the religious ideas of early Israel, if they are not integrally grounded in the praxis of the actual Israel communities that took shape in Canaan? ⁵⁶

In other words, it has to be stressed that the entire exodus process includes much more than a possible escape of slaves from Egypt in so far as it alludes to the unquestionable reality of

⁵⁵. Norman K. Gottwald, "The exodus as event and process...", op.cit., p.250.

⁵⁶. Ibid., p.253.

the birth of Israel out of 'bondage in Egypt'. Once again, it may be noted here, that the immediate goal of this discussion is to widen the political dimension of liberation adopted in liberation theology so that it can encompass ecological dimensions as well along with socio-economic dimensions.

WHO WERE THE ISRAELITES?

Who constituted the early Israelites? continues to be a bone of contention among biblical scholars. The following is an overview of the scholars on this vexed issue.

The dominant view that the early Israelites were 'nomadic' has been challenged from various quarters. According to Julius Wellhausen, the early Israel was a pastoral nomadic society. In the view of Antonin Causse who is a Durkheimian, Israel began as an ethnic pastoral community that slowly lost its organic cohesion as it settled down and diversified economically in response to the Canaanite civilization. For Martin Noth, who is a form-critic, early Israel's socio-religious organization is seen as a league of twelve tribes in a common form of worship. George Mendenhall presents Israelites as an egalitarian movement whose marginality was not geographical in character but socio-economic and political. In his theology of the peasant's revolt, he identifies the people as peasants. Thus, instead of nomads, the sociological identity of peasants is suggested for early Israelites. Here, the peasants are understood as a group of people who are politically and economically marginal on whose produce the rich thrive. George Pixley thinks that the rebellious peasants of early Israel saw Yahweh as the liberator in Egypt and this liberator Yahweh attracted the Canaanite peasants who eventually formed a 'tribal alliance' with the exodus peasants in solidarity against their oppressors.

There is also no consensus among scholars as to what the term 'tribe' means, in reference to the people of Israel. Mendenhall has questioned the natural ethnic reading of Israel tribalism

and suggests that the tribals are:

an intentional community deliberately committed to a different ideology and a different social organization. ⁵⁷

Having discussed all of these perceptions about the nature of the early Israel community, Gottwald puts forward the concept of 'retribalization'. According to him, early Israel was an alliance of co-existent social organizational systems which had several structural and functional differences among them. What united them was their 'underclassness'. One can easily note Gottwald's avowed Marxist approach to social classification. According to him:

the resultant society was an alliance through various modes and degrees of affiliation of an eclectic assortment of underclass and outlaw elements of society. ⁵⁸

They included feudalized peasants, apiru mercenaries, transhumant pastoralists, tribally organized farmers, and pastoral nomads who were willing to set aside their intrinsic differences to form a united front against their common threat, the Canaanite ruling class- the city-state kings and rulers. This 'egalitarian re-tribalization' as Gottwald calls it, was a reaction against the Canaanite statism and imperialism. This was also essentially a village-based movement which broke away from the city-state control.

Gottwald, then, proceeds to concentrate on the many biblical texts that deal with the hostility between Israel and Canaan and concludes that these texts pointed to a 'social hostility'

⁵⁷. Walter Bruegemann, op.cit., p.310.

⁵⁸. "Theological Issues in the Tribes of Yahweh by N.K. Gottwald: Four Critical Reviews" in Gottwald (ed), The Bible and Liberation, op.cit., p.168.

rather than an 'ethnic hostility'. The struggle was against the ruling class, the 'kings', 'princes' and 'armies'. He suggests that the Hebrew word 'yoshev' usually translated as 'inhabitant' means strictly 'ruler' or 'people in authority' or the 'powers that be'.⁵⁹ In short, the class struggle between the oppressed and the rulers is the hallmark of the 'revolt' model of relocation of people in Canaan, as propounded by Gottwald. For example, the so called apiru people who joined others in this struggle were characterised by their negative stance toward the existing socio-political structures. The sarcastic and the colloquial way in which this term is used in the Amarna letters suggests that the apiru had come to be an epithet for a person or a group of persons opposed to the status-quo. The rebellious serfs and the farmers were also acting the part of apiru. When the exodus Israelites entered the land of Canaan, they confronted this stress-torn society. But they did share a lower class identity. The former slaves who are now liberated attracted the restive serfs and the peasants of Canaan who were being oppressed by the feudal city-state imperialism. These two groups, thus, coalesced, forming a 'retribalization'. The local populace, the indigenous people collaborated with the Israelites against the Canaanite statism.

One of the interesting things about Gottwald's hypothesis of 'retribalization' is that it explains the 'tribe' as a sociological unit without any kinship dimensions, thus, denying the evolutionary approach to the tribals. According to him, tribalism comes after and in reaction to statism. Gottwald, with his inclination to the Marxist sociological approach, tends to subsume all the oppressed sections of society under the class model and from this perspective Yahwism as egalitarianism provides an ideology for class struggle. This reading raises several problems. Gottwald is confronted with the criticism that the 'apiru' are hardly to be identified with the lower class Canaanites. They are outside elements who have intruded into

⁵⁹. Norman K. Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh, op.cit., pp.551-534.

Canaan. It is held that all of the apiru references are resolvable to characters in the internecine imperial-feudal struggles among the city states and with Egypt. Hence it is objected that a 'social class' reading of the Amarna conflicts is vastly strained and totally perverse.⁶⁰

On a separate level, this class reading of the early Israel as a model causes problems in applying the model to the present day context. Lucien Legrand raises this question when he asks:

Can the complexity of the Hebrew terminology as regards the tribes in their division be reduced to the three-tier system proposed by Gottwald, viz. tribalism, nomadism, and pastoralism. They do not necessarily coincide.⁶¹

The tribal system in India, for example, has definite ethnic components which Gottwald does not see in the Israelite tribes. This is the reason why in India, for example, separate theologies for the 'dalits' and the tribes were to be developed by themselves as they found that liberation theology's class analysis was so broad and general that it fails to appreciate the specificity of their oppression on the basis of caste and ethnicity. These particularities could not be subsumed under the sweeping category of 'class'. Gottwald also faces the same problem. The reason for this obsession with a class reading is due to his unabashed Marxist approach towards social reality.

Legrand makes this observation clear. In his view, Gottwald's thesis of revolt of the lower class, simply follows the Marxist model. He asks:

Is it (the revolt model) also inspired and

⁶⁰. Ibid., p.218.

⁶¹. Quoted in "Theological Issues in The Tribes of Yahweh...", op.cit., p.186.

conditioned by this model...once the Marxist analysis is fed into the inquiry, is it not necessary, at the end of the process, to get a class revolt against oppressors? Can the various forms of tension in India be reduced to class struggle? Has Marxism really accounted for the caste system and the tribal system as we know them?⁶²

As we have already seen, in the Third World context, where alienation and oppression are based on diverse categories such as caste, gender, race, and tribe, a class reading has proved to be too lacking in precision and sharpness. It is this generality of the term 'poor' and the 'oppressed' in liberation theology which made the dalits and the tribals form their own theology or theologies. (This is separately discussed in another section). Unfortunately, these progressive theologies have resulted in an unhealthy polarization as if these theologies have nothing in common. It is here that one of the central aspects of Gottwald's hypothesis of revolt model is useful and offers scope for an integration of these progressive theological concerns. According to Gottwald:

a defining feature of the Israelite movement for liberation was that it was not "ghettoized" as a pastoral nomadic movement, but represented as an effective combination of pastoralists and agriculturalists who managed to subordinate their differences in a unified attempt to strike at the source of their common misery.⁶³

If it was the Canaanite city-state imperialism which united groups into a common front, in today's context it is the neo-imperial powers who oppress the poor and destroy the environment that do so. In this situation, 'ecology' can be the umbrella

⁶². Ibid., p.188.

⁶³. Norman Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahweh, op.cit., p.460.

category as the real victims of ecological destruction, (as seen in the section on "The Ecological context in India") are the poor, especially the tribals, the indigenous people, the women, and the fisherfolk.

As environmental problems and social injustice are inter-related, an ecological perspective, rather than a class perspective, can be a much more effective integrating principle for a synthesis of radical theologies of the poor, the women, the dalits, and the tribals through an integral ecotheology. Liberation theology of the Latin American kind, to take this integral approach would require sharpening its biblical exegesis, especially of the exodus narrative which should be seen from a comprehensive point of view, not just as the event of liberation from Egypt but as a total process which includes the covenant tradition as well as the settlement events which provide a synthesis of socio- economic, political and ecological dimensions of liberation.

THE HERMENEUTIC CIRCLE RE-DRAWN.

Taking the biblical account of the exodus comprehensively as suggested above can overcome the purely anthropocentric view of salvation or liberation. The P account, as already seen, with its treatment of the sabbath and the jubilee year, and its account of the tabernacle and creation, tells us that it is not only that the liberation of the poor and of the land (nature) are integrally related, but also that salvation or liberation should not be understood merely in anthropocentric terms. Rather than seeing salvation from an exclusive anthropocentric and political perspective, combining it with the P emphasis on the religious, cultural, ecological and, therefore, the cosmic dimensions can provide a comprehensive way of interpreting the exodus.

The fact that liberation theology has not integrated the ecological dimensions of liberation with its political aspects

is partly due to its adherence to Marxist social analysis (based on class perspective) which is almost exclusively economic and political. Although, following the Marxist analysis, liberation theology rightly identifies Capitalism as the main cause of poverty and exploitation in Latin America, as also in other parts of the Third World, from an ecological point of view, even the Marxist perspective can be found inadequate. (This is discussed separately in chapter 5.) It may suffice to say here that Marxism sees ecological destruction as the result of the capitalist profit-oriented production process which alienates man from man and man from nature. But the experiences in the former Socialist Soviet Union and in the East European contexts clearly show that the traditional 'socialist' development patterns are also not ecologically sensitive and follow essentially the same 'development' models based on large industrial and other (including nuclear) projects which destroy the environment. Perhaps the only difference may be that Marxist socialists claim to follow this path to generate employment and redistribution of products while the capitalists employ this model purely for profit interests. Liberation theology, adopting the Marxist perspective fails to see the inadequacies of the Marxist analysis. While it is imperative to fight the capitalist structures of exploitation, it is equally important to note that the traditional Marxist development is far from capable of solving today's problems. In the Third World, while it is true that ecological destruction is a product of the capitalist development, we have reached a stage where environmental destruction has become (due to the following of environmentally insensitive development patterns both by the capitalists and the socialists) one of the causes of poverty and exploitation. For example, as rain forests are ravaged, it is the poor, particularly the indigenous and the tribal people, who are dislodged from their home territories and made devoid of basic necessities like food, shelter, and water, and uprooted from their soil and culture. In today's context marked by ecological devastation and the consequent victimization of the poor, social analysis must include not only the economic and political

aspects but ecological dimensions as well. As long as Marxism, with its materialistic philosophy, is committed to a development which is oriented towards large-scale industrialisation and construction of huge 'developmental' projects such as mega dams and nuclear projects, however noble their goals may be, it will not be able to see the link between environmental catastrophe and poverty. Having said that, it must be acknowledged that this deadly link between ecological hazards and social exploitation of the poor is gradually being recognised by the Latin American liberation theologians now. However, this change in perception of realities must be reflected in all aspects of theology as well, especially in the application part of the hermeneutic circle. Segundo has followed the Marxist critique of religion and applied the steps in his hermeneutic circle in liberation theology. This has to be refined today. I suggest the following reformulation where hermeneutic circle is now critically applied to liberation theology.

In the first stage, Segundo suggests that our analysis and comprehension of realities should lead to ideological suspicion. Liberation theology, through its economic social analysis, was led to a suspicion of capitalist ideologies. But, having now realised the important link between economic exploitation and ecological destruction which Marxist analysis fails to recognise, liberation theology needs to apply its ideological suspicion to Marxism as well. This is particularly important in a context where experiences in the erstwhile Soviet Union and East Europe show convincingly that traditional Socialism does not take environmental concerns seriously. One could argue that in these countries Marxism was never properly applied and that they were pseudo-Marxist regimes. Even so, there is little sign in Marxism to suggest that Marx took ecological issues seriously or regarded them as a cause of exploitation of the poor. In fact, as we will see in the next section, Marx viewed nature as an object to be merely exploited for human benefits. This is where the new initiative of Boff in his most recent work, attempting to revisit Marxist analysis by 'enriching' it with

ecological perspectives, fails.

The new ideological suspicion about the inadequacies of the Marxist social analysis (its inadequacies to address the issues of Feminism, Casteism, Racism, and Tribalism are already well delineated in the corresponding theologies) should now lead to a **theological suspicion** -suspicion of the inadequacies of liberation theology itself as it stands now. Due to its insufficient social analysis, it is natural that its theologizing especially biblical hermeneutics, also reflects this deficiency. For example, since the Latin American social context and realities were seen purely from economic and political perspectives, theological themes were also interpreted in a similar fashion, leaving aside the ecological dimensions entirely.

If liberation theology can arrive at this self-critical juncture, then it must lead to Segundo's third stage in the hermeneutic circle, namely the perception of new realities and new theological and ideological suspicions take it to a new hermeneutics. The exodus, being the paradigm of liberation theology, then, should undergo a radical re-interpretation. One is startled to see that Boff, one of the leading exponents of liberation theology, leaves the area of hermeneutics totally unattended in his latest book. There is no attempt whatsoever to reinterpret the paradigm, the exodus event (in fact, there is no discussion on exodus in this book) from his newly found ecological consciousness. This means that Boff's realization of the importance of ecological perspective has not been reflected genuinely in liberation theology's hermeneutics. As already suggested, taking an integral view of the exodus event, especially taking the cue from the Priestly narrative of the exodus, its stress on the integral link between liberation of the poor and the earth, the relation between social justice and ecological havoc, liberation theology can widen the frontiers of its hermeneutic circle. Without the P account, the J and E model of the exodus is far from complete. Without the covenant

and the settlement themes, the mere account of the exodus from Egypt is incomplete. This means that without the ecological aspects, political liberation is far from integral. In contextual terms, issues like poverty cannot be solved through political revolution which does not address the ecological problems, as environmental problems are not only the results of poverty, but more importantly, they also cause poverty and other forms of social injustice today. Therefore, the political dimensions of liberation already picked up by liberation theology, as also very clearly explicated in the Yahwist and Elohist accounts of the exodus, need to be combined with the ecological aspects of liberation present in the covenant. These are also very much cultural and religious in nature as can be seen in the indigenous communities (explicated through the institutions of the sabbath and the jubilee year by the P account) so as to give an integral perception of liberation.

CHAPTER 4. ANTHROPOCENTRIC TREATMENT OF THEOLOGICAL NOTIONS IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY.

INTRODUCTION.

One of the major drawbacks of almost all liberation theologies is their anthropocentrism- the human-centredness- in their theological reflections. Early Christian theology tended to focus exclusively on the question of God, especially on the second person of the Trinity. Christian theology, later did concentrate on humanity, but again from a metaphysical and 'spiritualised' manner. With liberation theology, this focus became radicalised and concretised when the focus fell on the poor and the oppressed as subjects of theology. However, it still remained anthropocentric, in that, it neglected the concerns of the non-human creation- nature, animals, the earth and its fullness. While the focus on the poor and the oppressed in the Third World is a step in the right direction, the failure to see nature and animals as 'fellow oppressed' or as the 'new poor' is to be deemed a serious flaw in liberation theology. Although this neglect in liberation theology is being pointed out by other theologians and also recognised by a few liberation theologians themselves, no serious efforts have been made to liberate the theology of liberation from anthropocentrism. As will be seen in a following section, one of the reasons for this neglect is the use of Marxist tools of social analysis. A change from this perspective should be reflected in liberation theology's hermeneutics, social analysis, and its treatment of theological notions and themes. An alternative hermeneutic was suggested in the previous chapter (chapter 3.) and an analysis of Marxist class perspective in liberation theology and its limitations for an integral eco-liberation theology is provided in the next chapter.(chapter 5.) This chapter attempts to bring out the evident anthropocentrism in liberation theology's treatment of theological themes and doctrines.

'LIBERATION' IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY: IS IT REALLY LIBERATIVE?

Perhaps the most radical and notable contribution of liberation theology has been its reinterpretation of the traditional concept of salvation as liberation. The relation between salvation and liberation is a vital concern in liberation theology. Often, liberation theology is criticised for reducing salvation to liberation, that is, to its socio-political dimension alone. Answering this critique, Gustavo Gutiérrez, the father of liberation theology argues that in liberation theology what has happened is a shift from a quantitative approach to a qualitative view of salvation. The former sees salvation in terms of the number of persons (souls) saved whilst the latter approach does not see salvation as merely 'other-worldly'. The following words of Gutiérrez makes this point clearer:

Thus the centre of God's salvific design is Jesus Christ, who by his death and resurrection transforms the world and makes it possible for the person to reach fulfilment as a human being. This fulfilment embraces all aspects of humanity: body and spirit, individual and society, person and cosmos, time and eternity.¹

This view does take care of both the individual and the eschatological dimensions of salvation, the aspects that liberation theology is often accused of ignoring. In fact, there is even scope in the above quote for arguing that it also takes care of the cosmic dimension. But judging from the overall thrusts of Gutiérrez's works on liberation theology and in fact that of the vast majority of liberation theology literature, one comes to the conclusion that the appearance of the word 'cosmic' (in the sense of ecological) is accidental rather than an intended ecological perspective. Arguably, the only serious occurrence of an ecological perspective in Gutiérrez is found

¹.Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, op.cit., p.85.



in a few pages in his book On Job. The other serious effort in this direction by any other Latin American liberation theologian is Leonardo Boff's recent work on Ecology and Theology entitled Ecologia, Teologia e Mistica, Sao Paulo; 1992. The English translation of this book has now been published under the title Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm; Orbis (1995).

Clodovis Boff explains the relation between salvation and liberation. His discussion of the theme takes the form of a dialogue between an activist, a priest and a theologian.² According to him, the appropriation of the salvific will of God has practical implications. God's salvation is given and experienced in history, experienced in the attainment of virtues such as peace, justice, and dignity. In political terms, it means that salvation happens in the liberation of the oppressed.

It must be noted that Gutiérrez came up with the concept of 'liberation' as a replacement for the predominant model of 'developmentalism' in Latin America. Developmentalism is synonymous with 'reformism', argued Gutiérrez, as it helps to maintain status-quo structures and does not strike at the root causes of societal problems. Gutiérrez understands liberation in three senses:³

(i) liberation expresses the aspirations of the oppressed social class.

(ii) at a deeper level, liberation applies to the understanding of history, i.e. mankind assumes conscious responsibility for its own destiny.

(iii) From a specific Christian view, liberation is emancipation from sin in Christ, the saviour who

². Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, Salvation and Liberation: In Search of a Balance Between Faith and Politics, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1984, pp.87-89.

³. Gustavo Gutiérrez, op.cit., pp.24-25. [emphasis mine]

liberates from sin, the ultimate root of all distortions, injustice and oppression.

One cannot miss here the obvious contribution of liberation theology in these words, namely a movement from faith to action; from 'orthodoxy' to 'orthopraxis'. Despite this emphasis on the praxiological aspects of faith, its concept of liberation is still far from being an integral one in that it is confined to the realm of human beings and history and it neglects forms of oppression of nature and non-human animals.

There have been calls from various angles, both within and without liberation theology circles, to extend the scope of 'liberation' in liberation theology to include the sphere of the whole cosmos. There are, indeed, signs of this happening in some liberation theology, although mainstream liberation theology has not yet embarked on this task in a serious way.

Jürgen Moltmann, in the same vein, while appreciating liberation theology's emphasis on the socio-political dimensions of liberation (salvation), appeals for widening its horizon even further so as to encompass the cosmic dimensions as well. According to Moltmann, liberation takes place at the following levels:⁴

(i) in the struggles for economic justice against the exploitation of man.

(ii) in the struggles for human dignity and human rights against political oppression of man.

(iii) in the struggles for peace with nature against the industrial destruction of the environment.

(iv) in the struggles for hope against apathy in

⁴. Jürgen Moltmann, The Future of Creation, S.C.M. Press Ltd, London, 1979, pp.110-112.

asserting the significance of the whole in personal life.

Thus integral liberation happens at socio-political, ecological and personal levels. All these dimensions are important. But certain perspectives take precedence over others, depending on the contextual features in question. According to Moltmann, it is therefore natural and justifiable that liberation theology emphasises the economic dimensions of liberation because liberation from hunger is a priority. But human society cannot be built without peace with nature as hunger or other kinds of economic deprivation cannot be solved, if at the same time we drive the world into ecological catastrophe.

Andrew Linzey, who is a strong advocate of a 'liberation theology for animals' also accuses liberation theology of 'humanocentrism' or anthropocentrism. According to him, liberation theology does not liberate theology from this major pitfall- humanocentrism. Although he criticises liberation theology's narrow Christology as the main reason for its being anthropocentric, he also finds himself at odds with liberation theology's concept of liberation. He exposes the anthropocentric strands in the three dimensional view of liberation by Gutiérrez. He, in fact, quotes Gutiérrez extensively to highlight the anthropocentric rhetoric in Gutiérrez's views on liberation. Linzey cites Gutiérrez's concept of liberation with the following emphases:⁵

(i) liberation expresses the aspirations of the oppressed peoples and social classes, emphasising the conflictual aspects of the economic, social, and political process which puts them at odds with wealthy nations and oppressed classes.

(ii) liberation is a way of understanding history:

⁵. Andrew Linzey, Animal Theology, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1994, p.63.

Humankind is seen as assuming responsibility for its own destiny... In this perspective, the unfolding of all the dimensions of humanness is demanded- persons who make themselves throughout their life and throughout their history. The gradual conquest of true freedom leads to the creation of a new humankind and a qualitatively different society.

(iii) In contrast to 'development', liberation allows for another approach leading to Biblical sources which inspires the presence and action of humankind in history... Christ makes humankind truly free...and this is the basis for all human fellowship.

Linzey brings out quite clearly the 'human-centredness' in liberation theology. It leads him to pronounce this judgement on liberation theology:

In short: the first major work of liberation theology (Theology of Liberation) espouses an uncompromisingly dogmatic humanocentricity.⁶

According to Linzey, this exclusive anthropocentric approach in liberation theology does have ethical implications for nature and animals. In his view, liberation theology holds the maxim of 'the good of humanity' as the yardstick to measure everything else. From this it follows, argues Linzey, that our treatment of animals for example, is not a direct moral issue at all. The lack of reference to animals in Gutiérrez leads Linzey to conclude that Gutiérrez regards the non-human creation, animals, as having no intrinsic worth. He even makes a sweeping observation that "nothing in any of his (Gutiérrez's) works suggests otherwise".⁷

⁶. Ibid.

⁷. Ibid., p.64.

Although the thrust of Linzey's critique of liberation theology and that of Gutiérrez is appreciated, it may be noted here that his judgement on Gutiérrez's works clearly betrays some oversight on the part of Linzey. For example, Gutiérrez does address the problem of anthropocentrism and affirms the intrinsic worth of non-human creation including animals in his commentary On Job. (It could be said that perhaps this is the only work of Gutiérrez which attempts to take up the issue of anthropocentrism). Here are a few extracts from Gutiérrez:

Commenting on the 'Yahweh Speeches' in the book of Job, Gutiérrez argues that Yahweh teaches Job, in this passage, that if the animals described in the speeches were free, it was because God took side with them.

God's speeches are a forceful rejection of a purely anthropocentric view of creation. Not everything was made to be directly useful to human beings; therefore, they may not judge everything from their own points of view. The world of nature expresses the freedom and delight of God in creating. It refuses to be limited to the narrow confines of the cause-effect relationship.⁸

Here is another passage on the 'intrinsic worth' of creation:

If the rain falls on the black moors, this is not because of any necessity, but because it pleases God. Utility is not the primary reason for God's action; the creative breath of God is inspired by beauty and joy.⁹

This passage echoes not only a powerful rejection of

⁸. Gustavo Gutiérrez, On Job: God-Talk and the Suffering of the Innocent, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1985, p.74.

⁹. Ibid., p.75.

'instrumental' or 'utilitarian' views of creation, but also an almost quixotic appreciation of nature. In this book, Gutiérrez also comes closer to recognising mainline liberation theology's tendency to reduce everything to the realm of history. Again commenting on the speeches of Yahweh:

What God is criticising here is every theology that programmes to pigeonhole the divine action in history and gives the illusory impression of knowing it in advance.¹⁰

Whilst it is true that Gutiérrez does address the issues of anthropocentrism and the intrinsic worth of creation, it could still be argued that these passages remain isolated passages as these concerns have not yet formed the overall concerns of liberation theology. There has not yet been a theological work on liberation theology which in a serious way links the socio-political dimensions of liberation with ecological dimensions. Probably the only exception is Leonardo Boff's recent book. It is rather surprising to note that Leonardo Boff who used to be a Franciscan, had to take this long to find the ecological dimensions of the Christian concept of salvation (liberation). One could, of course, argue that liberation theology, by virtue of its very nature, being a theological reflection on the *Sitz im Leben*, it is natural for it to miss the ecological dimensions, as Linzey himself admits, because in the 1970s (the formative period of liberation theology- in 1971, Gutiérrez's pioneering work A Theology of Liberation came out) the ecological issues were not talked about as serious concerns. But by 1981, when Leonardo Boff wrote his St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation, ecological issues were at least beginning to make headlines and were attracting serious debates and discussions. Yet, Boff failed to address them. Even when he talked about nature in passing, he still seemed to retain an anthropocentric framework, albeit in a qualified manner. Linzey

¹⁰. Ibid., p.72.

cites Boff's conclusion of St. Francis' attitude to animals:

Modern humanity have forgotten that in our activity with nature, one must deal not only with things, but also with something that affects us at our deepest level... We cannot achieve our identity while denying friendly, fraternal relationship with our material world.¹¹

Once again this provokes a judgement from Linzey on Gutierrez and Boff:

In short: Guti rrez and Boff, dissimilar though they may be in some ways, represent a theology of liberation, which has radically failed to grapple with the possibility of oppression and injustice beyond the sphere of human to human relations.¹²

Here again, Linzey's judgement is rather premature because it exposes the unawareness of Linzey of Boff's later work to which mention has already been made in which Boff moves a long way forward from humanocentrism to cosmocentrism. He even projects panentheism as a credible Christian proposition in an ecological context. In this book, Boff does attempt to relate creation and redemption from an ecological perspective. According to him, a theology of creation can help us find the true meaning of a theology of redemption:

Redemption presupposes a drama, a degeneration of creation, a failure of human vocation that has affected all humans and their cosmic environment. Humankind bears a retributive wound for not having tilled and kept the creation. Therefore, as St. Paul

¹¹. Andrew Linzey, "Liberation Theology and the Oppression of Animals" in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol.47, 1993, p.512.

¹². Andrew Linzey, Animal Theology, op.cit., p.67.

says, humankind suffers and groans as it longs for freedom from its yoke (Rom 8:22).¹³

Here are signs of liberation theology beginning to take up the cosmic dimensions of liberation in the Bible. It still remains the fact that these isolated theological views are far from being integrated or made part of the central concern of liberation theology. As already noted elsewhere, it is not just a question of adding ecological insights to the already existing framework in liberation theology, but rather undergoing a much more serious restructuring of its methodology, hermeneutics and social analysis.

It still remains a fact that liberation theology's main contribution is that it challenged the traditional Christian understanding of salvation as the rescue of certain individuals for a blissful life in the other world, and has brought back, in its place, the socio-political aspects of salvation. But for liberation to be truly liberative, it needs to be understood in a much more comprehensive manner, including the cosmic dimensions. As David Scott puts it:

...The fulfilment of all humanity in the political and social realities of this world- must be further deprivatised to include the well being of all life.¹⁴

Although Boff's latest book offers some hopes in this direction, liberation theology as a whole has a long way to go before it finds the integral link between the liberation of the poor and that of the earth and makes this the guiding principle in its theological reflections, biblical hermeneutics and social analysis.

¹³. Leonardo Boff, Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1995, p.47.

¹⁴. David C Scott, "Some Reflections on "A Theological Response to Ecological Crisis", in K.C.Abraham (ed), Bangalore Theological Forum, op.cit., p.17.

CHRISTOLOGY.

Jesus Christ the liberator is the basic Christological assumption in liberation theology. Its starting point is the historical Jesus. According to liberation theology, most of Western theology could see only an academic and systematic interest in the 'historical Jesus' whereas the understanding of Christ in liberation theology lies in the 'concrete Christ of history'. It is so relevant to Latin America due to a real historical similarity between the situation of Latin America and that of the historical Jesus in that both the contexts were marked by poverty, exploitation and other sinful conditions. The cross of Jesus Christ was the inevitable outcome of Jesus's own criticism of the religious and the political hierarchies and of his stand with the poor and the marginalised. It also implies that all suffering is not Christian, but only the suffering that flows from the following of Jesus, that is to say, to work for the Kingdom values, peace, justice and the integrity of creation. It is here that the Nazareth Manifesto (Lk.4:18,19) becomes politically relevant and the need for a mission on behalf of the poor and the captives comes out clearly. The Cross is the way this mission is carried out. But the cross is not the end point. Jesus was resurrected which means that the causes for which Jesus gave up his life were vindicated. This is the futuristic dimension of the Cross and the Resurrection- the realisation of a hope or as Sobrino puts it:

Jesus' resurrection inaugurates a liberative approach. It was understood to be the anticipation of a universal resurrection.¹⁵

The political dimension of Christology comes out more strongly in the following words, again from Sobrino:

Jesus was condemned as a political agitator... Jesus'

¹⁵.Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American View, S.C.M.Press Ltd, New York, 1978, p.263.

power is that of love immersed in a concrete situation, hence it is political rather than idealistic love.¹⁶

It is, once again, Leonardo Boff who is the most vocal on the revolutionary dimensions of Latin American Christology. He identifies five criteria for developing a Christology for Latin America, viz:¹⁷

(i) emphasis on human need rather than ecclesiological dogma and structures.

(ii) the future orientation (primacy of the utopia over the factual).

(iii) openness to dialogue with the world over against maintaining the status-quo.

(iv) the social dimensions of the liberative work of Christ over against the personal.

(v) foundation on Christ who calls us to correct action. (orthopraxis).

For Boff, the cross of Christ is not merely a piece of wood. It is the symbol of Jesus' solidarity with the poor, the alienated and the suffering. It is a symbol of Christ's struggle against the dehumanising forces in operation. A Christology which takes the side of the oppressed, Boff holds, is the theology of liberation, because "Jesus Christ the liberator is the pain filled cry of the oppressed Christians".¹⁸

¹⁶. Ibid.

¹⁷. Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ the Liberator: A Critical Christology of Our Time, S.P.C.K. London, 1978, pp.43-48. [emphasis mine]

¹⁸. Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ the Liberator, op.cit., p.195.

The triumph of a struggle for justice is the reality of resurrection and this struggle is very much part of the salvation history as salvation is liberation from sin which is embodied in oppressive structures. Thus sin and salvation are not simply individualistic but also social and political. Gutiérrez sums it up when he says:

...all the dynamism of the cosmos...the movement towards the creation of a more just and fraternal world..all these originate, are transformed and reach their perfection in the saving work of Christ...¹⁹

The principal insight of liberation Christology, as we can infer from the above discussion, is that Christ is brought to the realm of history, people, especially the poor and the oppressed, from the world of the 'Christ of faith' or from the 'spiritual realm'. The social and the political dimensions of God's saving act in Christ are emphasised over against the personal and the individual. The real inadequacy of this Christology is that like other doctrines in liberation theology, Christology is also tied to the realm of history and human relations. The cosmic relevance of Jesus's person and work is neglected once again. This 'narrow Christology', as Linzey finds, is the main reason why liberation theology cannot be liberative enough. Christ is fundamentally defined as the one who makes humankind truly free. Linzey exposes the anthropocentric treatment of Christology in Gutiérrez's A Theology of Liberation where Gutiérrez maintains that Christology is anthropology. Gutiérrez actually quotes Karl Barth to substantiate his claim:

The God of Christian revelation is a God incarnate... and hence the famous comment of Karl Barth regarding anthropocentrism, "Man is the measure of all things,

¹⁹. Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, op.cit., pp.104-105.

since God became man".²⁰

In Linzey's view;

Gutiérrez has picked up what is clearly a strain in Barth's own thinking, a regrettable tendency to reduce Christology to anthropology and to view the created world merely as a backdrop or theatre to the "real revelation" which happens purely in the human sphere.²¹

Linzey also offers certain revisions in liberation Christology. According to him, the following Christological affirmations are of paramount importance which liberation theology would do well to pay attention to and incorporate into its own Christology.²² (It may be noted at this point that some of the following points are discussed, among others, in Chapter 9).

(a) Christ as Co-Creator.

Christ is the Logos through whom all things came to be. Logos, thus, is the source and destiny of all that is.

(b) Christ as God Incarnate.

Although liberation theology has dwelled on this theme in some details, the ecological significance of this notion is largely lost in liberation theology. The assumption of materiality in Incarnation needs to be revised. It is, indeed, a divine Yes to human life, as liberation theology affirms. However, it is not an absolute No to the rest of the creation. In Linzey's view, the 'ousia' (being) assumed in the incarnation is not only

²⁰. Ibid., p.6.

²¹. Andrew Linzey, "Liberation theology and the oppression of Animals", op.cit., p.514.

²². Andrew Linzey, Animal Theology, op.cit., pp.68-72.

specifically human, it is also creaturely which liberation theology needs to take seriously.

(c) Christ as the New Covenant.

In Linzey's opinion, scholastic theology still finds some life in liberation theology. In scholastic theology, humans have no moral obligation to animals and hence they are excluded from the bounds of human fellowship. Liberation theology, with its anthropocentrism, only echoes the prevailing Thomistic scholasticism and therefore is not radical enough. The covenantal tradition and its ecological insights should be linked with a Christology which perceives Jesus Christ as the New Covenant.

(d) Christ as our Moral Exemplar.

This is an insight liberation theology can easily accommodate, thinks Linzey, because liberation theology sees Jesus Christ as the liberator par excellence who takes sides with the oppressed and the poor. Linzey wonders if the omnipotence and power of God is properly expressed in the form of *katabasis*, humility, and self sacrifice, why should this model not properly extend to the relations with the whole creation. This is important because:

There can be no liberation theology without the liberation of the creation itself; no liberating theology without a God determined to liberate every being suffering oppression.²³

Thus it is clear that an integration of liberation Christology and a cosmic Christology can lead to promising and integral Christology. This liberation perspective even within a cosmic Christology is so important in order to ward off the elitism of

²³. Ibid., p.72.

certain forms of Green Christologies, including that of Linzey. As David Hallman argues, a liberation approach is of cardinal import, as such an approach forces us to start with our own experience and because we cannot pretend that we all experience the ecological crisis in the same way. The poor and the oppressed are the worst sufferers of ecological destruction and hence the need for a liberative approach (from the view point of the poor) to ecological issues. This is the perspective of eco-justice.

It should be noted here that a detailed explication of a non-anthropocentric or cosmic Christology is given in Chapter 9 on the emerging ecotheology where the immediate task of liberation theology- the need to link the Jesus of the poor and the oppressed with the Jesus of the shoot of Jesse, the need to relate the Jesus who takes the side of the poor and the oppressed to the Jesus who hears the groans and travail of the whole creation, the need to link the Liberator Christ with the Cosmic Christ- is highlighted.

ECCLESIOLOGY.

One of the most radical insights of liberation theology is its concept of the Church. Moving away from the metaphysical concepts of institutional models, liberation theology conceives the Church as a 'people's movement'. People, especially the poor and the exploited, are the Church. (anthropocentrism is evident here, despite the radical grassroots orientation). According to Gutiérrez, Vatican II's view of the Church as a 'sacrament' had enormous possibilities for developing a model of Church which is socially oriented. The theology of the Church in the world is complemented by a 'theology of the world in the Church'.²⁴ In fact, the Basic Christian Communities (CEBs) were the offshoot of a pastoral response to the challenge of Vatican II. Hence Philip Berryman depicts the CEBs as "small, lay-led

²⁴. Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, op.cit., p.147.

communities motivated by Christian faith that see themselves as part of their communities and to establish a more just society".²⁵ It became almost the cell of the Church and were constituted by the poor. As the word 'basic' indicates, it was the people at the bottom strata of the society who constituted these groups and therefore the Church. These CEBs, thus, remodelled the framework of the Church and reflected the impulses of the grassroots communities. In this sense, it resembled the early apostolic Church. As Leonardo Boff says:

The Church springs from the people in the same way as the Church springs from the apostles.²⁶

Thus, the basic Christian Communities offered an alternative to the institutional model of the Church. It was, to use a term used by Boff, an ecclesiogenesis- the birth and beginning of a new Church.

The main contribution of Latin American liberation theology and of the CEBs is that it shifted the focus of ecclesiology from the hierarchy to the grassroots people; from the clergy to the laity; from the institutional interests of the affluent to the socio-political concerns of the poor and the oppressed. The problem of this ecclesiology is not just that it is anthropocentric in nature (The CEBs are still 'people' oriented), but that it also instils anthropocentric perspectives in others. This is an important aspect considering the influence liberation theology exerts on the Third World theology. This impact is clearly seen, for example, in Alwyn D'Souza, an Indian Christian theologian, when he summarises his understanding of

²⁵. Philip Berryman, Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts about the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond, op.cit., 1987, p.64.

²⁶. Leonardo Boff, Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church, London, Collins, p.7.

the church as people in the following way:²⁷

(i) people are the key to liberation.

(ii) people can never be people in slavery or oppression.

(iii) No true worship is possible in bondage.

(iv) people is mission.

People still continue to be the focus of theological reflection. 'Preferential option for the poor' (still anthropocentric albeit qualified) is the basis of Gutiérrez's ecclesiology. His ecclesiology coheres with his major theological contribution, namely, the reinterpretation of salvation as a single, yet complex process of historical liberation which incorporates the totality of human existence, holds James B. Nickodoff. The Church, according to Gutiérrez, is built around the poor.

The refusal to build the church around and for the poor constitutes a contradiction of the very essence of the ecclesial community and a rejection of the very essence of God's will to place (the poor) at the centre of the history of the Church.²⁸

Leonardo Boff, however, dwells on a cosmic ecclesiology from a Trinitarian perspective, bringing out the inter-relationship between human beings and the rest of creation. According to him, Trinity and ecology have one thing in common: both are relational. Ecology, like the Trinity, is a set of relationships. It includes and values everything and negates

²⁷. Alwyn D'Souza, Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology, p.518. [emphasis mine]

²⁸. James B. Nickoloff, "Church of the Poor: The Ecclesiology of Gustavo Gutiérrez" in Theological Studies, Vol.54, No.3, Sept. 1993, p.518.

nothing. This perception has serious ecclesiological ramifications, Boff maintains:

The ecclesial community must feel part of the human community, and the human community has to feel that it is part of the cosmic community. They all form part of the trinitarian community of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²⁹

For a liberation theologian of the stature of Leonardo Boff, to realise the cosmic importance of theological themes such as ecclesiology and the Trinity, is more than a welcome change, although it is still far too little, considering the enormous amount of literature produced on liberation theology which remains anthropocentric and which continue to be highly influential among various circles in the Third World. In other words, Boff's recent wisdom on ecology can, at this stage, be treated only as an exception rather than as a sweeping change occurring in liberation theology. Liberation theology, in other words, has a long way to go before it is liberated from its anthropocentrism and its socio-political and history determinism. As Raimundo Panikkar warns:

Ecclesiology is neither mere Sociology nor pure exegesis. It is a creative theological activity which requires an undimmed theological Charism.³⁰

From this perspective, liberation theology's ecclesiology reflects a rather 'dim' theological charism. Pointers for the formulation of a genuine ecclesiology from a liberative perspective are given in Chapter 9. The sphere of the Church, in liberation theology, should now be widened so as to encompass the whole cosmos. This is the challenge for the action-oriented

²⁹. Leonardo Boff, Ecology and Liberation, op.cit., p.48.

³⁰. Raimundo Panikkar, in Searching for an Indian Ecclesiology, op.cit., p.27.

liberative ecclesiology for the future.

PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR.

'Preferential option for the Poor' is a distinct theological theme in Latin American liberation theology, in fact, introduced and popularised by liberation theology. From this angle, liberation theology is a theology of the poor, by the poor, and for the poor. Its paradigm, the exodus event, is the best example for God's preferential option for the poor. Jesus Christ also exemplified his preferential option for the poor through his birth, ministry, death and resurrection. But this notion has also been a controversial one ever since it came into currency. Criticism such as that this option is rather too exclusive in that it excludes the rich, have been raised from time to time against liberation theology. Leonardo Boff, for one, does defend liberation theology's insistence on this guiding principle and answers the critique by saying that it is not meant to be an exclusive option, but only as a preferential option. In other words, it does not compromise the Church's essential character of universality. Stephen J. Pope, while defending and appreciating this thrust in liberation theology, however, calls for the adoption of the following framework in which, he suggests, the theme is to be interpreted:³¹

(i) the preferential option for the poor must be complemented with an account of the virtue of solidarity with the poor by which we shall make their problems our own.

(ii) it must also incorporate a sense of moral priorities that recognises the powerful 'differential pull' of other moral claims upon us.

(iii) it must also be based on a much more comprehensive

³¹. Stephen J. Pope, "Proper and Improper Partiality and the Preferential Option for the Poor" in Theological Studies, Vol.54, No.2, June 1993, pp.268-270.

'option' for the community and the common good.

It should be made clear that the objective of this discussion here is not to see whether the notion as such can be biblically or theologically justified. The burden of this discussion is rather, to see its limitation, as far as an integral ecotheology is concerned, namely its anthropocentric orientation. 'Preferential option for the Poor' in liberation theology, is still humanocentric. The last qualification suggested by Stephen Pope above, does in fact, indirectly point to this deficiency and the need to widen the horizons of this theme so as to include nature, 'the new poor'.

Leonardo Boff previously could see only the humanitarian dimension of St. Francis' notion of 'the preferential option for the poor'. Francis saw the poor with the eyes of the poor which allowed him to discover the values of the poor. In Francis, says Boff:

Humanitarian love was transformed into Christian love; anthropology became theology and Christology.³²

However, a significant development in Boff's thinking is that he does now make a link between the preferential option for the poor and the ecological concerns in St. Francis. Boff now affirms that in St. Francis, the option for the poor also meant a concern for the rest of creation as well. The challenge of St. Francis, therefore, is more than 'humanitarian'. It is 'creaturely' too. In St. Francis, a concern for the poor and that for the rest of creation is inseparable. For Boff, the new challenge of St. Francis is:

...that the option for the poor and the most impoverished of all... the option which the Poverello himself made, accords with tender love for the

³². Leonardo Boff, St. Francis: A Model for Human Liberation, Crossroad, New York, 1982, p.76. [emphasis mine]

creation. That was the love that took him to the lepers and to the wolf of Gubbio, which made him embrace beggars and speak to the birds.³³

The urgent challenge facing liberation theology today is to take this enlarging of the theme of 'preferential option for the poor' further and make it an integral thrust of liberation theology. Boff in his latest book also ventures to enlarge the scope of the dictum 'preferential option for the poor' when he says:

...in the sphere of the rights of the environment, we should widen the meaning of the option for the poor to include an option for the most threatened of other beings and species.³⁴

In the present Latin American context where the poor and nature are 'fellow sufferers', nature must be considered as part of 'the oppressed'. In this context, preferential option for the poor must also mean a special concern for the environment without which the plight of the poor is further worsened. It is in this vicious context of neo-colonial exploitation of the poor and of nature that the sympathizers and well-wishers of liberation theology have been urging liberation theology to link ecological concerns with the socio-political problems of the poor. Ingemar Hedström voices the following pertinent plea:

In the light of this ravaging of people and land in Latin America, we realize that the "preferential option for the poor" characteristic of Latin American liberation theologies, must be articulated as a

³³. Leonardo Boff, Ecology and Liberation, op.cit., pp.53-54.

³⁴. Ibid., p.89.

"preferential option for life".³⁵

There is growing realization of this need to view nature as one of the victims of oppression and exploitation along with the poor. K.C.Abraham, an Indian liberation theologian, echoes the same concern and thinks that liberation theology should now rise up to the ecological challenges. In his view:

...It is rightly observed that a true liberation will be possible not only by involving ourselves in struggles to liberate the oppressed human beings from their exploitation, but also by a conscious and concerted effort to liberate the bonded earth from the over exploitative attitudes of human beings.³⁶

Latin American liberation theology, therefore, must treat nature also under the category of the 'poor' and the 'oppressed'. The biblical base for this identification was discussed in the previous section on the exodus event. It must be said that, although mainline liberation theology is yet to incorporate this widening of the horizons of the category of 'the poor' and 'the oppressed' to include the exploited nature, various liberation movements in different parts of the Third World have made this integration. In Philippines, some of the Roman Catholic clergy, albeit strong champions of liberation theology, are now trying to introduce a green version of liberation theology which, in fact, is the need of the hour in the Third World. Young priests, protesting against the lethargic response of the Government towards logging, are now, campaigning against logging themselves. They are preaching ecology and in some places, they even head to the hills to stop the loggers. They are, in fact,

³⁵.Ingemar Hedström, "Latin America and the Need for a Life-Liberating Theology" in Charles Birch et. al (ed), Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1990, p.120.

³⁶. K.C.Abraham, "A Theological Response to Ecological Crisis" in Bangalore Theological Forum, op.cit., p.7.

doing the 'police work' in the form of forest guards. One of the leaders of this campaign, Gary Agcaroli, a priest, combines social justice and eco-justice when he explains the reasons for their campaign against logging:

We are anti-logging not only for ecological reasons but also because logging supports the status-quo... We want to change the present conditions.³⁷

These are the re-orientations in perceptions taking place in local people's movements in the Third World which liberation theology should pay attention and respond to. By taking the linkage of social justice and eco-justice, and by enlarging the scope of the 'preferential option for the poor' to include the 'new poor', nature, liberation theology can revitalize itself. This is actually done more easily in liberation theology as there are insights within liberation theology which, if properly interpreted, could in fact provide an ecological framework. As Linzey observes if the biblical meaning of the 'poor', for example, is "one who does not have what is necessary to subsist", as Gutiérrez himself seems to suggest, then, it would not be difficult, following this definition, to include the non-human creation whose lives are deformed and deprived.

CONCLUSION.

As already seen, Latin American liberation theology has predominantly been anthropocentric in its treatment of theological themes. In a way, it is true of almost all liberation theologies today, although a shift of emphasis is taking place in that liberation theologies have now begun to talk about ecological issues as part of the concerns of the oppressed. We have seen the prevailing anthropocentrism in liberation theology's explication of 'liberation' as salvation,

³⁷. Marites Vitug, "Faith in the Forest: A New Breed of Activist Priests Push a Green Version of Liberation Theology" in Far Eastern Economic Review, April, 1992, p.36.

Christology, Ecclesiology and the theme of 'preferential option for the poor'. The anthropocentrism and the socio-politico-history determinism in its interpretation of the Exodus event was discussed in the previous section. Although signs of liberation theology moving towards a cosmic perspective are slowly emerging, liberation theology remains largely anthropocentric and history oriented. Obvious changes are seen on practical fronts, that is, among the people's movements which link human rights and ecological concerns and fight for eco-justice. This is the concern that is to be reflected in the theology of liberation. One of the ways (beside the suggestions already made with regard to theological doctrines in liberation theology in this section and the hermeneutical changes proposed in the last section, and the changes proposed in social analysis in the following chapter) by which liberation theology can take up this challenge is to develop an ecological and liberative doctrine of creation, a doctrine liberation theology has so far left largely unattended. As pointed out in the previous chapter, by taking up the Covenant tradition such as the Sabbath, an integration of a theology of exodus and a theology of creation which is ecologically sensitive and socially liberative can be worked out. As Doróthee Sóelle puts it:

We need to achieve a synthesis of Creation and Liberation traditions that does not devalue the liberative tradition, but rather apprehends the Creation tradition from a liberative perspective.³⁸

A Creation theology must now supplement liberation theology. Once again, it is encouraging to note that Leonardo Boff has come to this conclusion and considers the neglect of 'creation' as the main drawback of major Christian theologies, including liberation theology. According to him, the dominant Christian

³⁸. Quoted in Eleazar S. Fernandez, "People's Cry, Creation's Cry: A Theologico-Ethical Reflection on Ecology from the Perspective of the Struggling Poor" in Tugon, Vol. XII, No. 2, 1992, p. 291.

theology for institutional and historic reasons concentrated much on redemption. Boff sees creation as "a mirror in which God sees himself and as the dance of God's love". According to him, by taking the doctrine of creation seriously, we can overcome anthropocentrism and develop a Christian responsibility towards nature. Although human beings are unique, this uniqueness can only be affirmed within the creation. Human beings are not alone, but are within creation. Humanity does not own the world because it came before humans. But the world has been given to human beings to cultivate and tend. Therefore, the relationship humanity has with creation is basically one of responsibility and moral relationship.³⁹ This, indeed, is a new beginning for liberation theology, coming out of a genuine search for a comprehensive liberation theology. As of now, this recent contribution of Boff remains an isolated expression of this quest for reform and restructuring in liberation theology. Latin American liberation theology has to listen to and learn from various expressions of 'Creation theologies' (an account of an ecological doctrine of Creation is given in Chapter 9). Or else, as John Cobb warns:

...there is a danger that liberation theology will become a doctrine of liberation in a general theology that is not itself liberated.⁴⁰

³⁹. Leonardo Boff, "Ecology and Theology", op.cit., p.113.

⁴⁰. Quoted in David Gosling, A New Earth, Covenanting For Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation, p.50.

CHAPTER 5. THE MARXIST SOCIAL ANALYSIS IN LIBERATION THEOLOGY.

INTRODUCTION.

One of the most important factors which makes liberation theology controversial is its use of Marxism. The use of Marxism in liberation theology has been a subject of many critiques. Perhaps, the most striking among them, at least for its distinctive perspective, is Alistair Kee's Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology, where he concludes that liberation theology has failed because it has not been Marxist enough. He identifies some of the problems with liberation theology's use of Marx. His main criticism is that liberation theology makes only a selective use of Marx which is not justifiable. This, however, is not convincing, as it is impossible to adopt everything that is proposed by Marx in a Christian theology. As Duncan Forrester puts it:

...to accept the Marxist critique (in full) would mean abandoning theology, the reality of Christian faith, and the truth claims of the gospel.¹

Liberation theology, as Kee himself acknowledges, does address three of the four major critiques of Marx on religion.² They

¹. Duncan B. Forrester, "Can Liberation Theology Survive 1989?" in Scottish Journal of Theology, Vol.47, No.2, pp.248-249.

². The following are the four critiques of Marx on religion:

(i) Religion as Reconciliation. According to Marx, religion reconciles man to an evil world with its injustices as if it were the real world that God willed which led Marx to pronounce one of the most controversial utterances ever made in history: "...religious suffering is at the same time a real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creatures, heart of the heartless world and the soul of the soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people".

(ii) Religion as Reversal. Feuerbach believed that man projects aspects of his being away from himself and objectifies them as attributes of God. In this reductionist interpretation of religion, there is an unconscious reversal of reality. Marx

are: religion as ideology; reconciliation; and historical materialism. Liberation theology answers these critiques and to some extent, recognises the values of historical materialism. However, Kee's main criticism is that Marx's fundamental critique of religion, the ontological one, that is, religion as the reversal of reality, is not addressed by liberation theology, and for this reason liberation theology will remain an ideology. Kee sees this omission as deliberate as it is hoped that theology can be purified by challenging and rejecting other criticisms. According to Kee only Leonardo Boff, among liberation theologians, tries to address this ontological critique of Marx. But then, Boff is wrong, says Kee, to say that Marx was not criticizing all religions (or theologies) but only a particular form of religion.

According to Kee, when it comes to the question of liberation of humanity, liberation theology considers Marxist atheism as an ally, because as an ideology, it (Marxist atheism) can purify faith in an age of consumerism and idolatry of wealth and state which is reversal of reality. But, on the other hand, liberation theology rejects atheism as an enemy when it amounts to a rejection of religion. According to Kee, one cannot hold on to such a position (if one is following Marx) which sees

applied the same notion to religion whereas Feuerbach was applying this to theology. This is Marx's ontological critique of religion.

(iii) Religion as Ideology. As a source and a form of ideology, a false consciousness, religion, according to Marx, serves the interests of the ruling class. He gave the examples of identifying the values of the Emperors with that of Christ during the Constantine period.

(iv) Historical Materialism as Religion. Ideology relates everything to its material base and everything is determined by the mode of production. For Marx, history is not guided by ideas primarily, but by matter and to change history it is not merely ideas but the material base and the mode of production that need to be changed. It necessarily involves class struggle. Alistair Kee, Marx and the Failure of Liberation Theology, S.C.M.Press, London, 1990, pp.12-39.

materialism and idolatry as reversal of reality and does not see religion in the same way, that is, as reversal of reality, because it contradicts Marx. Kee makes it very clear that if it is inversion of reality that money or state becomes mammon, then it must not be forgotten that, for Marx, religion itself is inversion of reality. All liberation theologians, according to Kee, avoids this criticism of Marx.

But this critique overlooks the fact that a genuine political theology can move beyond and even correct Marx. It is true, as Kee holds, that Marx's critique of religion was not about a particular religion or theology but about religion per se. This, in Marx's view, does not allow the possibility of any religion or theology which does not reflect the interests of the ruling class. Perhaps Marx himself would have changed his mind had he lived longer and seen something like liberation theology being developed. Machovec argues along these lines:

Marx developed his 'atheism' as a critique of conventional 19th century representations of God and should these change, then a genuine Marxist would have to revise his critique. Twentieth century theologians have worked out new and more dynamic models for thinking about God, so that often we Marxists do not know whether we are still atheists or not in this regard.³

And this is precisely what liberation theology has done, a new way of looking at the 'God question' which can be a corrective to Marx's ontological critique of religion. Liberation theology, in this sense, is an attempt to go beyond, not by overlooking Marx, but beyond Marx. Hence when Kee says, in using Marxism, Gustavo Gutiérrez becomes a Moses and like Moses Gutiérrez does

³. Quoted in David McLellan, Marxism and Religion, Macmillan Press, London, 1987, p.143.

not lead Latin America to the promised land, ⁴ it may be noted that in liberation theology Marx cannot be the Joshua for the Latin American people.

What is more interesting, though, is that Kee does not see (neither does liberation theology) the real inadequacy of the class struggle concept in the area of social analysis in today's context. As it has been pointed out by many scholars, in the area of social analysis, Marxism is not radical enough, that is, in its approach to the human conditions. As David McLellan makes clear, the Marxist picture of the centrality of the relations of production and therefore of the economic class are being questioned today. Race, gender, and caste have come to be seen as even more basic categories than class. From this viewpoint, according to McLellan, the emergence of Black, Feminist (and now Dalit theology as well) theologies have rendered the Marxist attitudes to religion distinctively beside the point.⁵ Perhaps, more importantly, Marxism (and liberation theology) has overlooked the ecological dimensions of oppression and exploitation, as it tried to subsume all forms of exploitation under the umbrella category of economic class. This is the real drawback of the Marxist social analysis, orientated towards the class struggles, which liberation theology has adopted as its 'tool' for social analysis. Therefore, this section tries to look at liberation theology's use of the Marxist tools of social analysis and to expose its limitations in responding to the present day ecological challenges which liberation theology needs to take seriously.

LIBERATION THEOLOGY'S USE OF THE MARXIST SOCIAL ANALYSIS.

In answering the critique of liberation theology from various quarters- that liberation theology is Marxist in its orientation and content- liberation theologians have made it clear that they

⁴.Alistair Kee, op.cit., p.174.

⁵. David McLellan, op.cit., p.170.

use Marxism only as a tool for social analysis. Liberation theology's critique of 'development', neo-colonialism and the capitalist economies such as the USA clearly bears the Marxist imprints. Gutiérrez even acknowledges this when he says:

Most of those who are aware of this situation and are active in challenging it are more or less inspired by Marxism.⁶

As 'social analysis' in Marxism is an important concept, pregnant with rich perspectives, it is worthwhile looking at the concept itself and its meaning in Marxism. Father Cottier defines 'analysis' as follows:

...a method of inquiry that consists in breaking down a complex reality to its simplest elements. This breaking down must also make it possible to clarify these elements- that is, to determine their relative place and importance. Thus, one will distinguish, thanks to the analysis, what is primary and secondary, essential and accidental, cause and effect, profound reality or mere appearance.⁷

Following this definition, the Marxist analysis can be seen as 'social analysis' in a broad sense, that is, including the whole of human reality with its economic, sociological, political, religious and historical dimensions. Or more specifically, as Rosa Luxemburg describes:

Marxism includes two essential elements: on the one hand, analysis, critique and on the other, the active will of the working class that constitutes the revolutionary element. Whoever does only analysis or

⁶. Gustavo Gutiérrez, (quoted in Alistair Kee, op.cit., p.167.

⁷. Quoted in René Coste, Marxist Analysis and Christian Faith, Claretian Publications, Philippines, 1985, p.16.

only critique does not represent Marxism, but a pathetic body of that doctrine.⁸

The Marxist analysis, therefore, is here understood in its wider meaning, including analysis, critique and praxis. Arthur McGovern describes the important components of Marxian analysis.⁹ It employs a method of studying the societal changes in history (historical materialism). This views the modes of production and economic structures as far more decisive in shaping history and society than political ideologies. The Marxist analysis also has 'class struggle' as its pivotal point. The class struggle emerges out of divisions of labour and ownership as driving forces in history. It also consists of a critique of religion which is seen as pacifying the poor and justifying the status-quo. Much more important (especially for liberation theology) is the fact that Marx formulated a sharp critique of the capitalist system.

The above mentioned components are interrelated. In a sense, it is the economic divisions that link them together. It is no wonder, then, Marx of the mature years, focused specifically on economic analysis. For Marx, economic analysis was basically a critical analysis of the then Capitalism. This was, as René Coste explains, because of his conviction that:

production is in the end, the determining factor of all human reality.¹⁰

The infrastructure of society, in Marx's view, is the dialectic between the forces of production and the relations of production. It is the materialistic foundation of history or

⁸. Quoted in *Ibid.*, p.16.

⁹. Arthur F. McGovern, "Dependence Theory, Marxist Analysis, and Liberation Theology" in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro (eds), The Future of Liberation Theology: Essays in Honour of Gustavo Gutiérrez, *op.cit.*, pp.278-280.

¹⁰. René Coste, *op.cit.*, p.17.

historical materialism.

Liberation theology found Marx's critique of Capitalism very relevant and used it as a 'tool' to analyze capitalist structures in Latin America. How is the Marxist analysis used in liberation theology? Berryman has this to say:

Theory is regarded as a tool for cutting through the appearances to get at the heart of things.¹¹

It was the Marxist critique of Capitalism that influenced Gutiérrez, for instance, in his critique of 'developmentalism' and to move towards an alternative paradigm of 'liberation'. According to Gutiérrez, Western colonialism, through its economic policies, introduced the concept of development in Latin America. He exposed the dangers of this concept in his Theology of Liberation. Development is identified with economic growth, seen exclusively in terms of per capita consumption, bereft of social justice. Gutiérrez, rejecting this model, came up with the notion of 'liberation' perceived as a total social process of emancipation. It analyses the distribution of goods and services and also the systems of relations among the agents of its economic life. This view has an ethical dimension in that it concerns human values. Gutiérrez acknowledges his debt to Marx when he says:

It would be a mistake to think that...converging viewpoints are found in Marxist inspired positions.¹²¹

Capitalism, with the help of the Marxist analysis, was identified as the root cause of all social and economic problems in Latin America. Gutiérrez had no doubt in his mind about which

¹¹. Arthur McGovern, op.cit., p.282.

¹². Gustavo Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, op.cit., p.16.

system prevailed in Latin America- it was Capitalism.

...(Capitalism) is the only system that really exists in Latin America, save for Cuba...¹³

This brought him to the conclusion that Capitalism has to be uprooted in order to solve the problems of Latin America, because:

"...a truly liberated society cannot be reached by Capitalist means"¹⁴

Gutierrez, along with other liberation theologians, concluded that capitalist developmentalism was synonymous with 'reformism' which only helps keep the status-quo. This took Gutiérrez and his fellow theologians a step further. Gutiérrez, replacing 'development' with 'liberation', argued that only a radical break with the status-quo could lead to a liberated, socialist society- once again a clear Marxist influence. Rejection of Capitalism and the option for 'Socialism' was decisive and left no option for a middle way between Capitalism and Socialism. Segundo made it explicitly clear in the following words:

I think that the whole phenomenon of adopting a 'third way' presents profound methodological challenge to liberation, and represents the ultimate consequence of an erroneous way of formulating the whole problem of relationship between Theology and Politics.¹⁵

Of course, liberation theology uses 'Socialism' in a qualified

¹³. (Gutiérrez, A Theology of Liberation, op.cit., p.65). Quoted in Peter Burns, "The Problem of Socialism in Liberation Theology" in Theological Studies, Vol.53, Summer, 1992, p.495.

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Ibid., pp.497-498.

manner. Almost all liberation theologians have taken pains to disassociate themselves and their views of Socialism from the traditional forms of Socialism exemplified in the erstwhile Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But the Marxist emphasis on the economic dimensions of this state, that is, Socialism, is evidently emphasised in liberation theology. For Segundo, for example, Socialism is a political system in which the masses have the ownership of the means of production:

By Socialism I do not mean a complete long term social project- hence one that is endowed with a particular ideology or philosophy. I simply mean a political regime in which ownership of the means of production is taken away from individuals and handed over to higher institutions whose main concern is the common good. By 'Capitalism' I mean, a political regime in which the ownership of the goods of production is left open to economic competition.¹⁶

As Peter Burns argues, the acceptance of Socialism by liberation theologians does not depend on a prior evaluation of the central Marxist dogma of historical materialism.

The use of the Marxist social analysis is particularly evident in Miranda and the Boff brothers. Miranda even reads the Bible from a perspective opened by Marxism. The Marxist social analysis helps Miranda to identify the philosophies of oppression with Capitalism and reject private ownership of the means of production. By joining faith with dialectics, Miranda says:

But if Marxism does not recognise that Capitalism is the consummation and the developing of oppression which was inherent in human civilization since biblical times, then it is denying dialectics and

¹⁶. Ibid., p.499.

attributing the birth of Capitalism to exterior causes.¹⁷

Gutiérrez also considers the private ownership of resources as a major problem and as something to be done away with in humanity's search for a socialist society. While criticising Capitalism and private property, Gutiérrez also takes care to warn against distorted applications of Marxism and Socialism such as state bureaucracies and party dictatorships.

Yet another key insight which liberation theology incorporates from Marx is the concept of 'class struggle'. Leonardo Boff used the category of 'class' to criticise the Roman Catholic Church on its class dimensions. Gutiérrez also employs 'class' perspective in his theological as well as social analysis. According to him, to ignore the reality of class struggles is to be deceived. The poor and the oppressed belong to a social class which is exploited by another class. The Marxist overtones of Gutiérrez's understanding of 'class' is reflected in the following words:

...the exploited class...the proletariat is an active one. Hence an option for the poor is an option for one social class against another. An option for the poor is a new awareness of class confrontation..."¹⁸

Gutiérrez identifies the poor with the (Marxist) proletariat and calls for a class struggle. The importance of class conflicts is further emphasised in another passage in Gutiérrez:

The marginalised nonpersons have a way of understanding history and their social situation (social sciences, Marxist analysis, Socialist

¹⁷. Quoted in Alistair Kee, op.cit., p.204.

¹⁸. Gustavo Gutiérrez, The Power of the Poor in History, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1983, p.60.

path)...It is impossible to situate ourselves in the situation of that nonperson and not carry forward a conflictual struggle...¹⁹

All these passages from liberation theology make it clear that liberation theology does use Marxist social analysis to examine the Latin American context of which the main problem is identified as Capitalism. In this process, liberation theology, consciously and critically, employs Marxist categories and propositions such as 'the ownership of the means of production', 'private property', and 'class struggle'. It also demonstrates that liberation theology's use of concepts such as 'exploitation', and 'alienation' is not simply an 'heuristic' use of Marx, as McGovern has suggested²⁰ but does reflect serious Marxist applications.

Gregory Baum rightly maintains that liberation theology has incorporated into its system the Marxist class struggle approach for its analysis and praxis. According to Baum:

Liberation theologians speak of "social analysis" in the singular, making use of Marxist-style class analysis which brings to highlight the contradictions present in the social order and orients the imagination towards the transformation of the present system.²¹

Although liberation theologians like Gutiérrez emphasise the presence of the Marxist analytical tools such as class struggle,

¹⁹. Quoted in Paul E. Sigmund, Liberation Theology at the Crossroads; Democracy or Revolution?, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, p.66.

²⁰. According to McGovern, "Occurrence of 'exploitation', 'alienation', 'imperialism' etc are rather heuristic uses of Marx and does not reflect scientific and empirical Marxism being applied" in McGovern, "Dependency Theory, Marxism, and Liberation Theology", op.cit., p.283.

²¹. Paul Sigmund, op.cit., p.67.

they do not imply and, in fact, reject any identification of social sciences exclusively with Marxism. As the Boffs have maintained all along, Marxism is used by them only as a companion and not as a guide. Leonardo Boff in his latest book Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm, reflecting on the future of liberation theology as well as Socialism, makes it emphatically clear:

...Marx was neither the father nor the godfather of liberation theology...²²

The main reason for liberation theology to view Marxism as an important tool is because it believes that Marxism has identified Capitalism as the systemic cause of all social and economic exploitation of the masses. This liberation theology takes seriously, and as the discussion so far establishes, liberation theology does engage Marxist concepts and categories in its social analysis. But the real question is whether the Marxist social analysis has anything to offer in today's context of Latin America and other parts of the Third World, marked by serious ecological havoc. This is the burden of the rest of this section. The focus here is confined to the relevance of the Marxist analysis in dealing with the environmental issues. (This section assumes that the Marxist critique of Capitalism still has much force). It is argued here that Marxism, even with its positive potential in dealing with the capitalist systems, however, remains far from helpful in coming to terms with the complex modern ecological context. Liberation theology, being a theology of the poor and the oppressed, should now realise this inadequacy of Marxism, in a context where economic exploitation of the poor (the main focus of liberation theology and of Marxism) is intertwined with the environmental destruction of the Third World (an area both Marxism and liberation theology have usually ignored). Since liberation theology has seldom attempted to reevaluate Marx from an

²². Leonardo Boff, Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm, op.cit., p.120.

ecological perspective convincingly, an attempt is made here to see if Marxism and its social analysis can address the ecological problems convincingly.

However, at this point, it is worth looking at Boff's latest attempt in this direction in his Ecology and Liberation, which, is the first major attempt yet within the mainline Latin American liberation theology to look beyond the Marxist approach. In this book, he takes his distance from the elitist forms of ecological concerns often expressed in the forms of environmentalism or conservationalism and in some green political parties. He calls for a 'social ecology', an ecological framework which is geared to social justice. He concedes now that all social problems today have to take into account the ecological aspects, along with other dimensions. He writes:

Just as, from the 1960s onward, the social and human sciences formed the necessary means of understanding and empowering political activities, so today ecology has to be taken into account in any theoretical understanding and social activity, if these are to make their expected contribution to assuring the integrity of creation, and in particular to safeguarding all forms of life, beginning with those that are most threatened.²³

Although this realization of the importance of the ecological perspective is welcome, Boff, however, leaves the readers of his latest book in confusion with regard to his re-evaluation of Marxism and Socialism. Whilst he denounces Leninism and Stalinism as aberrations of Socialism, (he identifies the Leninist one party system as the most important cause, among others, of the collapse of socialism) his 'critique' (his defence rather) of the Marxist analysis and his upholding of the

²³. Ibid., pp.84-85.

'class analysis' is at complete odds with his adoption of the ecological framework.

Boff still sees Capitalism as a scourge and is more than convinced that it can benefit only the rich and the privileged. Although liberation theology never adopted Socialism as the model to be followed, it found the Marxist critique of Capitalism helpful, and therefore, adopted some arguments from the Marxist tradition. In that sense Marx is of help even today, affirms Boff:

These arguments helped- and still help- to overturn the perverse logic of gain paid by misery and the dehumanization of the masses.²⁴

Marx analyzed and criticised capitalist structures and formulated the ideal of Socialism in which there will be no private ownership of the means of production and subordination of labor to capital and profit. Marx, Boff concedes, considered the 'economic perspective' as the basic one to analyze social realities. On the one hand, Boff, in this book, begins to appreciate the ecological paradigm to look at the social problems of today. But, on the other hand, he still holds on to the Marxist framework of 'economic' and 'class' analysis, which, as will be seen in the following section, cannot go together. To those who think that liberation theology, with this work by Boff, is undergoing a radical restructuring, it is disappointing, when Boff writes:

Today, the insight of Marx, which is fundamentally correct, has been enriched by the contributions of cultural anthropology and of feminist insight and ecology.²⁵

²⁴. Ibid., p.98.

²⁵. Ibid., p.116.

After all the criticisms of liberation theology's adherence to class analysis, even from the sympathetic progressive circles, all what Boff offers is to repeat familiar rhetoric:

In a society consisting of classes and no longer of orders, such as our own, the class category is essential for understanding social structures and conflicts of interest...²⁶

We have already seen that in different contexts marked by various kinds of exploitation other categories which are more fundamental to those social contexts, such as caste (by the dalits in India), gender (by feminists), tribe and ethnicity (by the indigenous people) have already replaced the class category. Even in Latin America, the 'class category' of Marx cannot be the most suitable category because as Robert V. Andelson and James M. Dawsey argue:

Yet in Latin America, the proletariat (a term explicitly reserved by Marx for industrial wage workers) is relatively affluent; it ranks in the top quarter of income earners. The truly marginalised masses, there, as in the Third World at large, are composed of tenant farmers and other agricultural labourers, on the one hand, and jobless or casually employed, urban slum dwellers, on the other hand. Of these, the first group corresponds most closely to the peasantry which Marx considered hopelessly passive and reactionary; the second, to the 'lumpenproletariat' which he thought so degraded that it could generate only beggars, criminals, and 'scabs'.²⁷

²⁶. Ibid. [emphasis mine]

²⁷. Robert V. Andelson and James M. Dawsey, From Wasteland To Promised Land; Liberation Theology for a Post-Marxist World, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1992, p.57.

In typical Marxist fashion, what Boff is offering to do in this much awaited book, in the form of 'change', is to subsume ecology and other categories under the overarching 'class' category. 'Class' and therefore 'economic dimensions' retain their primacy over other factors. What needs to be done in today's ecological context, Boff assumes, is to 'enrich' class with other dimensions so that it can be an 'integral class' perspective:

The class struggle...by becoming sensitive to ecological and holistic interests, acquires a new style. Now not only the interests of a class, or even of society as a whole, are taken into account, but also the welfare of nature.²⁸

The Marxist tendency to swallow other factors is echoed in the following words of Boff:

Marxism, enriched by cultural, ecological, and feminist analysis, is still an instrument on the hands of the oppressed for overturning the mechanisms that produce their poverty. The aspect of the truth Marxism perceived in the past will always be true, for the conditions of destitution have not changed.²⁹

This is where Boff is wrong and his re-look at Marxism does not go far enough at all and which makes his second look at Marxism and ecology nothing more than a knee-jerk reaction to the growing criticism of liberation theology's neglect of ecological concerns. This leaves one to say that liberation theology is yet to take Marxism to task. For one thing, the conditions of destitution, as Marx thought they existed, have indeed changed. It is not only that poverty and other forms of deprivations are the results of capitalist systems, but it is also true that

²⁸. Leonardo Boff, Ecology and Liberation, op.cit., p.117.

²⁹. Ibid., p.120.

poverty is caused by environmental destructions for which both capitalist and socialist development models have to take blame. Boff, to the dismay of his sympathetic readers, does not deal with the link between poverty and ecological destruction. Neither does he realise that Marx has nothing significant to offer for ecological problems, as it is made clear in the following section. Boff's rather too simplistic perception that the Marxist class category can be enriched by all other important factors such as gender and ecology does not work in real terms, especially with regard to the ecological crisis. As long as the class perspective in Marxism is retained as the fundamental category within which all other categories are subsumed, as Boff seems to suggest, liberation theology will be seen to be slavishly adhered to the Marxist framework. In other words, Marxism can only be one of the stepping stones, not the primary step in social analysis today. This Boff does not concede. Hence, the incompatibility of Marxist 'economic class' analysis with its view of development with an integral ecological vision. The task for liberation theology today is not to 'add' ecology to economy or just to accommodate the concerns of ecology within the broader concerns of economy. Ecology is to be accepted as the umbrella category today.

MARXISM AND ECOLOGY.

It seems to be generally assumed that Marxism has little to offer to ecological problems. One needs to remember that when Marx wrote his works, ecology was not an issue. Having said that, one also needs to look at Marxism to see if it can provide any perspective to deal with the present day ecological catastrophes. Although, the majority response to this question seems to be in the negative, there are others who would take issue with this predominant approach and would want to defend Marxism and propose that Marxism has much to offer in this regard, provided it is reinterpreted. One of the most important advocates of this school of thought is Reiner Grundmann, who in his Marxism and Ecology has not only vigorously defended the

Marxist anthropocentrism (this is when anthropocentrism is being viewed as one of the key attitudes leading to ecological issues), but also goes a step further in advancing that only an anthropocentric perspective can solve the problems of the environment today. While defending the Marxist stance on ecology, Grundmann also thinks that Marxism needs to be reinterpreted, especially the traditional perception of historical materialism. In his view, Marx's predominant view that Capitalism is the (only) reason for ecological problems does not hold good any more and, therefore, a Marxist solution to the problems of ecology must transcend the traditional Marxist perspectives.

Is capitalist production the only cause of ecological problems?

For Marx, all ecological problems were the result of Capitalism and its mode of production. In other words, he tried to tie all ecological issues to the capitalist economy. In his The Jewish Question, Marx linked the degradation of the natural environment to the dominion of money. He thus wrote:

Money is the jealous God of Israel...
and practical debasement of nature.³⁰

In Capital, Marx even identified large scale industry and agriculture as the root causes of ecological hazards.³¹ Once again, it was the large industries and agriculture within the capitalist system that were referred to here. In the Conditions of the Working Class, Engels mentioned the devastating effects of the expansions of industry on the natural environment, while

³⁰. Quoted in Reiner Grundmann, Marxism and Ecology, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, p.78.

³¹. Quoted in Grundmann, op.cit., pp.79-80.
"Large- scale industry and large-scale mechanised agriculture work together...they join hands in further course of development in that the industrial system in the country-side also enervates the labourers, and industry and commerce, for their part supply agriculture with the means of exhausting the soil".

Marx observed that:

...the Capitalist transformation of the production process is at the same time the martyrdom of the producers, and every advance in Capitalist agriculture is an advance in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but also of robbing the soil.³²

But as Grundmann argues, blaming Capitalism alone for the ecological problems does not take us anywhere, for the potential of public enterprises for causing ecological hazards are as great as that of private enterprises when they employ high-risk technology and resort to unlimited industrialization as, indeed, was clearly illustrated in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries. But does this invalidate Marx? Grundmann's answer is an emphatic 'No', because Marx had much to offer on ecological concerns.

Marx in the Paris Manuscripts talked about the 'humanization of nature and naturalization of man'. The Young Marx, it seems, had a strong desire to harmonise nature and man. His early writings do present an ecologically friendly Marx. Communism, according to him, does not merely overcome the alienation of human beings, but it also puts an end to the alienation of nature, and brings both human beings and nature to its essential being. Communism, in this sense, is 'perfected naturalism'. Marx recognised that human beings are part of nature. Human beings being dependent on nature for its survival have to organise their 'interchange' with nature. In this interaction with nature, humanity uses skills, tools and knowledge which can be called 'technology'. Marx, locating technology between humanity and nature, called for the 'transformation' of nature with the help of technology:

Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with

³². Quoted in Tom Bottomore, A Dictionary of Marxist Thought, Blackwell Reference, Oxford, 1983, p.138.

nature.³³

According to Schmidt, Marx had a double concept of nature. On the one hand, he saw nature as the totality of all existing 'reality' comprising human beings and the 'external nature', that is, the universe. On the other, he also viewed nature as something which is there only for human beings. This points to the gradual departure of Marx from an eco-friendly attitude to an exclusive anthropocentric perspective. In Capital, Marx clearly departed from his early vision of the 'nature-man harmony'. Here, as Moltmann observes, the 'resurrection of nature' is completely struck off. The new society is orientated towards the benefit of humanity, and that too at the expense of nature. Nature is only a 'resource', an 'object of labour' which human beings are to transform into consumer products. When it came to the relationship between humanity and nature, the mature Marx remained confined to Bacon and Descartes because, as once again Moltmann sees it:

Marxism can only think of a practical relationship between human beings and nature which is work...nature is an object that it is to be worked on, and as raw materials, for production...³⁴

However, it is precisely this emphasis in Marx which Grundmann conceives as a potential insight in Marx on ecological issues. According to him, the apparent disregard for nature in Marx can be explained by looking at the Hegelian distinction between the 'first' and 'second nature'. 'First nature', here stands for nature before it is transformed by humanity and the 'second nature' refers to the transformed nature (culture, history, and society). According to Marx, humanity by transforming nature, converts first nature into second nature which will be merged

³³. Quoted from Capital in Grundmann, op.cit., p.90.

³⁴. Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation, op.cit., p.45.

in the communist society.

But the question to be posed here is whether Marx takes those aspects of nature which are not relevant for material production? Grundmann thinks that Marx would answer in the negative, if a 'deontological respect for nature' is required as a starting point or if the 'intrinsic worth' of nature is taken to be the *sine qua non*, because Marx clearly adopted an instrumental view of nature to which, suggests Grundmann, aesthetic and recreational dimensions can be added. The issue of Marx's instrumental perspective is examined in the following section. It should be noted that the distinction between the first and second nature, does imply an instrumental perspective, as it assumes that nature, without being transformed by humanity, cannot contribute to culture, history and society- the second nature. As Jan Elstern points out, Marx's views do not hold good for the millions of solar systems outside the reach of humanity.³⁵ This brings us to Marx's anthropocentrism.

Anthropocentrism and Instrumental Perspective in Marx.

Many have argued that Marx's concern with the exploitation of human social relations does not extend to the exploitation of nature. Anthony Giddens calls this Marxist stance a 'Promethean' attitude which is indefensible because the 'expansion of productive resources' naturally leads to ecological degradation. (It may be noted here that Marx even praised Capitalism for developing the productive forces). But Grundmann disagrees with Giddens and many others, and staunchly defends Marx's anthropocentrism. He declares in unequivocal and bold terms:

Anthropocentrism and mastery over nature, far from causing ecological problems, are the starting-points from which to address them.³⁶

³⁵. Quoted in Grundmann, op.cit., p.97.

³⁶. Ibid., p.2.

Grundmann concedes that Marx was anthropocentric and, indeed, was a follower of Bacon and Descartes. But this does not necessarily make Marx anti-ecological, maintains Grundmann. Following Bacon, Marx distinguished between two forms of humanity's relationship with nature:³⁷

(i) nature is merely 'appropriated' i.e. in societies of hunters and gatherers.

(ii) nature is not only appropriated, but also transformed.

Marx, in one of the passages in his Grundrisse, seems to reject the idea of dominion of nature, since it would amount to the breaking of a free will. In his own words:

Basically the appropriation of animals, land etc. cannot take place in a master-servant relation... The presupposition of master-servant relation is the appropriation of an alien will.³⁸

But it would be unwise to develop a 'Green Marx' out of such passages. To the contrary, while explaining this statement, Marx clearly betrays his exclusive anthropocentrism. According to him, the condition of breaking an 'alien will' is a limiting case which is of little interest. It is immaterial whether domination is achieved by breaking or respecting (or by transforming, influencing, manipulating) an alien will. What matters most is that the outcome of domination should serve the interests of the dominator. In other words, Marx emphatically rules out any intrinsic worth for nature. According to Grundmann, as far as Marx was concerned:

The question of whether nature possesses a will (or a soul) of its own, therefore, is primarily a

³⁷. Ibid., p.58.

³⁸. Quoted in Grundmann, op.cit., p.61.

question of religious interest.³⁹

According to Marx, an eco-centric approach can only be inconsistent unless it adopts a religious perspective. This is an important point in a critique of liberation theology and its use of Marxism. As Marx himself concedes, the intrinsic worth of nature does have religious and theological relevance. (Gutiérrez also affirmed this religious importance of nature's intrinsic worth, as seen in the previous chapter, in his On Job). Once liberation theology accepts the religious importance of the intrinsic worth of creation, Marx, then, is of little relevance as far as ecological problems are concerned, because he outrightly rules out nature's intrinsic worth.

Nature, in Marx, is not anthropomorphous. It has no end in itself, except the ones imposed by humanity upon it. However, according to Marx, human beings have to respect the laws of nature, in the process of imposing their ends on it. In this sense, domination does not necessarily imply violation, because mastery over nature can also be liberative, not necessarily destructive. In Grundmann's view, Marx's rejection of a teleological structure to nature does not blind him to ecological problems. On the other hand, it is contained within his general position which views nature as humanity's inorganic body. (It may be noted that this view is in tune with the general Marxist tendency to subsume specific realities and categories like gender, race, caste, and now ecology under its broad umbrella category 'class').

Marx's view of mastery over nature and his rejection of the intrinsic worth of nature have to do with his view of human nature. It is because of their natural (pertaining to the brain) and social (common goals, traditions of know-how, skills etc) characters, that human beings are able to harness nature for their ends. In Grundrisse, Marx wrote:

³⁹. Ibid.

Nature becomes purely an object for humankind, purely a matter of utility, ceases to be recognised as a power of itself, and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as the ruse to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or a means of production.⁴⁰

Marx, thus, retains the exclusive instrumental view of nature. There is absolutely no scope for nature's intrinsic worth. In other words, there is no place in Marx for the 'first nature'. All that matters is the 'second nature', the transformed nature by humanity, because according to Marx, the more nature is transformed (used and exploited) the more its laws are understood. And for Marx, communism is the consummation of this process where mankind will be able to control its own working of the natural environment.

Grundmann's defence of the Marxist anthropocentrism is bold, but far from convincing. He seems to operate on an 'either or' framework. According to him, one has to be either exclusively in favour of an instrumental view of nature or an exclusive supporter of the intrinsic worth approach. His reference to Passmore's distinction between these two views⁴¹ confirms this watertight bi-polarization of the two schools of thought. Ascribing intrinsic worth to nature does not mean one has no right whatsoever, irrespective of the circumstances, to 'transform' nature. Nobody would deny the instrumental view of nature, as there can be no human life without nature being used in some way or other. The point is that these two views can be held in balance, which possibility Marxism seems to reject. At its best, the Marxist anthropocentrism (as interpreted by

⁴⁰. Quoted in Grundmann, op.cit., p.99.

⁴¹. Grundmann, op.cit., p.83.

According to Passmore, on the instrumental view of nature, wilderness and species ought to be preserved only if, and in so far as, they are useful to man. On the intrinsic view, they ought to be preserved even if their continued existence were demonstrably harmful to human interests.

Grundmann as 'a responsible mastery over nature'), is little different from the 'stewardship' concept which is being popularised today, because it also can operate without according any intrinsic worth to nature. Taking human needs and interests as the only criteria, ecological problems can never be solved, as there can always be some justification for ever increasing human greed, often in the guise of 'needs', in an increasingly consumerist society of today. More importantly, from a Christian religious and theological perspective, the Marxist stance of rejecting the intrinsic worth of nature is unacceptable, because there is intrinsic worth affirmed in the Bible and in Christian theology, as we shall see in chapter 9. Liberation theology would do well to recognise this inadequacy of Marxist social analysis, that is, its incapability to deal with the environmental problems of today.

Historical Materialism reinterpreted- a Marxist solution to ecological challenges?

While rejecting the predominant Marxist approach of blaming Capitalism and the institution of private property alone for the ecological problems, Grundmann proposes a reinterpretation of Marx's historical materialism which he thinks can offer a constructive perspective to ecological issues. Conceding a kind of 'economic determinism' in Marx, he also maintains that in Marx one could also come across a 'social determinism' alongside the much talked about economic determinism. In fact, Marx believed in both technological and social determinism, as he operated with a twofold theoretical interest. They are: (i) an historical element (to find out which 'variable' explains most) and (ii) a critical element (to estimate the technological and social possibilities and requirements for a communist society.) Marx wavered between the two interests and resorted to determinism and reductionism of one or the other. Marx had an evolutionary approach with regard to historical materialism. The development of the modes of production and technology is gradual. It follows that the present mode of production and

technology must have forerunners in the previous evolutionary stage. This is the way Marx wants to establish a kind of 'elective affinity', as Grundmann puts it, between machinery and Capitalism. Capital is without any limits, and machinery does not depend on craft skills of workers, nor on an increased working population in order to produce more commodities. The sole limitation is physical and technical in nature- limits of raw materials. Hence, according to Marx, a worker who is employed by the capitalist machinery gets dispossessed. However, it is possible to conceive of machinery independently of (bad) capitalist use. It, then, follows, for Marx, that a post-capitalist society must also be a post-machinery society. The theoretical scheme employed by Marx is called historical materialism, from an evolutionary perspective which consists of three aspects:

(i) the forces of production (artisan, manufacture and machine products).

(ii) the mode of production (use-value and commodity production).

(iii) the relations of production (Slavery, Feudalism. Capitalism and Communism).

The following table vividly describes the evolutionary model of historical materialism.⁴²

⁴². Ibid., p. 212.

Mode of production.	Antiquity	Feudalism	Capitalism	Communism
Main technology	Tools	Tools, manufacture	manufacture, machine	???
Form of production	use-value	use-value/ exchange-value	exchange value	use-value
purpose of	production for needs	production for needs	production for surplus	production for needs
Form of socialization	social production, regulated by blind rules	political regulation; guilds and estates, partly markets.	independent producers, market regulation	social production regulated by conscious plan

According to this 'new' Marxist approach, it is not just the private property which fetters the development of the productive forces, as it is also not the institution of state planning. According to Marx, Capitalism tries to reduce both labour and raw materials. (This explains why Capitalism would be interested in the recycling of only those raw materials which are relatively expensive). Marx's moral base for arguing against this trend is his goal of abandoning all kinds of alienation. Hence, he thought, Socialism would bring about non-enslaving forms of production with a synthesis of ancient and modern societies; that is, with the use-value production (quality of production) of the former and the general availability of commodities in modern capitalist societies (quantity of production).

The historical condition for this synthesis of 'happiness' of

the ancient society and the 'material wealth' for the greatest number of people is a sufficient level of production forces which would free humanity from wrestling with nature to a large degree. Marx, in fact, praised Capitalism for developing the productive forces which served this purpose. But:

Capitalism still does not bring about a full social mastery and regulation of nature.⁴³

Marx was also against an 'anti-modern' approach because he believed that people only set themselves tasks which they are able to fulfil. For Marx, in Communism, humanity will achieve this rational and reasonable mastery over nature.

Once again, this 'post-Marxian' sociology with a genuine historical materialism, as Grundmann calls it, is not convincing and consistent. For one thing, Marx's position on machine technology is ambivalent, to say the least. As it is clear from the table above, Marx himself was not sure of the extent of technological development. His historical condition of Socialism, that is, the point of fulfilling sufficient level of production for the greatest number of people is once again vague, even dangerously simplistic. This has to be seen against his view that humanity will attempt only those things that they are able to achieve, which is not convincing at all and certainly does not match reality. Grundmann, is quite right to view a technological deterministic interpretation of historical materialism, which sees technological evolution as an autonomous process, as ecologically untenable. But as Jonathan Hughes argues, his argument against it is unlikely to convince people on both sides of the argument. To quote Hughes:

His argument against it, however, is unlikely to satisfy those who maintain that the development of technology is beyond human control, since he

⁴³. Ibid., p.228.

demonstrates only the inapplicability of one particular model of autonomous technology. Equally, the suggestion that classical historical materialism is contradicted by the non-autonomy of technology and must therefore be replaced by systems theory will fail to convince those Marxists who emphasise the reaction of relations of production upon the development of the productive forces that bring them into existence, and who see in *Capital* a powerful elaboration of the claim in the *Communist Manifesto* that the Capitalist mode of production is historically unprecedented in its compulsion constantly to revolutionise the instruments of production.⁴⁴

As Hughes further observes, the above consideration shows that Grundmann's central theme of society's ability to direct technological development cannot be settled by an examination of society and technology in general, but should also take into account the fact that this relation could be specific to various modes of production.

Marx's praise of Capitalism for its production forces also implies the fact that his own production mode is not radically different from the capitalist one- both orientated towards high technology and mega industries which, in turn, demand large scale exploitation of raw materials. The only difference, perhaps, is that the capitalist production is profit motivated whereas the socialist (Marxist) production is supposed to be geared to fairer redistribution of products. Even this objective has not been achieved in any of the so-called socialist societies. This is why 'recycling' cannot be seen as the answer to ecological problems. (According to Marx, the capitalist forces will recycle only those materials which are relatively expensive). This is because, recycling, without at the same time

⁴⁴. Jonathan Hughes, "The Red and the Green" (Review of Grundmann, *op.cit.*) in *Radical Philosophy*, 63, Spring 1993, p.38.

checking the amount of production, does not relieve the pressure on the raw materials and therefore on nature. Hence, the solution to the ecological problems lies not with historical materialism, even in the reinterpreted form, precisely because of its ambiguity about the nature of machinery and its failure to set any limit to the process of production. As in Capitalism, Marxism also believes in mass production, at the expense of nature. After all, both systems are centred on 'materialist' philosophies. As far as liberation theology is concerned, which is the focus of this chapter, historical materialism is rightly rejected by it. While the Marxist analysis helps us to identify Capitalism as one of the main causes of ecological problems, we also need to call into question any vision of a production process which is exclusively materialistic (historical or philosophical). From this perspective, that is to say, as far as ecological scenario is concerned, there is little to choose between Capitalism and Socialism (Marxism), for both fail to set limits to 'growth' (often understood vis-a-vis an increase in the per capita consumption) in industrial and technological development.

Class and Ecology.

One of the predominant approaches in Marx to economic issues is that ecological problems are the results of a global class struggle. As liberation theology does talk about 'class' and 'class struggle', and uses them for its social analysis, it is important that we look at the concept of class in Marxism and see if it can be of any relevance at all in dealing with the ecological issues. Marx employs a bi-polarization of classes, bourgeois and proletariat, and to him:

the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.⁴⁵

⁴⁵. Karl Marx and F.Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, Martin Lawrence, Limited, London, 1935, p.10.

It is important to note that Marx and Engels formulated their concept of the proletariat (working class) against an industrial context. The following quote reflects this dimension:

But with the development of industry, the proletariat not only increases in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels real strength more.⁴⁶

But this industrial determinism regarding the working class led Marx and Engels to view other oppressed sections as not worthy of being called the proletariat. In fact, in derogatory terms, they describe all other classes as follows:

The lower middle class, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the peasant, all these fight against the bourgeoisie, to save from extinction their existence as fractions of the middle class. They are, therefore, not revolutionary, but conservative. Nay, more, they are reactionary, for they try to roll back the wheel of history. If, by chance, they are revolutionaries, they are so only in view of their impending transfer into the proletariat; they thus defend not their present, but their future interests...⁴⁷

At least two conclusions can be drawn from this:

(i) For Marx, the working class are the industrial workers.

(ii) All other working class can become true working class when they become industrial workers- this implies that history's progress is totally identified with (unlimited) development of the industrial sector.

⁴⁶. Ibid., p.17.

⁴⁷. Ibid., p.19.

The limitations of the Marxist conception of 'class' have been pointed out from various angles. Its inadequacy to specifically deal with the problems based on gender, caste, and race have, as already seen, led to many an independent liberation movement. Its inadequacy in addressing the ecological issues is also very clear because Marxist 'classism' implies an industrial society without any limits imposed on its development.

René Coste also voices the same critique. According to him, it is imperative to take one's distance from the Marxist view of class struggle, because:

The concept is fully applicable only within the framework of industrial society. For ancient times or other kinds of civilization, it would be more accurate to speak of 'tribes' or 'castes' or 'orders'.⁴⁸

The traditional Marxists continue to follow the 'industrial' oriented conception of the working class. This is the reason why they would treat the calls for decentralised and small scale industries for today by the environmentalists as counter revolutionary and utopian. Because for them, it is not the huge industries that are pollutive, but the class divisions within it:

...the tyranny of the factory comes not from the factory itself, but from the class divisions within it, from the relations between those who produce the wealth and those who own it..⁴⁹

It is only too well known today that 'industrialism', whether it is of the capitalist or of the socialist version, is at the

⁴⁸. René Coste, Marxist Analysis and Christian Faith, op.cit., p.149.

⁴⁹. Duncan Blackie, Environment in Crisis: The Socialist Answer, A Socialist Worker's Party Pamphlet, London, p.26.

heart of ecological problems, because both are centred on (limitless) production which involves unlimited exploitation of the produces of nature. Liberation theology, due to its reliance on the class analysis, has neglected other forms of oppression, beside the economic oppression. Commenting on liberation theology's 'Christian centrism' and its exclusive focus on the 'poor' from an economic point of view, Eleazar S. Fernandez opines:

In its pre-occupation with economic "class" analysis, it has failed to notice the other reality: that the irruption of the Third World is also the irruption of the non-Christian world... and its alleged failure to incorporate in its liberative project and theological reflection the experience of those who suffered because of their race and culture.⁵⁰

This critique can be taken further and it can be said that liberation theology needs to liberate itself from its economic class analysis, if it is to be sensitive to the ecological problems of which the poor are the real victims. In fact, George Tinker, a Native American theologian has made a scathing and constructive critique of liberation theology's obsession with class analysis and the Marxist framework.⁵¹ According to Tinker, Gutiérrez's (as well as of other liberation theologians) focus on 'history' and 'non-person' in economic terms do not do justice to the indigenous communities like the native Americans whom he calls 'the Fourth World'. Gutiérrez' use of categories such as 'non-person', 'the poor' and 'the oppressed' falls short of doing justice to the specificity and distinctiveness of the

⁵⁰. Eleazar S. Fernandez, "Hermeneutics and the Bible in Liberation Theology: A Critique from other Companions in the Struggle" in Religion, Politics, and Ideology, An Ecumenical Journal of Discussion and Opinion, Vol. XII, No.1, 1992, p.83.

⁵¹. George Tinker, "The Full Circle of Liberation: An American Indian Theology of Place" in David G. Hallman (ed), Ecotheology: Voices From South and North, Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1994, pp.219-220.

suffering of indigenous people. (The same critique is being made by the dalits and the tribals in India, as we will see in the chapter on 'Dalit Theology'). This is because:

While avoiding the language of explicit political programmes, Gutiérrez, like other liberation theologians, identifies the preferential option for the poor with Socialist and even implied Marxist solutions that analyze the poor in terms of social class structures. This overlooks the crucial point that indigenous people, experience their very personhood in terms of their relationship to their land...⁵² [emphasis mine]

The link between the environmental struggles and the struggles of the indigenous people (dalits and tribals in India) is also brought out in the following chapter on Dalit Theology. This (the question of land) is something which unites the dalits and tribals of India and the indigenous people all over the world.

As Tinker asserts, the attachment to land (ecology) is crucial and is very much part and parcel of the identity of the indigenous peoples. Categories like 'working class' and 'poor', erode the cultural integrity of these communities. Just as Capitalism reduced the indigenous peoples to 'non-personhood', Tinker believes, the Marxist agenda also failed to recognise the distinct personhood of indigenous peoples in terms of their attachment to land and ecology and their way of life. For instance, the Marxist class (industrial working class) perspective also begs the question whether indigenous people are in favour of production in the modern economic sense, as this production process also means the ruthless exploitation of the environment and hence the uprooting of indigenous cultures and spirituality. This, then, is a central problem with the Marxist analysis and therefore of liberation theology. As Tinker put it:

⁵². Ibid., p.219.

From an American Indian perspective, the problems with modern liberation theologies, as with Marxist political movements, is that class analysis gets in the way of recognising cultural discreteness and even personhood. Small but culturally unique communities stand to be swallowed up by the vision of a classless society, an international worker's movement or a burgeoning majority of Third World urban poor. This too, is cultural genocide and signifies that indigenous peoples are yet non-persons, even in the light of the gospel of liberation.⁵³

Enrique Dussel hints at this dimension when he also airs his critique of the class analysis in Marxism. As against the Marxian industrial proletariat, Dussel sees the ethnic, the peasant and the marginalised as the real 'poor' or the real proletariat. In his view the so-called working class (those in the organised industrial sector) can be actually a privileged group in the Third World, compared to the more oppressed groups of the tribals and the peasants.

These three groups (the ethnic, peasant, and marginalised) are the 'poorest' of the people...The working class in the Third World can be a privileged group, forming a constitutive part of 'the people', but not always the vanguard in revolutionary process. In fact the peasants are the 'social block' among which creative contradictions are generated.⁵⁴

A closer look at the situation of Latin America or of the Third World context in general, would make it clear that the Marxist critique of Capitalism is far from relevant in solving today's ecological problems.

⁵³. Ibid., p.220.

⁵⁴. Enrique Dussel, "The Ethnic, Peasant, and Popular in a Polycentric Christianity" in Marc Ellis and Otto Maduro (eds), op.cit., p.246.

FROM ECONOMIC TO ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.

In the context of neo-colonialism in Latin America, a mere economic analysis without the ecological perspective would not do justice to the nature of social realities as experienced today. When Columbus reached Costo Rica, he found an enormous wealth of forests in the area. When the Spaniards invaded Central America, they imported a new agricultural system which was alien to the indigenous ones. Today, though, there is a new development which Ingemar Hedstrom calls, 'the hamburgerization of the forests of Central America'. According to him, cattle ranching has reached its peak during the recent decades. For this reason, he calls Central American countries- 'Hamburger Republics'. This increasing meat production is ultimately linked to large scale destruction of rain forests where the indigenous people live. Figures show that in Costo Rica, between 1960 and '80, pasturage and cattle increased by 75 per cent where as the rain forests decreased by 40 per cent. In other words, the increase in meat production, does not, in fact, satisfy the needs of the poor in Central America, but does facilitate the export of meat at cheap rate. This was how the McDonalds industry solved its problem of a scarcity of meat- meat production based on intensive grazing and natural pastures of the region. Inexpensive meat meant cheap hamburgers. In the whole process, the McDonalds thrive at the expense of the Central American poor and their natural environment, especially the rain forests. Hedstrom brings out the neo-colonial elements in this process when he says:

...Just as the other operational categories of the World Bank, its interest in promoting cattle ranching in Central America, does not seem to correspond to a desire to confront the conditions and structures produced by man and by poverty. Instead, an answer must be sought as we examine the role of Central American cattle ranching in the world meat-market, and especially Capitalism's interest in its

development.⁵⁵

This is the link between ecological sustainability and social justice which Marxist social analysis and liberation theology have overlooked. Liberation theologians are now admitting this neglect. Boff, for instance, makes this confession:

Just as conventional ecology developed unrelated to its social context, current theologies, including liberation theology, have developed without reference to the environmental context. It is important now to complement these perspectives with a coherent and holistic vision⁵⁶

A number of liberation theologians like Boff have started thinking along these lines. It is indeed interesting to note that Boff does make reference to the new concept of 'hamburgerization of rain forests' in Latin America and to a few case studies which demonstrate the link between environmental destruction and impoverishment of the poor.⁵⁷ While the realization of this link between ecology and economy by Boff represents a turning point in liberation theology, the problem is that Boff, like other liberation theologians, still sees Capitalism as the only problem and once again leaves Socialism and Marxist analysis largely uncriticised. For a theologian who was 'silenced' for speaking out, this silence over Marxist analysis and its limitations for analyzing the problems of the indigenous peoples and ecology casts shadows on the intellectual credibility of the shift taking place in liberation theology. In this recent book, quoted above, Boff does not move beyond the

⁵⁵. Ingemar Hedström, "Latin America and the Need for a Life-Liberating Theology" in Charles Birch, et.al. (eds), Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology, op.cit., p.119.

⁵⁶. Leonardo Boff, "Social Ecology: Poverty and Misery" in David G. Hallman (ed), Ecotheology, op.cit., p.245.

⁵⁷. Ibid., pp.246-247.

usual criticism of Capitalism for all the evils in Latin America. He writes:

Within the parameters of social ecology we must denounce the deeply anti-ecological character of the social system we live in- the worldwide Capitalist order.⁵⁸

All those who are sympathetic to liberation theology would agree with the above statement. But it is only a partial truth, once an ecological perspective is adopted. Those who expect a radical introspection on the part of liberation theologians into their reliance on Marxism are once again left disappointed by the continued affirmation of the Marxist class analysis by liberation theologians. In other words, as already made clear, the task of liberation theology, is not just to 'extend' its liberation framework to ecology (as Boff seems to imply), but liberation theology needs to undergo a radical restructuring including changes in theologising (especially with regard to its anthropocentrism, where changes are taking place), hermeneutics, and its use of Marxist analysis of society where, sadly, little change has occurred. As long as liberation theology does not show the courage to embark on this task of looking at these areas, its attempts to 'widen the scope of liberation theology' by 'adding' ecology to economy, will be judged as lacking credibility, not only by thinkers who have sympathy with its concerns, but more importantly, by the real victims of ecological and social exploitation; the dalits, the tribals, the women, and the indigenous peoples all over the world. The task for liberation theology today is not to 'add' ecology to economy or just to accommodate the concerns of ecology within the broader concerns of economy. Ecology is to be accepted as the umbrella category today.

This connection is vital because justice and respect for the

⁵⁸. Ibid., p.237.

integrity of creation are often seen, wrongly, as alternatives human concerns. As Charles Birch argues, justice and sustainability must ultimately be united into a single vision of life, as there can be no justice without ecological balance and vice versa. As long as the Marxist 'development' is seen through the eyes of unlimited industrialization and installations of mega projects which involve environmental destruction and uprooting of the indigenous peoples, it remains irrelevant as a tool for an integral social analysis. This ideological analysis of society in Marxism makes it suspicious of all kinds of clamours for ecological justice as 'counter revolutionary' and anti-developmental. For example, the South has always complained that the industrial countries have denied it, in the name of ecological balance, access to the industrial technology and the methods employed in the West. It is the influence of traditional Marxism that leads to the conclusion that the environmental problems are Western issues which the Third World cannot afford to pay serious attention to, as it will derail the ongoing process of 'development'. According to the Marxist analysis, environmental problems are just a symptom of injustice which prevails between classes, and therefore an economic issue. Once economic justice is sought (by the socialists), everything (ecological balance, including) will be added to it. This is the traditional Marxist approach to ecological problems. With the enthronement of the working class, ecological problems too will wither away. This is also true, it may be noted, of the traditional Marxist approach to the issue of population explosion, that is, the view that once social justice is achieved, the problem of population will no longer exist. As already seen in chapter 2, although the issue of social justice is of paramount importance in dealing with the problem of population growth, it can no longer be argued that even in an ideally socially just society the earth will have the 'carrying capacity' and unlimited resources to provide for the needs of number of people on this planet. This one dimensional view of social realities is no longer relevant in today's complex social scenario. Issues like poverty and ecological

devastation are interrelated. Poverty cannot be rooted out without challenging the rooting out of the environment. Jose Luxemburg, an environmental activist in Brazil said this at the Rio Earth Summit which Marxism and liberation theology must heed:

I heard one of the delegates repeating a dogma of our development policies, namely that poverty is at the root of the environmental degradation we have today. But it is the other way around. Most of the poverty we see in the world today is the result of the destruction of traditional cultures, of the rape of their resources in the name of "progress", of the uprooting of the people...⁵⁹

Capitalism and traditional Marxist Socialism aim at economic growth through large scale industries and mega technological enterprises. For both systems, nature is nothing more than a raw material waiting to be transformed by humanity into something of value in the industrial process. The traditional Marxist argument rested upon the question, 'who controlled the means of production and therefore who enjoyed the fruits of this production'. But today, the debate has to enlarge itself from the ownership of the means of resources, to the means of production themselves, as the nature of exploitation has now changed in the process of neo-colonialism. As Bastian Wilenga suggests, the neo-colonial situation of today warrants that Marxism should employ a "more critical analysis of inbuilt contradiction between the logic of the accumulation of Capital and the capacity of nature, a contradiction leading to the destruction of nature".⁶⁰ The Marxist emphasis on the

⁵⁹. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, Redeeming the Creation: The Challenge of Rio to the Churches, W.C.C, Geneva, p.14. [emphasis mine]

⁶⁰. Bastian Wilenga, "Ecological Movements: Struggle for a Sustainable Society" in John Desrochers; et.al (eds), Social Movements: Towards a Perspective, Centre for Action, Bangalore, 1991, p.105.

development of productive forces and its overreliance on science and technology presupposes a non-ecological understanding of nature. The Marxist analysis, as already seen, begins with the economic infrastructure- the relations of production and productive forces without caring for the ecological milieu- the natural resources. There is an urgent need to shift the focus from 'production' as such to the 'means' of production (the natural resources). Or as Madhav Gadgil and R.Guha propose, the concept of modes of production should be complemented with the concept of modes of resource use.⁶¹

Liberation theology ought to realise, in the wake of the 'socialist' experience in the former Soviet Union and the Eastern European block, that there is little to choose between Capitalism and Socialism, as far as ecological issues are concerned. The concept of the 'economic people' needs to be challenged and it needs to be replaced by a concept of an 'integral people' which would embrace the social, economic, political, cultural and the ecological aspects of human life. This is already happening in the Third World, in the form of peoples' movements which combine social justice and eco-concerns. In Latin America, also, this new perspective is gaining ground. The assassination of the Brazilian Union leader and ecologist Chico Mendes has been instrumental in opening up the possibilities of converging ecological justice and social justice (eco-justice) in Brazil, where the rubber workers, the peasants and the tribals (all of whom figure outside Marx's class of 'proletariat') have so much to share, especially with their environment.⁶²

In the wake of the already described 'hamburgerization of the Latin American rain forests' by the multi national companies

⁶¹. Ramachandra Guha, This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India, Oxford University Press, p.13.

⁶². "Brazilian Crossroads" in Poona Wignaraja (ed), New Social Movements in the South: Empowering the People, Vistaar Publications, New Delhi, 1993, p.225.

which impoverish the people and decertify the land, liberation theology has to recognise the inadequacy of the Marxian analysis of society and transcend it and adopt an ecological perspective. However, it does not mean that the Marxist analysis is completely redundant today. Its critique of Capitalism is still useful. Hence the conclusion 'Marxism is dead' can be nothing more than wishful thinking. As Duncan Forrester explains:

But Marxism will not disappear in the aftermath of 1989 for two particular reasons: it makes better sense of some aspects of reality than the other alternatives on offer, and is stubbornly orientated in hope towards the future, while others speak of the end of history and urge us to be at ease in the culture of contentment. Theology will continue not only to seek a proper and predictable relationship to social science but to wrestle with the insights, challenges and distortions of Marxism...⁶³

In other words, the Marxist analysis of alienation of the poor is to be made part of a more integral ecological analysis of social realities. Liberation theology, using the Marxist tools of social analysis, rightly identified Capitalism as the root cause of the Latin American social problems. But liberation theology, again due to its Marxist economic class perspective, failed (as Marxism also did) to see the links between the ecological problems and the economic deprivation of the poor, which, of course, is much more subtle and vicious than it was at the time of Marx. This is why liberation theology needs to transcend the Marxist analysis of society, if it is to be relevant for tomorrow, if it is to treat ecological problems as part of the socio-economic problems of the poor. Hence, liberation theology has 'failed' (to some extent), not because

⁶³. Duncan Forrester, op.cit., pp.252-253.

it has not been Marxist enough, as Alistair Kee pronounced, but because it has not been critical enough of the Marxist analysis of society.

CHAPTER 6. ECO-FEMINIST THEOLOGY.

INTRODUCTION.

We have examined the inadequacy of Latin American liberation theology in responding to the ecological challenges and proposed the changes needed for an integral ecotheology. Feminist theology, a variant of liberation theology, has much to offer towards this integral ecotheology, as women, especially the womenfolk of the tribals and dalits in India, form the immediate victims of ecological problems. Feminist theology, like other variants of liberation theology, has made a great impact on theological circles. One of the unique features of feminist theology is that women's experience, for the first time, is used as the criterion in theological reflection. Feminist theology and eco-feminism are, in fact, two interrelated streams of thought that deal with proper relations between humanity and rest of creation. As there are different strands within feminist theology, eco-feminist theology also takes different directions. There are, for example, the 'nature feminists' (deep ecology school) who consider human beings and other forms of life as essentially one and the same ('radical egalitarianism'). The 'social feminists', on the other hand, maintain that there are both oneness and diversities between human beings and other beings. They, unlike the nature feminists, refuse to view ecological issues detached from a justice perspective. Social feminists, in other words, operate from a liberative point of view. Social eco-feminism, on account of its eco-justice orientation, does contribute to an integral eco-theology. However, social eco-feminism, most of it being Western in orientation, needs to be critically integrated into an Indian liberation theology of ecology. As in other chapters, a doctrinal exposition of eco-feminist theology is basically what is attempted in this chapter, also pointing out the changes needed within eco-feminist theology in order to make it applicable to the Indian context.

WOMEN AND NATURE: NATURAL ALLIES?

One of the fundamental thrusts of eco-feminism is that there is a natural nexus between women and nature. Expression of this nexus is seen in various spheres like art, culture, literature, theology and so on. Often, this identification of women with nature is done on a conceptual basis, to say that nature, conceptually speaking, is a feminine category. Anne Primavesi gives the following illustrations:¹

In Lucas Cranach's *The Nymph of Spring*, nature is portrayed to the visitors of the Art Galleries as a naked passive nymph. Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* are the other examples. They show the virgin in conjunction with the mother earth. Wordsworth, the nature poet, presented nature in feminine terms when he wrote: "Nature never did betray the heart that loves her". The intelligentsia all over the world, today, discuss James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis which revives the name of the female goddess of earth.

In the ancient Scriptures of India also, one can see nature portrayed in feminine categories. Nature is the embodiment of the female principle and Indian feminist theologians like Aruna Gnanadason have argued that this conceptual framework should form the core of a feminist theology in India. According to a statement on 'Theologizing in India- A Feminine Perspective' prepared by the Indian Theological Association:

Women's respect for life and their potential for motherhood give them a special sensitivity to ecological and environmental issues, and suggest the possibility of a special female contribution in this

¹. Anne Primavesi, From Apocalypse To Genesis: Ecology, Feminism and Christianity, Burns & Oates, Kent, 1991, pp.33-34.

area.²

Women's body and the earth are often conflated in the Indian tradition. This link is done on the basis of sexual and biological considerations, on the assumption that both nature and women have the power of fertility. According to Janet Chawla, this had led the Indian tradition to make two presuppositions:³

(i) it has functioned to serve as a 'natural' model to legitimize the male's domination and control of the common female and

(ii) to confer sacredness to nature and attribute power ('shakti') to both women and the earth.

It can be noted that the women-nature conflation has often been used to subjugate women and nature by the ruling male class in India as in the West where women-nature nexus has functioned as a basis for the exploitation of women and nature by men. Although the Indian tradition has a strand which gives nature and earth power, in reality, they have been subjugated by the dominant patriarchy. This is made clear by a study on the 'Symbolism of Biological Reproduction and Sexual Relations of Production' by Leela Dube. She traces the use of the cosmological metaphor of 'seed and earth' to refer to both agricultural production and human reproduction in the textual and folk traditions in India. She quotes *Narada Smriti* which has the following:⁴

². Quoted in Ursula King (ed), Feminist Theology from the Third World : A Reader, SPCK/Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1994, p.61.

³. Janet Chawla, "Gendered Representations of Seed, Earth and Grain, A Woman Centred Perspective On the Conflation of Women and Earth", in The Journal of Dharma, Vol.XVIII, No.3, July-Sept, 1993, p.237.

⁴. Ibid., p.240.

Women are created for offsprings, a woman is the field and a man is the possessor of the field.

Yet another practice in the Hindu tradition which uses the nature-women conflation to subordinate women's position is the Hindu marriage rituals that include the 'Kshetrasamskara', the consecration of the field with a view to purify the bride's womb in order that the seeds may be received in good condition. It also implies that it is quite natural that women should suffer pain as nature does.

Like the earth, a woman too has to bear pain. The earth is ploughed, furrowed, dug into... a woman too is pierced and ploughed.⁵

According to Dube, a woman's body here is equated with the field or earth, the male semen with the seed, and the process of reproduction with the process of production. This is, in other words, a misogynist use of nature-women identification.

Anne Primavesi also considers the reproductive system of women as a profound connection between women and nature. For instance, women's menstrual cycles relate her to the moon, the tides, and the crops. Women share with nature the ability and the experience of bringing forth and sustaining life.

The realization of the patriarchal exploitation of this women-nature bond by feminists necessitates a new perspective. The new liberative perspective of the social feminists considers nature and women together as the 'oppressed', 'the other', 'the alienated' by the patriarchal culture. This is a radical shift from the conceptual reading of the women-nature identification (nature is also a feminine category) to an ideological conception of this link (nature and women are the oppressed class). There is an interlocking in the oppression of women and

⁵. Ibid., p.241.

nature. Although this shift from the conceptual to the ideological understanding of women-nature link is welcome in the Indian context, it must be pointed out that in the Third World context, eco-feminism should go one step further and move to a praxiological reading of the women-nature nexus, women seen as the direct victims of ecological destruction.

Dualism: The basis of the oppression of women and nature.

Dualism on the basis of gender has been identified as the root cause of oppression of women and nature by eco-feminists. One comes across a flood of references about various levels of dualism (dualism between body and spirit, male and female, humans and nature, the sacred and the profane) in eco-feminist literature. Just one such reference is quoted below from Anne Primavesi.⁶ (Primavesi, like many other eco-feminists holds that dualism is predominantly a Western feature, influenced by Greek metaphysics which was later upheld and incorporated by Christianity).

But uniquely in the Western world, Christians take the supposedly divine hierarchical structuring of cosmic reality as justification for unecological attitudes to nature. The dominion of man over fallen nature is taken for granted.

But there have also been criticisms of the feminist 'obsession' with the problem of dualism from various quarters. Bromislow Szerszynski, for example, argues that anti-dualistic tendencies actually lead to "discursive reduction". This is to say that the denial of any dichotomy between humanity and nature often consists of an attempted reduction of all discourse, political, sociological, and economic, to an ecological discourse. This, according to Szerszynski is "an attempt to get nature to stand

⁶. Anne Primavesi, op.cit., p.102.

in judgement on society" ⁷ or to make nature the basic standard by which all actions are judged.

Szerszynski's critique may be applicable to some of the deep ecology's treatment of nature and its view of 'ecocentrism' which perceives humanity as essentially one with nature. But much of the integral eco-feminist theological discourse does not take anti-dualism to this extreme. Rather they do maintain the diversities between nature and humanity. The difference, though, is that they also emphasise the similarities, interrelatedness and interdependence between these two realities. Szerszynski also observes that ecotheology often makes the assumption that dualism always comes as a package as though one dualism necessarily leads to other ones. According to Szerszynski, this is not only wrong, but also that in certain cases, dualism of some sort helps to overcome other dualisms. For example, by affirming the 'wholly-otherness' of God, we can underscore the solidarity of all human beings and the solidarity of humanity with the rest of creation. In other words, to argue that we can only care for something, if we regard that as part of ourselves is an impoverished notion of ethics of care, holds Szerszynski. In his view, this is 'identitarian'⁸ attitude, as it treats otherness and differences as threatening.

The theological views represented by the eco-feminists in this chapter clearly meet the critique of Szerszynski. Although it may be argued that an extreme form of dualism between Creator and creation, or God's total transcendence, does not necessarily lead to dualism between male and female, or between humans and nature, history and classical philosophy and traditional Christian theology tell us that it did happen that way. The Greek creation story and the story of Fall, explicated in the forthcoming section makes this point. In these systems where

⁷. Bromislaw Szerszynski, "The Metaphysics of Environmental Concern: A Critique of Eco-theological Anti-Dualism" in Studies In Christian Ethics, Vol.6, No.2, p.71.

⁸. Ibid., p.69.

hierarchical ordering is the pattern, body, female and nature take a subordinate place to that of God, soul, and male. It is also clearly evident how those dichotomies were accommodated into Christianity by Paul, for example, and later by Augustine, Aquinas and others. It is also wrong to accuse ecotheology, barring the deep ecology strand, of being afraid of 'otherness', because ecotheology, especially, eco-feminist theology, does affirm diversity among various life forms. In fact, one of the hallmarks of the Common Creation Story which McFague adopts as a model (this is dealt with in the following sections), is the recognition of this diversity among beings. However, what is unacceptable to ecotheology, is the domination and exploitation of some forms of life by others, based on distinctions.

Stephen.R.L.Clark considers eco-feminists' blaming of Plato for dualism unacceptable. According to him, ecotheologians tend to put the Stoic mistakes on to Plato. For example, it was the Stoics who displayed disdain for animals, not the Greeks. Clark does not think that Plato propounded crude dichotomies. To the contrary, Plato was, in many ways, anti-dualistic, argues Clark. He quotes the following from Plato to prove his point:⁹

"To be is to be something, to embody some real type, some standard of being".

"Everything that lives is holy".

In Platonic thought, what is literally nothing, does not exist at all. What more does one require to be reassured by Plato, asks Clark. It actually, Clark maintains, does not present us a hierarchy of extrinsic values. Plato's vision of the Republic is another case in point which Clark gives. The Republic in Platonic conception is a self-sufficient city, growing only what it needs and needing only what nature provides. Here the public

⁹. Stephen R.L.Clark, How to think about the Earth: Philosophical and Theological Models for Ecology, Mowbray, New York, 1993, pp.66-67.

interests are protected over against the private interests. It also expects the citizens of the Republic to respect the earth and the gods of place. All these, according to Clark, prove the critics of Plato wrong.

The question here is whether the 'proof-text' method always helps or not. One could cite passages from some one which suggest something contrary to the popular or the established perceptions. In fact, Stephen Clark himself suggests that this approach does not work. For example, in his critique on 'National Socialism', he observes that in one of Hitler's some time Minister of Agriculture, one could find ecologically friendly rhetoric which, of course, does not make him a champion of ecological integrity. The point is that Platonic philosophy, as it is argued in the sections on sin and creation, for instance, does function on a hierarchical, dualistic perspective which compartmentalises soul and body; male and female; humans and nature and also assigns prominence to the former categories. While Stephen Clark finds it attractive that Platonism does not equate Beauty with particular beauties, he avoids the Platonic equation of goodness with incorporeality. Absolute beauty is found only outside the material world. It was left to Augustine and Aquinas to inherit these notions and make them part and parcel of Christian theology.

THE CONCEPT OF GOD.

Our concepts of God have ramifications for our response to God's creation. Traditional Christian theology has been mainly patriarchal which again has serious implications in an ecological context. Feminist theology has, therefore, responded to this male domination and challenged it, as the concerns of ecology are, in a real way, concerns of women and especially of the rural poor.

Sallie McFague, in her book Models of God: Theology for an Ecologically Nuclear Age uses metaphors and models to depict God

and the divine activities in relation to the creation. According to McFague, the current symbols of God are inadequate in that they are exclusive and also generate distorted relationships among living beings. These traditional, patriarchal and hierarchical models are no longer relevant in today's context and hence need to be replaced by new and appropriate models. 'Lover', 'Friend', and 'Mother' are the models explained in this book to depict God. Not only do these images address the contemporary challenges of sexism and ecology, they also help us understand other doctrines like creation in a new perspective. McFague argues that since humanity consists of both male and female, if we are to conceive God in terms of 'image of God', then both male and female images are important. A concept of God as mother is related to the doctrine of creation. Two traditional views that God created everything out of nothing (creatio-ex-nihilo) and hierarchically with nature (the physical) inferior to the spiritual have been challenged now. McFague suggests that an alternative view can be developed from 'mother God' metaphor as symbolically it can express that creation was a physical event:

...universe is bodied forth from God...is from the Womb of God, formed through gestation.¹⁰

God as mother takes delight in the existence of the 'other', gives birth to creation. It should be underlined here that this is pictured symbolically. The first implication of this model is that the universe and God are neither totally distant nor exclusively different. To say that is to affirm that they are close.

The feminine concept of 'Shakti' ('power') is an important image of God in India. According to Aruna Gnanadason,¹¹ 'Shakti' is

¹⁰. Sallie McFague, Models of God: Theology For An Ecological Nuclear Age, S.C.M. Press. Ltd, London, 1987, p.110.

¹¹. Aruna Gnanadason, "Women and Spirituality in Asia" in Ursula King (ed), op.cit., pp.352-360.

much more than 'power'. It is a spiritual energy. It is also a feminine energy which is at the source of all things, both human ('purusha') and non-human ('prakriti' or nature). This feminine divine energy, according to Gnanadason, makes the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation a sacramental one, and hence, must be at the heart of a new vision of a new world order.

God as mother also has ethical consequences in terms of justice, in relation to God's command to love one's neighbour as oneself. Within this framework, it is impossible to love God, without loving others that constitute the body of the world. In an ecological, specifically nuclear context, 'as ourselves' in the great commandment is the affirmation of the existence for the 'others' as we affirm it for 'ourselves'. The direction, then, is towards bedrock justice, working towards an order where necessities of existence are shared. God as mother-judge rejects those who selfishly refuse to share.

McFague also outlines the social significance of the metaphor of God as mother in a specific context of nuclear threats. Along with Gordon Kaufman, she holds that the traditional images of God as an omnipotent King who fights on the side of his chosen people to bring down the foes, or a 'Fatherly God' who will not let his children suffer, have influenced people in the way they respond to problems. The latter way of thinking supports an escapist attitude whereas the former line of thinking instills a militant attitude in people. Kaufman in his Theology for a Nuclear Age, brings to our attention two groups of American Christians currently depending on these images of God in their response to the issue of nuclear war. According to him, one group relies on the 'all powerful Father', quite passively to take care of the situation, whilst the other group tends to think that in the event of a nuclear war, then it would be the will of God, and in such a situation they believe:

America should arm itself to fight the "devil's

agent", Communist Russia.¹²

It is clear from the above views that neither version takes genuine human responsibility for the world seriously.

McFague's use of the metaphorical language has invited criticisms from various quarters. Kaufman asks why McFague sticks to personalistic models of God when anthropocentrism is deemed one of the serious problems leading to ecological threats. While defending the use of these personalistic models as important, she also points out that these concepts are not necessarily exclusively personalistic, confined to the realm of humans, as the body of God is all that there is which includes humans and non-humans. This is what is implied in some of our expressions like 'parental' or 'friendly' or 'motherly' care for animals or plants. She quotes Arthur Peacock, a British physicist and theologian, who holds that personal elements in concepts are important, in defence of her own use of personalistic models of God:

Does not the continuity of the universe, with its gradual elaboration of its potentialities from its dispersal... to the emergence of persons on the surface of the planet... imply that any categories of "exploration" and "meaning" must at least include the personal?¹³

While Kaufman advocates conceptual models instead of personalist ones, David Tracy appreciates the use of the personalist models advocated by McFague. This, according to Tracy, can free theology from being too metaphysical as in the case of process theology with its over concern with concepts.

¹². Sallie McFague, Models of God, op.cit., p.110.

¹³. Sallie McFague, "Responses" in Religion and Intellectual Life, Spring, 1988, p.41.

The World as God's Body.

Sallie McFague's more recent book The Body of God: An Ecological Theology, in fact, takes into account the criticisms she faced about her earlier book, The Models of God. In The Body of God, McFague develops an organic model of theology which challenges the classical, traditional, hierarchical, anthropocentric (androcentric as well), and dualistic models of theology.

It is interesting to note that McFague in this book leaves behind the personalist models of mother, lover and friend. Instead, she develops the metaphor of the world as God's body, or the model of 'embodiment'. She formulates her organic model, drawing particularly from the Common Creation Story and Post-modern Science.

Transcendence and Immanence.

Speaking about God's body, McFague unravels enormous theological possibilities, especially in the area of relating God's transcendence and immanence. The usual ways of describing the transcendence of God are either in political terms such as King, Lord, patriarch and so on or through via negativa terms (not temporal, not finite etc). The former is 'domesticated transcendence', says McFague, which is narrowly concerned about human beings and is completely detached from other life forms. The latter model is too abstract and is far from the life experiences of the believers. Hence the need for some new model. Taking 'body' as the key metaphor, transcendence can be radicalised. Christianity is a religion of embodiment with incarnation (the Word becoming flesh) at its centre. Reflecting on Ex.33:23b¹⁴ where God's back is shown to Moses, McFague argues that the passage tells us that God is not only not afraid of the flesh but loves it, becomes it. God's transcendence is 'embodied' in the world and it is not available to us in any

¹⁴. "...then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen". (Ex.33:23b)

other way except as embodied. This, however, does not confuse transcendence with immanence, because, as McFague succinctly puts it:

We do not see God's face, but only the back. But we do see the back.¹⁵

The world as God's body also radicalises the immanence of God. We encounter the Creator in the creation (panentheism). Once again, we need to remind ourselves, cautions McFague, that we only see God's back and not the face. But as McFague argues this admission of our limitation allows us to revel in the many embodiments the divine transcendence takes such as winds, waters, clouds. It is neither idolatry, nor pantheism but panentheism, as all these are used as metaphors, "for no one thing is God".¹⁶ God is present to us in and through all bodies. Incarnation, in fact, is the culmination of the divine way of enfleshment. To free the organic model (the world as God's body) of its possible pantheistic elements, McFague suggests that the organic model be combined with the 'agential model' which has a strong backing in the Judeo-Christian traditions. In the agential model, God is perceived as an agent whose intentions are realised in history, particularly in human history. God has power over the world in a way as humans have control over the activities of their bodies. Without this model which points to a centre of being who is not totally identified with or exhausted by the world, the organic model can become pantheistic. The combination of the two models, though, provides a panentheistic framework which radicalises the transcendence and immanence of God. In other words, as Corinne Scott puts it, the model of the world as God's body is the way McFague

¹⁵. Sallie McFague, The Body of God: An Ecological Theology, SCM Press, London, 1993, p.133.

¹⁶. Ibid., p.134.

conceives God's transcendence in an immanent way.¹⁷

Anne Primavesi also seems to advocate a rather similar view of God's transcendence in her book From Apocalypse to Genesis, although as J.N.Morris notes, her central concern is to call for a shift of focus from transcendence to immanence in the Christian understanding of God. She suggests an immanentist reading of God's action through the Spirit which is the giver of life. The following quotation illustrates the feminine, ecological, immanent understanding of God's action in the world in Primavesi:

This indwelling power of the Spirit of God continuously regenerates life: whether through the root of a tree, the stirring of the ocean bed or the quickening of life in the womb.¹⁸

J.N.Morris finds Primavesi's emphasis on the divine immanence as an extreme position where transcendence is almost lost.¹⁹ Morris, however, does not say much about where exactly Primavesi over emphasises divine immanence. If he sees the above quotation as an example of such an over-emphasis (he does use the same passage to make his point in the article), Primavesi has already addressed the critique from a biblical basis because the Genesis account also mentions that the indwelling Spirit of God was hovering over the waters at the time of creation, which Primavesi has only extended to a wider ecological sphere.

Like McFague, Ruether also takes care to avoid pantheistic

¹⁷. "Revitalizing Pastoral Ministry in India Today: A Perspective from Ecology and Preservation of Creation: An Incarnational Ecological Paradigm: The World as the Body of God", a paper presented in Bangalore by M. Corinne Scott. (unpublished)

¹⁸. Anne Primavesi, op.cit., p.3.

¹⁹. J.N.Morris, "Can We Over-Emphasise God's Immanence in Creation? Looking From Primavesi to Moltmann" in Theology in Green, Vol.4, No.2, p.14.

confusions, although she does seem to get very close to the slippery slope. Celia-Deane Drummond expresses this apprehension. According to Drummond, Ruether in her book Gaia and God, seems to identify God with Gaia (which she defines as the 'living and sacred earth') when she holds that the divine in covenant and sacrament become transformed into God and Gaia respectively. This apparent equation of God and Gaia is also detected in the following words of Ruether:

Thus what we have traditionally called "God", the "mind" or rational power, holding all things together and what we have called "matter", the ground of physical objects, come together...coincide".²⁰

According to Drummond, Ruether's use of the Gaia hypothesis of James Lovelock (which Ruether does not deal with in great details in the book) is uncritical and also gives the impression that sometimes God and Gaia are confused. In Drummond's own words:

She [Ruether] is apparently equating Gaia with the divine and taking up Lovelock's vision in a highly uncritical way to shape her understanding of Gaia.²¹

While encountering the divine in creation is perfectly compatible with the Christian faith, assigning sacredness or divinity to creation (the concept of Gaia seems to imply this - Gaia is the sacred earth) may not satisfy the demands of the Christian faith. A much better way is to take the view, traditional it may well be, that the earth and its fullness is a gift of God which is blessed by God. The earth is a blessed gift, not a sacred reality in itself.

²⁰. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia & God: An Eco Feminist Theology of Earth Healing, Harper, San Francisco, 1992, p.249.

²¹. Celia-Deane Drummond in Theology in Green, No.8, October, 1993, p.41.

It is perhaps worthwhile looking briefly at the ecological significance of the Gaia position, at this juncture. James Lovelock, a British atmospheric chemist, defines the Gaia hypothesis in the following way:

This postulates that the physical and chemical condition of the surface of the Earth, of the atmosphere, and of the oceans has been and is actually made fit and comfortable by the presence of life itself. This is in contrast to the conventional wisdom which held that life adapted to the planetary conditions as it and they evolved their separate ways.²²

There are at least two important arguments in his theory. One of them is that the earth is a self-regulating and self-sustaining entity, which can constantly adjust its environment to support life. The other proposition is that human beings are just one of the many species on the earth whose future depends on interrelationship among these species. The following quotes from Lovelock bring these points home:

Most of us sense that the Earth is more than a sphere of rock with a thin layer of air, ocean, and life covering the surface. We feel that we belong, here, as if this planet were indeed our home. Long ago the Greeks, thinking this way, gave the Earth the name of Gaia.²³

Gaia theory is as out of tune with the broader humanist world as it is with established science. In Gaia we are just another species, neither the owners

²². James E. Lovelock, Gaia: A New Look At Life On Earth; Oxford University Press, 1987, p.152.

²³. Stephen B. Scharper, "The Gaia Hypothesis: Implications for a Christian Political Theology of the Environment" in Cross Currents, (Special Issue on Ecotheology), Summer, 1994, p.207.

nor the stewards of this planet. Our future depends much more on a right relationship with Gaia than with the never-ending drama of human interest.²⁴

The positive aspect of the Gaia hypothesis is that in this scheme human beings are not superior to other forms of life. It also helps us, as Scharper thinks²⁵, to look at the world as an interconnected and a co-operative enterprise where interdependency, not competition, is the hallmark. Its negative aspects, however, are more serious. In fact, Lovelock himself admits that the view that the Earth is a self-regulatory entity, capable of adapting its environment to any situation cannot be an environmentally favourable position because, as Celia Deane Drummond argues, if the Earth is a self-regulatory organism, then the living Gaia would ignore all kinds of 'man'-made environmental problems like pollution. This is because, according to the Gaia thesis, the Earth will resist all these problems and will survive. Even when humankind gets eradicated, Gaia would still survive the onslaughts caused by humanity. This leads to a quixotic approach toward nature, often exemplified in the so called 'New Age Movements' or to what Drummond calls a 'participatory life style' where:

Gaia is the new Goddess, the "earth Spirit". She is life, the air, the water, and the interaction between all their inhabitants.²⁶

In other words, whereas in traditional theology, anthropocentrism has been the problem, in Gaia theory, there seems to be a total neglect of a human perspective. Scharper expresses the same concern. According to him, although the Gaia

²⁴. Celia Deane-Drummond, "God and Gaia: Myth or Reality" in Theology, July/August, 1992, p.273.

²⁵. Stephen B Scharper, op.cit., p.218.

²⁶. Celia Deane- Drummond, "God and Gaia: Myth and Reality", op.cit., p.277.

position asks us to take a planetary perspective, it seems to adopt an ahistorical or an agnostic perspective in terms of human history. It also lacks an analysis of existing power structures of inequality and dominations. He further writes:

It also underestimates the destructive potentials of human species. By viewing humans as simply one life among many, ..., Gaia woefully undervalues the human ability to destroy the life systems of the planet. Hence Gaia ultimately lacks a framework for critically assessing and challenging exploitative human activity.²⁷

God as Spirit.

Moving away from the overtly personalistic models of God, McFague reintroduces the image of 'Spirit'. To describe God as Spirit is also to avoid the dualism of body and soul. God is revealed to the world as the Spirit is to the body. The Spirit is the breath and life of the universe. Once again, McFague is using 'Spirit' metaphorically to refer to God. Spirit as wind, breath and life is the most basic and inclusive way to express embodiment. The use of the metaphor 'spirit' has several advantages in that it undercuts anthropocentrism and promotes cosmocentrism. The fact that 'spirit' is used as a feminine category in the Hebrew tradition brings out the feminine dimensions within the godhead. God as Spirit is not understood as the controller of the universe which is God's body, but as its source and breath. Connection here is not in terms of control but relationships. From this perspective, all worldly beings which are interrelated are seen as 'enspirited' embodiments of God. This, once again, as Kathryn Tanner says, enables McFague to concentrate more on revisioning the transcendence of God into a:

²⁷. Ibid., p.219.

naturalistic and worldly transcendence vis-a-vis the marvellous intricacy and grandeur of the universe that is God's body.²⁸

COSMOLOGY: THE WORLD AS GOD'S BODY.

Sallie McFague presents a cosmology which pictures the world as God's body. Although the metaphor of the world as God's body is nothing new (Ramanuja had envisioned this model in India), credit goes to McFague for taking it up in a radical way in Christian theology. McFague starts by bringing out the importance of 'bodies' and proceeds to draw heavily from the 'Common Creation Story' of contemporary science, while criticising the classical organic models of the body. She, as Kathryn Tanner says, remythologizes the evolutionary and ecological world view of contemporary science by faith claims and Christian truths and sacramentalizes the world of bodies.

The Classical Christian Organic Model.

Christianity perceives the Church as the body of Christ. In that sense, Christianity is a religion of 'body'. The incarnation (word becoming flesh), the Eucharist (the celebration of body and blood of Christ), Cross (bodily death of Jesus), and Church (the body of Christ) point to this embodiment dimension. But the classical Christian organic model has several limitations. The major flaw of the Christian form of the organic model is that it is highly 'spiritualized' and considers only Christians as members of this 'spiritualized' resurrected body of Christ. It neglects the diversity of creation, non-Christians and non-humans. This model assumes that the body in question is a human (male, implicitly) body. Hence, the model is anthropocentric and androcentric. It also supports a kind of universalism. 'One body' would mean that there is sameness, and variety is ruled out. What is good for the head is essentially good for the

²⁸. Kathryn Tanner in Modern Theology, Vol.10, No.4, October, 1994, p.147.

whole. It is bereft of cosmic reach.

The Common Creation Story and the Organic Model.

According to McFague, the common creation story (the evolutionary story or the Big bang story) provides a basis for a new organic model because it understands and appreciates both unity and diversities in creation. It is not a finished process but a continuous one. It underscores the interrelatedness and interdependence of all forms of life. They all have a common beginning and history. It overcomes anthropocentrism and, in fact, decentres human beings. It exhibits a highly complex network of relationships.

The organic model that emerges from the common creation story is not the orderly, limited, clearly defined classic one based on the human(male) body... it includes all bodies that were, are, and shall be here on this planet. But this diversity is interconnected in the most radical, profound way, for each and everything emerged within a common history, in some way, ancient or present, far or near, depends on all others.²⁹

The common creation story is focused on matter, physicality and embodiment. It pictures reality as composed of many an embodied being. They inhabit a planet that has evolved over billions of years through a dynamic process. All beings are interrelated. Therefore, 'embodiment' enables us to move towards a bio-centric perspective in an ecological age. This, according to McFague, leads us towards a more inclusive sense of justice for the needs of all (embodied) beings because:

In an embodiment ethic, hungry, homeless, or naked human beings have priority over the spiritual needs

²⁹. Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.47.

of the well fed, well housed, well clothed sisters and brothers.³⁰

The body model, thus, gives both an ecological and justice (liberative) context for theology. The main advantage, therefore, of this model is that it includes all forms of life on the planet. The body model relates us to the bodies closer to us first and foremost, our fellow human beings. As an ecological model, its extension is valuable because it unites and relates us to each and every body on the earth. As already noted, the body model is liberative, as it compels us to be concerned about the human bodies that are hungry, thirsty, overworked, unhoused, raped, mutilated and so on. In other words, as McFague herself puts it, the body model prevents us from 'spiritualizing pain' and from 'the other-worldly obsession'. The Common Creation story, she reckons, has an additional advantage in that it is not confined to any particular religion and is open to all and, therefore, is an inclusive one.

But what about the Christian Biblical account of the origin of life? As we shall see in the following section McFague leaves this question aside.

CREATION.

The doctrine of creation has been a matter of much discussion and debate in feminist and ecological theologies. Rosemary Radford Ruether looks at the various creation narratives like the Babylonian, Hebrew, and Greek creation stories which have influenced the traditional Christian theology of creation. She analyses these accounts and brings out their social messages from an eco-feminist perspective.

³⁰. Ibid., p.48.

(a). Enuma Elish (The Babylonian Creation Story).

According to this story, the universe begins with a primal matter which, in fact, is the source of both God and the universe. For this reason, Enuma Elish is considered to be a cosmogenetic (generation of the cosmos) and theogenetic (generation of Gods) story.

The story is centred around the conflict between Marduk and Tiamat. Marduk, the male God split the body of Tiamat, the female god and raised one half upward and sealed off the waters above and formed the stars and planetary abodes of the heavens in the underside of her body. Marduk conquered and killed Tiamat's consort, Kingu, out of whose blood he mixed clay and created humans. Two social messages stand out in this story:³¹

(i) the gods are generated.

(ii) the world is matriarchal.

In fact, the earliest model of generation was parthenogenetic gestation. (The gods and goddesses, for example, Apsu and Tiamat, gestate). But Marduk changes the whole situation. He introduces a military and architectonic model of power. He extinguishes the life from Tiamat's body and forms the world and humanity artificially. With Marduk, we encounter, says Ruether, "a transition from reproductive to artisan metaphors in cosmogenesis".³² The new male ruling class (represented by Marduk) appropriated 'matter' which becomes the private property of its 'creators', whereas life gestated and begotten is autonomous.

³¹. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia & God, op.cit., p.18.

³². Ibid., p.18.

The Hebrew Creation Story.

The Old Testament creation accounts have both similarities and divergences with the Babylonian creation story. The salient features of these creation accounts Ruether sees as the following:³³

(i) God here is not modelled after the kings and warriors but after the intellectual power of the Priestly class who calls everything into being through ritual naming. The command ("let there be") is the way God creates.

(ii) duality between workers and rulers, and between leisure and rest is eliminated. For instance, God works and rests, and makes this the model for all beings including animals.

(iii) The second creation story in Genesis projects the male (husband) as the primal and the collective person (Adam). The woman is derivative. On the other hand, it also brings out the deep kinship between humans and the earth ('adam' and 'adamah')

The Greek Creation Story.

Plato's creation story, *Timaeus*, is an abstract and metaphysical story. His starting point is the primal dualism that underlines the reality; dichotomy between the invisible and the eternal sphere of thought and the visible realms of corporeality.

The creator, Demiurgos, the cosmic artisan, like Marduk and Yahweh, creates by making. The metaphor of cosmogenesis is that of artisan. Demiurgos, first shapes the space into primal elements of fire, air, water, and earth (cosmic body) and shapes the world soul and infuses it into the cosmic body as its principle of life and motion. The creator, then, goes on to shape human souls from the same elements from which he had mixed

³³. Ibid., pp.19-21.

the world soul, but in a more diluted form. He, then, infuses the souls with celestial truth and, then, they are incarnated into the male bodies. The male souls are entrusted with the job of controlling the chaotic sensations that arise from the body. If the souls are successful in this task, then, they will shed their body and return to their 'native star' and will enjoy a 'blessed congenial existence'. However, if they fail in this task, the souls will reincarnate and pass in a second birth into a woman. If 'he' continues to fail in controlling the bodily sensations, he will be reincarnated as a brute, the equivalent of the evil state into which he has fallen. This process goes on until the soul succeeds in its task and then return to the original state as a male (ruling class) human.

The social messages of this Greek creation myth are twofold:³⁴

(i) dichotomy between mind and body.

(ii) supremacy of mind over body is extended to the hierarchy of male over female, and humans over animals.

The Traditional Christian Doctrine of Creation.

The Western Christianity developed a cosmological synthesis of the Hebrew account of creation (Gen.1 and 2), the Greek and the scientific- philosophical perspectives reflected in Plato. While retaining the symbolism of the 'rational soul' as 'masculine' and the body and passions as 'feminine', Christianity rejected the Platonic solution of reincarnation to explain social hierarchy. This accounts for the division between equality of souls in relation to God and inequality of bodies and status in society across gender and class hierarchy.

Ruether's discussion brings out the point that the traditional Christian doctrine of creation is hierarchical, anthropocentric

³⁴. Ibid., p.24.

and androcentric. Feminist theologians have tried to deal with this problem in different ways. While there are attempts to reinterpret the Old Testament creation accounts in the light of feminist ecological wisdom (this is dealt with in some details in chapter 9), others have tried to propagate new models of creation. Sallie McFague, for one, suggests a model of 'procreation' as against the 'production' model of Genesis.

According to McFague, the problem with the production model of Genesis is that, creation, here, is a finished and completed process. God, the Creator is external. McFague argues that despite its age and status in tradition, the Genesis account of creation is nothing more than a model. She propounds a procreation model where creation emerges from God as a body that grows and changes. (In the case of an evolving universe, this process involves billions of bodies). Basing it on the common creation story, McFague calls it an organic-agential model which combines both procreation and emanation models. The emanation model preserves the assumption that the life giving energy of creation emanates from its divine source of being. This also fits very well with the image of God as 'Mother'. Taken as a metaphor, it can suggest, albeit symbolically, that creation is a physical act where the universe is 'bodied forth' from God's 'womb'. This model, therefore, relates all reality in a dynamic way. As McFague puts it:

therefore the dynamic, changing, evolving body that is all reality does not grow away from God, but in, through and toward God.³⁵

The real advantages of this model of procreation, then, are that it is ecological (all reality is related to God) and that it fits very well with a feminist framework.

There are others like Anne Primavesi who try to reinterpret the

³⁵. Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.153.

Genesis creation accounts from eco-feminist perspectives. (It may be noted that the focus here is exclusively on the eco-feminist strand in Feminism and therefore other strands of feminist interpretations of Genesis are not looked into here since they are considered in chapter 9). According to Primavesi, Gen.2:7³⁶, if rightly understood and interpreted, does provide an ecological perspective. It brings out the bond between humanity and its earthly matrix. This comes out quite clearly in some of the feminist renderings of the Genesis text. Primavesi gives the following examples:³⁷

Meyers renders Gen.2:7 as follows:

Then God Yahweh formed the earthling of clods from the earth and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; and the earthling became a living being.

Phylis Tribble has it the following way:

Then Yahweh God formed the earth creature dust from the earth and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life and the earth creature became a living nepesh.

In Meyer's view, to translate 'adam' as 'man' is to fix a male domination and to overlook the Hebrew word play. It is actually interesting to look at the etymology of 'human' in English language as well. According to Primavesi, in English, 'human' is not the combination of 'hu' with 'man'. Instead the word is derived from an Indo-European root, 'ghum' which means 'earth' or 'ground', from which comes the Latin 'humus' (earth) and the Old English word for man, 'guma'. Meyers further argues that in the Hebrew creation story, the names or substantives, were not

³⁶. "then the LORD God formed man from dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being". (Gen.2:7)

³⁷. Anne Primavesi, op.cit., p.205.

only simply labels given, but were meant to be indicators of the very essence of the thing or creature designated. From this point of view, 'adam' indicates that the essence of human life is not its eventual classification into gendered categories. The meaning of the Hebrew word 'adam' suggests that the essence of human life is its organic connection with the earth. This rendering of the text transcends the distinction between body and spirit; male and female and humanity and nature. It fuses the earth with the breath.

While it is gratifying to note that there have been radical attempts at reinterpreting the Genesis creation accounts to bring out the ecological insights for our times, the efforts of proposing alternatives to or revisions of the biblical creation accounts often leave the hermeneutical task untouched. For example, when McFague suggests the organic-agential model of procreation, she is ambiguous, to say the least, as to what we should do with the Genesis creation story which is part of Christian faith. She does, no doubt, call for remythologizing the creation myths in the light of the common creation story. And this is precisely the task which she has left unattended, especially from the hermeneutical point of view. One encounters the same disappointment with Ruether as well. She too, in the same vein as McFague, believes that we need scientists and poets who can retell the creation story of science in a holistic manner. This concern is expressed in her Gaia & God. Yet the retelling never takes place. As Celia-Deane Drummond puts it:

We are left in anticipation of such a retelling, and by the end of the book, are somewhat disappointed that this theme is largely dropped except as a passing reference to Teilhard de Chardin and process theology.³⁸

³⁸. Celia-Deane Drummond, op.cit., p.41.

SIN.

Once again, it is Ruether and McFague, among the eco-feminists, who treat the concept of sin extensively. Ruether offers an eco-feminist doctrine of Fall in Gaia & God. She analyses the Hebrew, Greek, and the traditional Christian doctrines of sin.³⁹

The Hebrew View of Sin.

In the Hebrew tradition, humanity is given the freedom to do good or evil. However, God is in charge and will finally destroy evil and vindicate the divine righteousness. The other features of the Jewish conception of sin is that it has ethnocentric and cultic judgements. The cultic understanding of evil is connected with the dichotomy between purity and pollution, which, in turn, leads to separation of sabbath and ordinary days; Jews and Gentiles; male and female, et. al.

The Greek View of Sin- The Platonic View.

In Platonic Greek philosophy sin is associated with body and world. When the soul loses its contemplative union with the intellectual essence and descends into the lower passions, it loses control over the body and actually becomes ruled by body. To Plato, this is the root cause of all evil. The soul, in the process, loses its capacity to reach its heavenly abode at death and is now destined to undergo a cycle of reincarnations. This duality is much stronger in Gnosticism. In Platonism, at least, the 'upper' levels of the planetary spheres become part of the heavenly home of the soul. But in Gnosticism, the whole cosmos is the 'evil sphere'.

³⁹. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia & God, op.cit., pp.116-171.

Christian Concept of Sin.

As in the case of the doctrine of creation, we find a synthesis of the Jewish ethical and the Greek philosophical dimensions of the concept of sin in Christianity. The flesh/ spirit dichotomy, for example, is strongly present in Paul.

Augustine's concept of the fallen and redeemed 'man' was based on his views on sexuality as well. Although he considered women to be equally redeemable, they are, by nature, under male subjugation. To him, it is the sinful nature of the sexual act which leads to the transmission of the fallen state of the original Adam to all his descendants.

An Eco-Feminist Theology of the Lost Paradise or Fall.

According to Ruether, both the story of the Garden of Eden and the Greek story of 'Pandora's box'⁴⁰ were formulated by a patriarchal system, to blame women for all the evil in the world. Eco-feminist theology radicalises these traditional pictures. Their theory of the lost paradise brings in the concept of matriarchy which prevailed before patriarchy took over. This element of matriarchy is present in many cultures. Feminist thinkers like Matida Joslyn Gage dwell on the theme of matriarchy. She views this not as a primitive system, but as a time of high culture in early Egyptian and Near Eastern civilization. Women were in the ascendancy in all spheres of life such as family, religion and society. This benevolent female rule was characterised by the worship of the goddess. Gage identifies the Jewish and Christian heritage as the factors

⁴⁰. According to the story told by the Greek poet Hesiod, there was a happy race of mortals who were free from trouble and wearisome labour and safe from diseases. Prometheus stole fire from the gods to allow humans to develop technology. Zeus punished humanity by sending the woman Pandora, who makes the mistake of opening the box given to her as a gift by Zeus. As a result, all the deceases and troubles that afflict humanity were let loose. (Rosemary Radford Ruether, Gaia & God, op.cit., p.144).

that dethroned the matriarchal culture. This, according to Gage, was the real loss of paradise. This tradition was revived in the 1960s and formed a major source of modern eco-feminist concept of female-centred lost past. This, however, took different directions. In the Creation Spirituality Movement, represented by Matthew Fox and others, it goes to an extreme position of romantic idealization of the state of the 'original blessing', the great golden age of the cosmos to which all should strive to get back. Many eco-feminists have expressed reservations about this view. Ruether herself, describing sin as distortion of relationships, rejects the rather 'wishful thinking' of some of the eco-feminists and of the Creation Spirituality Movement claiming some restoration of an idealised paradise-like matriarchal social order. McFague also expresses the same reservation when she says:

Creation Spirituality, I believe, presents us with a picture not of how things are but how should be, it is utopian, eschatological vision and ought to be allowed to function that way.⁴¹

It is of great significance that most of the social feminists do not consider the return to matriarchy or the return of the goddess as the answer to the problems of today. This can only bring new problems rather than solving existing ones. The future vision should be one of partnership and co-operation. Social eco-feminists do mention the goddess tradition and there is a strong call for the return of this tradition by some eco-feminists. It may be relevant to dwell on this aspect in some detail.

The following words of Mary Grey illustrate the popularity of the goddess tradition among certain feminists:

...not only that Christianity does need the Goddess

⁴¹. Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.72.

tradition, but that failure to listen to what the many Goddess movements are saying is both to ossify Christianity in its androcentric structures and to be unfaithful to its own deepest intuitions of justice and relational wholeness.⁴²

According to Mary Grey, patriarchy would like to argue on the basis of the Babylonian creation story that with the death of Tiamat, the goddess tradition also had its death. Although it may not be the right kind of argument, to bring back the goddess tradition to Christianity may not be all that eco-friendly. Even Sallie McFague who prefers to reinterpret traditional Christian models rather than going for the Buddhist or the goddess tradition options, could not help appreciating the sacramentalism and the sacredness of the mundane in these latter traditions. It is true that the goddess tradition is matriarchal and it may also have some ecological insights to offer. But the problem of the goddess tradition, particularly as it is being propagated in the West, is twofold. For one thing, the goddess tradition is full of ambiguities. For instance, the concept of 'shakti' (power), represented by the goddess 'Kali' in India, may well be safe in the hands of the Chipko women in India, as Gabriele Dietrich observes. And as long as the religious connotations of 'shakti' is safe in their hands, it could also provide a feminist ecological paradigm. But the problem is that this represents only one side of the spectrum. For example, the goddess 'Kali' is one of the most violent deities among the Hindu pantheon. How can 'Kali' portrayed as a violent deity fit an ecological framework is one of the several questions the goddess tradition raises for eco-feminists. As Stephen Clark succinctly puts it:

It is at least worth noticing that eco-feminists, who begin by depreciating the patriarchal images of God

⁴². Mary Grey, "Does Christianity need the Goddess? Or Can Christianity embrace Goddess and still be Christianity" in Theology in Green, No.6, April, 1993, p.4.

as the Lord of Battles, seem to conclude by praising Kali or Anat. At least the God of the Hebrews does not rejoice in the blood of His enemies or children. Those who worship Nature are not far away from Moloch.⁴³

The other problem with the goddess tradition, says Gabriel Dietrich, is that it remains:

...a middle class and fairly academic affair, "safe" in the sense that goddess religion has ceased to have a material base in subsistence agriculture and in actual organised worship (temples) for centuries.⁴⁴

In other words, the way the goddess tradition is being dealt with is too elitist and is bereft of justice concerns. Such a perspective is not relevant for an integral eco-perspective in the Third World context. No wonder, therefore, such traditions find favour with quixotic movements like the Creation Spirituality Movement.

McFague goes on to explicate the concept of sin in a wider manner and brings out its implications. She views sin from three angles, as it is often committed at three levels; between human beings, between humans and animals, and between humans and nature. According to McFague, a theology of ecology is also a theology of space or place. Space is one of the basic categories in an organic theology. This is because, in an embodiment model, each and every body requires space. It is also a liberative category as space is a levelling and democratic notion that places us on an equal footing with other life forms. It means not only that all life forms need space for their physical needs but also that all life forms live on the same space. The

⁴³. Stephen Clark, op.cit., pp.39-40.

⁴⁴. Gabriele Dietrich, Women's Movements in India: Conceptual and Religious Reflections, Breakthrough Publications, Bangalore, 1988, p.160.

category of space, thus, highlights the link between ecological concerns and social justice issues. When the ruin of ecology (space) occurs, the justice concerns emerge painfully. It may be noted here that this is a highly relevant perception to the Third world contexts where ecological movements are also movements for the rights of the oppressed to own land (space). From this perspective, McFague explicates the dynamics of sin operating at those levels.

Us Versus Us.

This refers to sin committed by human beings against their fellow human beings. Some human beings possess space disproportionately, that is to say, at the expense of their fellow human beings. From an ecological perspective, justice should mean sharing the place and the resources of our common space. This liberative ecological view of sin, sin as refusal to share space and the refusal to stay in our limited space, also surmounts the rather minimalistic elitism in some strands of deep ecology and creation spirituality. In the words of McFague:

while our analysis of ecological sin will focus on the more neglected areas of our relation with other animals and nature, proper relations with our dearest and nearest kin, our own species, must be first in consideration and importance. Some environmentalists, notably deep ecologists, claim that human beings as one species among many millions, perhaps billions, are of no special importance. This radical egalitarianism gives the assumption of a split between ecology and justice issues a theoretical base. But to say we do not need any special place or more space than a polar bear needs, to a starving child is to widen the abyss separating justice and

ecological issues.⁴⁵

Us Versus Them.

This pertains to the distortion of relationship between humans and animals. The ecological vision of sin points to the fact that animals other than the humans also have a place. Following the common creation story, we realise that we are, in fact, related to the physical bodies of all other animals. We not only are animals, but also share some genetic similarities with them. We are on a continuum with them and vice versa. Therefore, it is important that we should share space with them.

Us Versus It.

This applies to our relationship with nature. While the predominant Western tradition tended to objectify nature as if it is totally distinct from human beings, some strands within eco-movements like deep ecology, seem to suggest that human beings are essentially one with nature. Both these views are extreme positions. The common creation story, on the other hand, retains both similarities and diversities, while emphasising the interrelatedness and inter dependence between them.

From a justice perspective, nature becomes the 'new poor'. Christian discipleship is characterised by solidarity with the poor, the needy, and the alienated. This extends, in an ecological ethic, to nature, the new poor, as well. Sin, then, is the limitation of one's horizon to the self. This is where the concept of God as mother can again be of help, maintains McFague, because sin is defined as:

refusal to be part of an ecological whole whose continued existence and success depend upon a recognition of the inter-dependence and inter-

⁴⁵.Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.117.

relatedness of all species. The mother God as creator, then, is also involved in "economics", the management of the household of the universe, to ensure the just distribution of goods.⁴⁶

Such a perspective helps us to treat ecological destruction as sin and also to rediscover the link between social justice and ecological crises.

CHRISTOLOGY.

Feminist theology has effected radical changes in traditional Christology, the doctrine of the person and work of Christ. The Hellenistic tradition gave 'Logos' an androcentric base. Coupled with the anthropocentrism of traditional Christian theology, Christology in traditional Christian theology has been predominantly anti-women and ecologically insensitive. Although Christian tradition contains potential and radical resources, they were highly 'spiritualised' in traditional theology.

McFague's model of embodiment has enormous Christological implications. As the centre of the gospel is the incarnation of God, Word becoming flesh and living among us, the model of the world as God's body can be understood through the Christic paradigm. According to McFague, if there can be any claim made about the uniqueness of Christ, it should be the nature of the incarnation- God taking human body. In this sense, Christianity is a religion of embodiment, the religion of incarnation par excellence. Bringing out the liberative dimensions of incarnation, McFague argues that the uniqueness of Incarnation lies in its focus on the 'other', the oppressed and the poor, the suffering bodies.

The story of Jesus suggests that the shape of God's body includes all, especially the needy and the

⁴⁶. Sallie McFague, Models of God, op.cit., p.114.

outcaste.⁴⁷

McFague extends the horizon of oppression to the world of animals and the earth itself. In an ecological, embodiment model, nature becomes the 'new poor'. This, however, does not mean that nature is to be sentimentalised (as in deep ecology) or as McFague puts it:

...slip into such absurdities as speaking of oppressed mosquitos or rocks. This means that we have made nature poor.⁴⁸

If the earth is an aspect of God, then, we have the responsibility to love the earth. One of the key implications of the Incarnation, understood from the embodiment model, is that the doctrine of incarnation is then, radicalised beyond the Jesus of Nazareth, to include all matter. In other words, it moves towards a cosmic Christology. The body of God is also the cosmic Christ. As the life giving breath extends to all living bodies in the universe, the liberating, healing and suffering love of God also reaches all bodies. From this point of view, the Resurrected Christ is the cosmic Christ in that Christ is freed from the body of Jesus of Nazareth, to be present in all bodies. This is the salvific direction of creation which is also the locus of salvation.

Jesus's parables and ministry also point to a liberative, ecological paradigm. His parables express a preferential option for the poor and the rejected. Most of the stories Jesus narrated have an ecological background. His healing ministries suggest that bodies do count. The fact the Jesus ate with the sinners and the publicans drives home the point that physical and bodily needs are basic and need to be met. As McFague emphasises, 'food' here, is not a metaphor and is to be taken

⁴⁷. Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.164.

⁴⁸. Ibid., p.166.

literally- the body of God must be fed. This also calls for an extension of the Christian solidarity with the poor to the new poor, nature as well. In her own words:

The liberative, healing, and inclusive ministry of Jesus that overturns hierarchical dualisms, heals the sick bodies, and invites the outcaste to the table, should in our time be extended to a new poor-nature.⁴⁹

ECCLESIOLOGY.

The popular concept of the Church as the body of Christ undergoes drastic reinterpretation in eco-feminist theology. In the light of her 'body' paradigm, McFague re-interprets the model of the Church as the body of Christ. The embodiment model, thus, becomes crucial to her ecclesiology. The Christian doctrine of the Church as Christ's body is, perhaps, one of the ways by which Christianity did incorporate an organic thinking. The problem, though, is that it has been understood and interpreted in anthropocentric terms, excluding nature and other animal species other than human ones from the purview of Church, God's (Christ) body. It has also been exclusive in relation to other religious traditions. The other feature of this model is its androcentrism, in that it assumed that body meant one body, the human (implicitly male body). Here is the relevance of the new organic model, inspired by the common creation story which decentres and recentres humanity. The Church is also decentred. In functional terms, we see the Church:

Where the new vision of the liberative, healing, inclusive love of the embodied God in the Christic paradigm occurs, there is the church.... Needless to say, this does not necessarily occur in the institutions we call churches, nor does it occur only

⁴⁹. Ibid., p.xii.

in these institutions. It may occur there but it does occur elsewhere.⁵⁰

Church is, thus, decentred and relativised. It is described here functionally, not ontologically. Human beings are not the goals of creation (decentred). They are those who side with the oppressed, embodying concern for the basic needs of the life forms on the earth (recentred). Where this occurs, Church is. As Corinne Scott observes, the new church places humanity in its due place and makes them sensitive to eco-justice and does provide a radical eschatological vision:

More than anything else this portrait decentres and recentres human beings: we are both less important and more important in the eschatological vision of a new future. We are the stewards of life's continuity on earth, and partners with God in solidarity with the oppressed...it is an awesome vocation.⁵¹

With the new eschatological framework McFague also revises the traditional sacramental tradition which assumes that God is present not only in the preaching and hearing of the Scripture and in the two (or seven) sacraments of the Church, but also in each and every being in creation. The main limitation of the traditional Christian sacramentalism, in McFague's opinion, is that it has been utilitarian in intent, in that the worldly things have been used just as symbols of religious state. They are not often valued for their intrinsic worth. Having made this criticism, McFague does acknowledge the importance of this tradition in Christianity, as it has been one of the few Christian traditions that has encouraged a historical and spatial perspective. She also suggests two qualifications for the traditional Christian sacramentalism:⁵²

⁵⁰. Ibid., p.206.

⁵¹. Corinne Scott, op.cit., p.8.

⁵². Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., pp.185-186.

(i) it should replace the utilitarian attitudes that accompany anthropocentrism, with an intrinsic approach.

(ii) it focuses on bodies not as expressions of divinity, but as signs of human sin and destruction. Now it should focus not on the use of the earthly bodies, but on our own care of them.

The world, in McFague's model of embodiment, is the sacrament of God. It is the visible, physical, bodily presence of God.

The first qualification McFague makes is perfectly reasonable. Regarding the second one, though, one must ask the question whether it is necessary or even right to see the earthly bodies as expressions of divinity. The word 'expression' has the connotation of 'explicit manifestation'. One has to be careful in using such a term as it could slip into pantheism. In the Christian sacramental tradition, there is, in fact, a better way of perceiving the earthly bodies. It treats the fruits of the earth, the products of nature, as gifts of God. All life is God's gift, so is nature and its produce. Harvest festivals, though they have been commercialised these days, are intended to be expressions of our celebration of life. In the Orthodox tradition, for example, the use of incense, water, herbs in sacraments like baptism, is not utilitarian. On the other hand, the products of nature become an integral part of the worship. Nature also takes part in praising its Creator. Nature becomes part and parcel of the sacrament celebrated. One of the Orthodox theologians, explaining the significance of Jesus's miracle of turning water into wine, said that the water was blessed when it encountered its Creator. The earthly bodies, like human beings, do take part in the worship of the Creator. This is a better form of sacramentalism than the one which sees earthly bodies as expressions of divinity. It is worth noticing that in the Christian tradition, even saints are not considered as expressions of divinity. The saints are, at best, icons or windows to divinity.

ECO-FEMINISM AND JUSTICE.

The main difference between deep ecology feminists or the 'nature feminists' and the eco-feminists or the 'social feminists' is that the latter group considers ecological issues from a social justice angle. They are convinced that ecological concern, detached from social justice perspective is too elitist and far from reality. This thrust is very strong in Ruether, McFague, Primavesi, Dietrich, and Gnanadason. They believe that the ecological crisis has its origin in certain power structures. Therefore, solving eco-feminist issues needs to be based on challenging systems of social domination based on class, race, and gender. This strand of feminism does not propagate what is characteristic of 'deep ecology', 'radical egalitarianism' where human beings and nature are seen one and the same. Deep ecology envisions a society where every one goes back to nature, an idealised state where the 'original oneness' of all beings exists. While rejecting this romanticism in deep ecology and Creation Spirituality, social feminists also challenge the Western kind of development oriented capitalist society based on the value of consumerism and exploitation. As Ruether explains:

Our model is neither the romanticised primitive jungle, nor the modern technological waste land. Rather it expresses itself in a new commandment to learn to cultivate the garden, for the cultivation of the garden is where the powers of rational consciousness come together with the harmonies of nature in partnership.⁵³

McFague is also very vocal on the liberative dimensions of eco-feminism. She perceives ecology as a people's issue, a justice issue. This is because, ecology, the home we share is a finite

⁵³. Rosemary Radford Ruether, Liberation Theology: Human Hope Confronts Christian History and American Power, Paulist Press, New York, 1972, p.125.

one. Justice basically demands fairness. As we inhabit a finite planet with limited resources, the interrelatedness of ecology and humanity is so vital and it demands sharing of resources. Eco-feminism, according to McFague, also takes the Christian commitment of the preferential option for the vulnerable seriously. In her view, there is an interconnection among all kinds of oppression, whether it is oppression of the poor by the rich or of women and nature by men. For her, this interlocking of oppression, especially that of women and nature, is central to feminist ecotheology. She says:

My spiritual and theological journey has led me, as it has led many others, to the realization that while all oppressions are different, indeed, radically different in the form of agony they engender, oppressions are also interconnected, as the nature/women oppression amply illustrates.⁵⁴

In other words, it is the justice perspective that makes the social feminists distinct from the nature feminists and make them relevant for the Third World context. One of the salient features of the social feminists discussed here is that they all consider gender construction and patriarchy and classism as part of the oppressive system of domination leading to the subjugation of women and exploitation of nature. The problems of capitalistic technology, which is also at the root of the environmental crisis today, are also problems caused by patriarchy. This perspective is very strong in Vandana Siva (as seen in Chapter 2.) and Gabriele Dietrich. This is why eco-feminists consider androcentrism also to be as a crucial a problem as anthropocentrism. The perspective of class and gender is also strong in several social feminists. This is, at the same time, the strength and weakness of eco-feminists. Strength, because this perspective considers the link between ecology and justice very important. It also prevents eco-feminism from being

⁵⁴. Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.14.

reduced to a middle class or elite affair. Hence Ruether would say:

An Ecological Ethic cannot stop at protection of parks and rivers for wilderness hiking and camping for the leisured class.⁵⁵

Or as Lois K Daly tells us, the lesson we learn from the social feminists is:

While it is possible to discuss women and nature without reference to class and race, such discussion risks remaining elite.⁵⁶

Although the perspective of class and gender in analyzing ecological problems is of paramount importance, the perspective in itself is not all that sufficient, especially in the Third World context like that of India. First of all, the collaboration of class and gender perspectives is not all that easy at an ideological level with the leftist tendency to subsume any other categories under the broad umbrella of class. Secondly, most of the social feminists discussed in this chapter operate from a Western perspective. It may be noted that class and gender perspectives are essentially categories of Western genesis. For these perspectives to be relevant in India, as Dietrich points out, they need to be combined with the caste perspectives in eco-feminist reflections in India.

The class- gender perspective is easily detectable in Ruether. According to her, the wisdom literature in the Bible, especially the Psalms, is free from two elements, the view that regards

⁵⁵. Rosemary Radford Ruether, To Change The World: Christology and Cultural Criticism, Crossroad, New York, 1988, p.60.

⁵⁶. Lois. K. Daly, "Ecofeminism, Reverence For Life, And Feminist Theological Ethics" in Charles Birch et.al (eds), Liberating Life: Contemporary Approaches to Ecological Theology, op.cit., p.92.

consciousness as transcendence to visible nature and the reading of the spirit-nature split into class and sexual relations, which actually, combine class and gender languages. The class perspective comes out stronger when she calls for the coalescing of ecological and women's movements.

They must unite the demands of the movement with those of ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socio-economic relations and the underlying values of society. The concept of domination of nature has been based from the first on social domination between master and servant groups, starting with the basic relation between men and women.⁵⁷

The insufficiency of class categories in dealing with the feminist issues has been realised by feminists themselves. And the inadequacy of class perspective in diagonalising and treating the ecological problems in the Third World contexts like India is already discussed in chapter 5. If eco-feminist theology is to be relevant in India, it does have to take the caste factor seriously. According to Dietrich, caste is an important cross current in the interaction between class and patriarchy. Caste had an impact on the division of labour. This is one of the reasons why dalit women in India are called 'the thrice alienated' or as Ursula King has it, the "firewood" and fuel of society, "exploited, hungry, weak," whose bodies are but "bony cages."⁵⁸ This is absolutely vital, as in India, social division of labour and sexual violence are among the root causes of the ecological problems:

The sexual division of labour, next to the expansion of total market and a technocratic development

⁵⁷ Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman/New Earth, Seabury, New York, 1975.

⁵⁸. Ursula King (ed), op.cit., p.134.

concept, is one of the root causes of the ecological crisis itself. Thus without tackling the sexual division of labour and violence against women, the ecological crisis cannot be solved.⁵⁹

According to Dietrich, eco-feminists like Vandana Siva misses this point, although she, like Maria Mies in her Capitalism and Accumulation on a World Scale, puts very strong emphasis on the patriarchal character of Western science and technology. This is very evident in Siva's Staying Alive. Patriarchy is identified as a full fledged mechanism of exploitation. While in Ruether, we can note the tendency of reducing everything to classism and sexism, in Vandana Siva and Maria Mies, everything is reduced to patriarchy. Referring to Vandana Siva and Maria Mies, Dietrich observes:

Both of them are in danger of contributing to an ideology of patriarchy reductionism which resembles the class reductionism of the traditional left in reverse.⁶⁰

This reduction does not help us to understand the development of class, caste and patriarchy in India. While the eco-feminists neglect the caste factor in ecological movement, most of the strands on caste in India neglect the dimensions of patriarchy and ecology.

Concepts of purity and pollution in the Indian society had caste moorings. According to Louis Dumont, purity and pollution was measured by the degree of interaction with organic life in the traditional societal system. This system accounts for the perception that involvement in agriculture, child birth, including menstruation (relation to fertility) is most

⁵⁹. Gabriele Dietrich, "Development, Ecology and Women's Struggles" in Social Action, Vol.38, Jan-March, 1988, p.6.

⁶⁰. Gabriele Dietrich, Women's Movements, op.cit., p.155.

polluting. This puts the dalits and women on the same scale, as agents of pollution. Dietrich brings out another interesting point made by Louis Dumont.⁶¹ Although death is considered to be ritually polluting, the martial castes who are the professional death dealers, were not supposed to be polluted by their profession. In fact, they were ranked above only those involved in production of life. This is ecologically very significant, Dietrich holds, as it connects with the pseudo-productivity of the predatory approach which Maria Mies and Vandana Siva describe in contrast to the production of life carried out by women and dalits. All of this points to the fact that unless caste is made one of the basic categories of social analysis, a combination of class and gender perspectives will not really address the ecological or the feminist issues in India.

The other focus which is often missing in Western social feminists is the perception that women are the real victims of ecological destruction. There is so much focus on the nature of the interlocking oppression of women and nature on the conceptual basis of a women-nature nexus. However, there is rather too little emphasis on the effect of ecological destruction on women in terms of the victimization of women. Ecology, for the women in the Third World, is, more than anything else, a survival issue, not simply the issue of equality between men and women or between humanity and nature. This is because when the environment is in peril, the survival of women is in danger. As Aruna Gnanadason argues, women in India know what the scarcity of water or of flower on the grinding stone means in real terms. Scenes of a large number of tribal and dalit women walking miles and miles, carrying pots, to fetch water, because they were ousted from their natural homeland to make way for 'developmental' projects, are not seen in the West. They are daily scenes in the villages of India. This is what prompts Gnanadason to say:

⁶¹. Ibid., p.167.

...every struggle of women, participation of women in the periphery of society- Dalit- tribal women, is a struggle for life- to affirm life.⁶²

This means that women-nature nexus should be seen not just in terms of concepts (i.e., nature viewed as feminine), but more importantly vis-a-vis the effect of ecological destruction on women. In this process, the perspective of caste is a vital prerequisite in the Indian context. These are the revisions and changes to be effected, when social eco-feminism is appropriated in the Indian context, in the process of delineating an integral ecotheology relevant for India.

SUMMARY.

Eco-Feminist theology, a liberative strand within feminist theology, suggests radical models of relationships between humanity and other life forms. Eco-feminism takes the nature-women nexus as central to its theological explications. Feminists have exposed the patriarchal context of this nexus which was used to legitimize male domination over women and nature. They have suggested a radical perspective where nature-women link is taken to the ideological level from the conceptual level, to say that women and nature are fellow sufferers of exploitation. As already pointed out, this perspective should be extended further to fix this nexus on a praxiological grounding, especially in the Indian context where women, the rural, tribal and dalit women, in particular, suffer the worst of ecological destructions.

Eco-feminism has rightly and powerfully projected dualism as one of the crucial factors leading to the exploitation of women and nature. While the deep ecology strand tends to dismiss dualisms of all kinds and maintains that there is no essential difference

⁶². Aruna Gnanadason, "Towards a Feminist Eco-Theology for India" in Prasanna Kumari (ed), A Reader In Feminist Theology, A Gurukul Publication, Madras, 1993, p.96.

between human beings and other forms of life, social feminists have been more cautious and realistic in that when they challenge dominations based on dualisms, they do not fall into the 'radical egalitarian' path where all distinctions are eliminated. Social feminists, on the other hand, do affirm diversities as they emphasise interrelatedness among various forms of life.

Eco-feminists have radically reinterpreted the traditional concepts of God and come up with new metaphors and concepts to talk about God. Sallie McFague's models of God as 'mother', 'lover' and 'friend', although personalistic in orientation, have immense practical ecological and feminist implications. The embodiment model of McFague suggests that transcendence cannot be conceived without reference to God's body. God did show his/her back to Moses, but not the face. This means that transcendence is to be thought in physical terms. The fact that God's face was not revealed points to the fact that transcendence cannot be thought exclusively in physical terms, although physical aspects are certainly part of divine transcendence. The organic model of the world as God's body, over and against the classical organic model which is anthropocentric and androcentric, provides a radical cosmology. This fosters plurality, interconnectedness and interdependence among all living beings and opposes subjugation and domination. It also overcomes the elitism of deep ecology with its justice perspective, as in a 'body' model, bodies closer to us, those of the needy and the oppressed come first. This transcends a 'spiritualization of pain and suffering' and 'other-worldliness'.

Social feminists also look critically at the traditional Hebrew, Greek, and Christian doctrines of creation. Ruether, however, does not suggest an alternative doctrine of creation, while McFague argues for the replacement of the traditional model of 'production' in Genesis with a 'procreation' model where creation emerges from the Creator as a body that grows and

changes. God bodies forth the universe. Basing it on the common creation story, her advocacy of the procreation model which sees creation as a continuous process, does, however, leave the task of hermeneutics undone. McFague does not say how the Genesis creation story can be re-mythologised (at a hermeneutical level) from the perspective of the common creation story. Her observation that the Genesis creation account is nothing more than a model does not answer this critique. It is more than a model. It is a faith affirmation of a community of their genesis and as such it has become part of the Christian faith. The task, therefore, should be to reinterpret the accounts. Several feminists have suggested new ways of understanding the Genesis creation story in an ecological age. This is not to say that the Biblical accounts cannot be enriched by other models or perspectives. Perhaps this is what McFague also intends. Even then, she leaves the task of reinterpreting, re-mythologizing, the given word of God concerning creation untouched. This critique applies to the whole book (The Body of God) where the area of hermeneutics is largely neglected.

As in the case of the doctrine of creation, Ruether analyses and brings out the prejudices and the anti-feminine and anti-nature connotations in the Hebrew, Greek and Christian concepts of sin. In her discussion on an eco-feminist view of sin, Ruether introduces the aspects of matriarchy and the return of the goddess. Although Ruether does not favour the replacement of patriarchy with matriarchy, she is ambiguous about the place of the goddess tradition. The examples of goddesses like Kali and Anat who exhibit violence, can hardly be ecologically sensitive. McFague provides an integral and enlightening explication of sin in praxiological terms, on three levels- in terms of divisions within humanity like rich and poor; between humanity and animals, and between humanity and nature. Sin, here, is essentially distortion of relationships.

From the perspective of 'embodiment', Christology is also reinterpreted by eco-feminists. Incarnation (Word becoming

flesh); Jesus's ministry (healing of bodies, eating stories, parables); Cross (pain of body); Resurrection (transformed body which is not confined to Jesus of Nazareth, but includes all bodies) provide insights for a cosmic Christology. The embodiment model provides an organic ecclesiology where Church is really the body of God (Christ). Church, here, is not only the communion of humans or Christians alone, but it encompasses all beings. This model decentres and recentres humanity. McFague's concern for sacramentalism is appreciable. But some of her revisions of the traditional sacramentalism, as already seen, is more problematic than the ones she tries to replace. To view earthly bodies as gifts from, and blessed (not sacred in itself) by God is a model more compatible with the gospel.

One of the most important contributions of social feminists is that they link ecological issues with justice issues of the poor and women. In Ruether, class and gender perspectives are very strong. In others, a gender perspective is the overriding perspective. In the Indian context, however, the neglect of the caste dimension, in analyzing the problems of women and environment, especially the aspect of sexual division of labour, is a serious one. Some of the radical views of Western eco-feminists like the 'procreation' model of McFague need to be carefully incorporated in the caste ridden Indian context, where production of life by women is considered to be polluting. Hence, a caste dimension should become the basic category in Indian eco-feminist theology. Although the shift from the conceptual linking of women and nature (nature as a feminine category) to an ideological reading of the nexus between women and nature (women and nature are both oppressed class) is welcome in the Third World context, a sharper focus on the praxiological dimensions of this bond between women and nature, to see women as the direct victims of ecological crisis is also crucial in India, because ecological issues are issues of survival for the women in India, especially for the rural, tribal and dalit women.

Chapter 7. DALIT THEOLOGY.

INTRODUCTION.

The strengths and weaknesses of Latin American liberation theology and ecofeminist theology have been the subjects in the previous sections. As already pointed out in Chapter 1, one of the radical developments in the Indian liberation theological context has been the emergence of another variant form of liberation theology, called dalit theology. This section, in its attempt to formulate an integral ecotheology, delineates dalit theology and suggests some reformulations and changes in dalit theology in order that it could contribute to an integral ecotheology relevant for India.

THE CONTEXT OF DALIT THEOLOGY.

The context in which dalit theology emerged in India has already been dealt with briefly in Chapter 1. The insufficiency of the generalization of concepts such as 'poor', adopted by the Third World theology or the liberation theology in India, modelled after the Latin American liberation theology which used Marxian tools of social analysis, the economic class analysis, was realized by the dalit thinkers in India. This economic analysis neglected the most vital dimension of social oppression in India, namely the caste factor. This led the dalit thinkers and theologians in India to re-examine Marx and to expose Marx's neglect of caste as an important factor in analyzing the society. Marx failed to conceptualize the highly complicated caste structures as part of a typical primitive society. Caste could only be seen by Marx as a later or a secondary factor. Thus he rejected the ideology of caste and its sociological dimensions, the inequalities and the exploitations the caste system perpetuates in India. Within the context of the dawn of industrialization, Marx could only view social conflicts vis-a-vis economic, specifically industrial terms. As Saral K. Chatterji argues:

the persistence of hierarchical, subaltern and other non-economic relationships in the face of industrialization and Capitalism cannot be explained by a theory that seeks assurance in the primacy of economic infrastructure.¹

The remoteness of a class concept in India and its deficiencies have already been discussed in Chapter 1.

The so-called Third World theology or liberation theology in India, 'adopted' from Latin America, continued to engage in the generalization of concepts like 'the poor' and 'the oppressed'. Such terms gradually began to lose their cutting edge. Liberation theology, like Marxism, neglected certain intransigent factors in the Indian socio-economic milieu and relied on rather comfortable generalizations of categories like the poor. As S.K. Chatterji points out, the Marxist class influence in liberation theology's tendency of generalizations and abstractions:

although not always explicitly stated, this sort of abstraction presupposes a concept of "class" which appears to give the concept of the poor or the people a shape and direction... the class concept produces the illusion of homogeneity, unity, and a correct (as opposed to false) consciousness in the otherwise or indeterminate idea of the poor ²

Dalit theology inspired a constructive debate among theologians as to whether 'class' or 'caste' should have priority in social analysis in India. The dalits rejected the class concept as totally alien and Western in orientation, and advocated in its place the indigenous tool of caste to analyze caste ridden

¹. Saral K. Chatterji, "Why Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, Department of Dalit Theology U.E.L.C.I, Gurukul, Madras, p.26.

². Ibid., p.24.

Indian society. In a way, dalit theology was challenging a trend among the progressive theologians in India (as in other parts of the Third World too) to identify 'radicalism' with the Marxist ideology and its economic class analysis.

V. Devasahayam, elaborating this point, quotes Henro Stern who remarked:

to speak of class to refer to Indian society would be to adopt a perspective initially alien to the Indian world and hence an imperialist one. ³

Class and caste are seen by him as products of two different worlds; the former of the Western and modern and the latter of the Indian and traditional world.

Therefore, in place of Marx, dalit theology employs the caste analysis of B.R.Ambedkar who himself had criticised Marxism for its 'industrial determinism' in its understanding of the 'proletariate' which, according to Ambedkar, made it impossible for Marx to appreciate the real social injustice in India. Ambedkar argued that the real proletariat in India are the outcastes whom he called the 'social proletariat', as the caste system was understood by Ambedkar not just as the division of labour but also as a division of labourers. ⁴

Finding the social analysis of liberation theology insufficient in the Indian context, characterised by the caste system, dalit theology adopted a caste analysis of the society instead.

The other important factor which led to the formation of dalit theology in India is the dominance of the Brahminic tradition

³. V.Devasahayam, "Pollution, Poverty and Powerlessness", in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.18.

⁴. S.K. Sarkar, "Socio-Economic Ideas of Ambedkar and their Relevance" in K.S.Chalam (ed), Relevance of Ambedkarism in India, Rawat Publications, Jaipur and New Delhi, 1993, pp.34-35.

in the so-called Indian Christian theology. This particular strand of Christian theology in India, with a few notable exceptions, was largely within the classical Hindu (Brahmin) philosophical context. It operated either within the Sankara school of 'Advaita' (non-dualism) or within the Ramanuja school of 'Vishishta Advaita' (qualified monism), both representing the heights of the Brahminic tradition, a tradition represented by the high caste of Brahmins within the caste hierarchy or the 'varna' system in Hinduism. Naturally, this Christian theology was largely rooted in the religious experiences of the upper caste and the upper class people. James Massey gives the following examples: ⁵

Sadhu Sundar Singh came from a high caste wealthy Punjabi family, Upadhyaya from a Bengali Brahmin family, and Nehemiah Gore from a Marathi Brahmin family. While Narayan Vamen Tilak was a Brahmin, H.A. Krishna Pillai came from a non-Brahmin, but from a Vaishnavite (one of the high castes) background. A.J.Appasamy had a high caste Saivite background. P. Chenchiah and V.Chakkarai were also upper caste theologians.

The above names almost exhaust the early Indian Christian theologians, all representing the Brahminic strand of theology in India. Their immediate concern, most of them being converts, was to express their new faith in terms of the then predominant Indian thought which was Brahminic. It did not reflect the predicaments of the majority of the people in India who belong to the low caste or the dalit background.

Thus the so-called Indian Christian theology and later the Indian variant of liberation theology of Latin America failed to capture the aspirations of the dalits, the real oppressed in India, in their theological reflections. To repeat what Nirmal pointed out:

⁵. James Massey, "Ingredients for a Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.146.

...whether it is the traditional Indian Christian theology or the more recent Third World theology, they failed to see in the struggles of Indian dalits for liberation a subject matter appropriate for doing theology in India. ⁶

This was the context which necessitated the construction of dalit theology in India. Dalit theology, thus, emerged as a genuine Indian search for a theological system which was rooted in people's experiences of pain and suffering, specifically and exclusively of the dalits, the untouchables, who form a typical example of a unique system of oppression in India. In other words, dalit theology was developed to correct the tendencies of generalizations and abstractions of basic categories such as 'poor' and to purge Indian theology of its oppressive Brahminic dimensions, and to restore to it the genuine Indian dimension of caste.

DALIT THEOLOGY: AN OVERVIEW.

Dalit theology shares many similarities with liberation theology in its theological explications and biblical interpretation, in that it also adopts a sociological (political as well) reading of the Scripture, except that dalit theology does it purely from a dalit perspective. It is to be noted, at the very outset, that dalit theology is still in the making and that it has not yet fully developed a theological system, especially from a systematic doctrinal point of view. A.P.Nirmal is the central thinker in dalit theology. As a result this chapter will focus mainly on his works.

The Question of God.

Dalit theology is based on a faith in a dalit God. God is not the 'wholly other' or the one who is 'up there', but one who is

⁶. A.P.Nirmal, A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.57.

identified with the oppressed, the dalits. This understanding of the ultimate as a dalit God has been conceived as a result of the 'exodus' of the Indian dalits from Hinduism to Christianity and to Christ. According to Nirmal, it is this exodus which has made it possible for the dalits to recognise the 'dalitness' of Jesus and his Father. The recognition of the dalit God in and through the person of Jesus Christ led the dalits to reject all other deities, the non-dalit as well as the anti-dalit deities like Rama who killed Shanbuka—a dalit for having undertaken the life of prayer and asceticism which, of course, being the privilege of the upper caste Brahmins, was denied to the dalits.

But the God whom Jesus Christ revealed and of whom the prophets spoke in the Old Testament is experienced as a dalit God. God's dalitness is best exemplified in the virtue of 'service mindedness', which, of course, has many dalit implications. Service of others has always been the 'privilege' of the 'Sudras', the low caste and of the dalits in India. God of the dalits, against the context of the dalits being forced to do the menial work in the Indian society, is a God who does not create humanity to do servile work, but does it himself/herself and this is a God who identifies with the servitude and the suffering of the dalits. The servant passage in Isaiah is full of pathos, characteristic of the dalit conditions.

Christology.

For the dalits, to affirm that they are Christian dalits and not just dalits, implies Christological dimensions. It implies that Jesus Christ, for the dalits, is a dalit himself, despite his Jewishness. The key to comprehend the mystery of the divine-human unity in Jesus Christ, for the dalits, is Jesus's own dalitness. According to Nirmal, the Matthean account of genealogy (Mt.1:1-17) has certain dalit implications that are often overlooked. Some of the ancestors figured in the genealogy of Christ did have 'dalit' (outcaste) background. Examples are

Rahale, the harlot who helped the Israelite spies (Joshua.2:1-21), Solomon who was an illegitimate son of David, and Jesus, himself referred to as the 'carpenter's son'.

According to Nirmal, the 'Son of Man' title has dalit implications. 'Son of Man' was the title Jesus himself preferred most. Among the three traditional ways, the New Testament scholars have interpreted the title, (i) as an ordinary man; (ii) to refer to his imminent suffering and death; (iii) and in the eschatological sense of the term,⁷ dalit theology, in Nirmal's view, would prefer the second one. The Son of Man encountering rejection, mockery, contempt, suffering and finally death at the hands of the then predominant religious hierarchy, is for dalit theology Jesus encountering the dalit experience, as the dalits in India continue to undergo the same experience, notably at the hands of the dominant religious hierarchy, the Hindu Brahmins. In other words, as Nirmal puts it, Jesus underwent these experiences as the 'prototype of the dalits'.⁸ The rejection, powerlessness and frailty become the key to dalit Christology. Christ the servant is affirmed in the powerless and the poor. As M.E.Prabhakar puts it:

Christology is not to be understood in terms of power, but what is humble and frailly human...It is a call to make sacrifice on behalf of the poor. POWER IS SEEN IN LOVE AND ACTS OF LOVE, NOT IN STATUS...To be Son of God is to be dedicated totally in the purpose of God, even unto death on the Cross.⁹

The gospels make it crystal clear that Jesus identified totally with the dalits of his day; the Gentiles, the sinners, the tax collectors, the publicans and so on. His attitude to the

⁷. A.P.Nirmal, A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.65.

⁸. Ibid., p.67.

⁹.M.E. Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.49.

Gentiles is best expressed in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. (Jn.4)

Like liberation theology, dalit theology also considers the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus Christ (Lk.4:18-20) as a key passage. According to Nirmal, the fact that Jesus after quoting from Isaiah (Is.61:1-4) goes further and identifies the 'dalits' as the specific people to whom liberation was affirmed, shows Jesus's focus on the 'dalits'. The examples Jesus gives after the quotation is suggestive of this dimension, argues Nirmal. The examples of the widow of Zarephat in Sidon and the case of Namaan, the Syrian leper (when there were many widows and lepers, the prophets were sent to these particular Gentiles) follow the Nazareth Manifesto. Thus the dalits are set over against 'Israel'.

The cleansing of the temple in the gospels is a very important incident, as far as dalit theology is concerned. Although liberation theology highlighted the political dimensions of this incident, it overlooked its social ramifications for the Gentiles, the dalits. Lightfoot pointed out this dimension. The selling and buying took place in that part of the temple precincts that were 'set apart' for the Gentiles to worship. The bazar took place in the so called 'Gentile court', thus, in effect, preventing the Gentiles from worshipping God in peace and quiet. Through the cleansing of the temple, Jesus, the Messianic King, restores to the Gentiles their religious rights. This strikes a powerful chord with the Indian dalits who had to encounter (and continue to encounter) the problem of rejection of entry into temples in India. It took many an agitation by the dalits to get their right to worship granted in most parts of the country.

It is on the Cross that the 'dalitness' of Christ is best exemplified and symbolized. On the Cross:

Jesus was the broken, the split, the torn,... the

dalit in the fullest possible meaning of that term.¹⁰

The cry of Jesus on the Cross was full of pathos. The Son of Man felt that he had been God-forsaken, which feeling is at the heart of the dalits in India.

Ecclesiology.

Church as the body of Christ is a basic ecclesiological affirmation in dalit theology. It accepts the concepts of the 'Church of the poor' and the 'servant Church' in liberation theology. Dalit theology also maintains the essential 'community' nature of the Church-the dimension of 'koinonia' or fellowship. With liberation theology, dalit theology shares also the image of the Church as a 'people's movement'. M.E.Prabhakar has this to say on the nature of the church:

The Church in its true sense is its people who are at the heart of the Church's search for a meaningful and relevant self-understanding and role in society and the world.¹¹

The Church is the body of Christ. As the body of Christ was broken and crushed on the Cross, the Church, the community of the dalits are also torn asunder by the oppressors. This has liberative missiological ramifications for the Church in dalit theology. Again in the words of M.E.Prabhakar, the mission of the Church is:

... the oneness of humanity, particularly the suffering humanity and their fellowship without barriers of religion... and Christ-centred fellowship without barriers in which Church, (social) activists,

¹⁰. A.P.Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.69.

¹¹. M.E.Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.45.

and the oppressed people participate together.¹²

It must also be added that A.P.Nirmal now recognises the dangers of the anthropocentric view of theological themes and advocates a cosmic paradigm instead. This then will have ecological implications in Church's mission.

...each church, each local congregation is not only a manifestation of the Universal Church, but becomes God's micro-cosmos... It represents the cosmic nexus of ecosystem. In its organic relationship with ecosystems, it should reflect caring, commitment, pledge and responsibility that God has towards His/Her creation. That is Church's ecological mission.¹³

The Deuteronomic Creed-The Paradigm of Dalit Theology.

The Latin American liberation theology adopted the specific Old Testament account of the exodus (the event of liberation of the Israelites from the yoke of Egypt) as its paradigm. Dalit theology, on the other hand, takes the Deuteronomic creed (Dt.26:5-12) as its specific model for theological foundation and praxis. It is, once again, Nirmal who offers an exegetical interpretation of the Creed for dalit theology.¹⁴ Dalit theology, being a theology of identity and dalit consciousness, the creed fits in very well as it is also an affirmation of the identity of the people of God as part of their faith affirmation.

To affirm that the ancestor of the Israelites was a 'wandering

¹². Ibid., p.46.

¹³. Aravind P.Nirmal, "Ecology, Ecumenics and Economics In Relation" in Daniel D.Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.46.

¹⁴. A.P.Nirmal, "Towards a Christian Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., pp.58-62.

Ar.a.me'an", is to recall their nomadic roots. (V.5) To confess that they were 'once no people' also becomes a vital part of a confession because they are now the 'people of God'. In other words, it means that only when people recognise and affirm their roots and therefore their identity, can they become confessional. The fact that the wandering Ar.a.me'an is described here as 'few in number' should mean that it stands for an entire community. Dalit theology, by adopting this creed as its paradigm, also conveys that it is also a theology of a community, a unitive theology, as Nirmal puts it.

The creed, then, goes on to recall the sufferings and afflictions, the people of God underwent at the hands of the oppressors, the Egyptians (V.6) which is followed by the cry to the LORD. (V.7) This would imply that dalit theology, rooted in this creed, as a genuine Christian theology, is also a theology of suffering and cry, characterised by pathos. The creed describes that the liberative exodus event was symbolised by 'a mighty hand', an 'outstretched arm', and by 'terror'. (V.8) 'Signs' and 'wonders' come low in the order here. This, thinks Nirmal, means that liberation is achieved, not only through signs and wonders, but through action too - another basic affirmation which dalit theology and liberation theology have in common. This also presupposes that dalit theology cannot afford to resort to a 'fatalistic' approach to social realities, but can only be dynamic and praxiological. Pathos gives rise to protests. Nirmal quotes Ambedkar's motto, in this respect, which runs as follows:

"unite, educate and agitate".¹⁵

In Nirmal's view, "the land flowing with milk and honey" (V.9) comes at last. It is, in other words, the result of the liberation already achieved. This would mean that "the land flowing with milk and honey" is not the chief goal of the

¹⁵. Ibid., p.61.

exodus. Rather, it is the socio-political freedom from the Egyptians which is the main goal of liberation. It is the human (emphasis mine) freedom which is at the heart of exodus, opines Nirmal.

Relating the experiences of the dalits in India, Nirmal notes that the Indian dalit experience depicts even greater pathos than that which is expressed in the Deuteronomic creed. For instance, the dalit ancestors did not even enjoy the freedom of the nomads, as they were cast out from their villages by their high caste masters. But the creed offers a powerful model for dalit theology, in terms of providing a framework which consists of the affirmation of a people's identity, recollection of their afflictions and sufferings, and God's mighty acts of liberation.

Pathos- Dalit theology's epistemological paradigm.

While in liberation theology, praxis forms the epistemological principle, 'pathos' takes this place in dalit theology. Epistemology, the science of knowing, is important for all kinds of theological systems. Classical theologies adopted various epistemological bases like God's self-revelation, reason, faith, the Scriptures, tradition etc. In liberation theology, we have seen praxis (the dialectics of theory and practice) taking over and in dalit theology, praxis being superseded by pathos.

Dalit theology, while appreciating the praxiological dimensions, does however, affirm the primacy of pathos over praxis. Pathos or suffering or pain comes prior to involvement or participation in struggles. Dalits know God through their pathos. Hence Nirmal would say in proverbial style:

Pain or pathos is the beginning of Knowledge.¹⁶

¹⁶. Ibid., p.141.

Pain or pathos is there even before one experiences or even comes to know about pain. Pathos, simply is there. The sufferer knows God through his/her suffering and pain. It gives rise to the conviction that God participates in human pain. This was best epitomized on the Cross, in the person of Christ and the pain and suffering he experienced. Hence Leonardo Boff said:

Passion of Christ (is) the passion of the world;
Passion therefore is important for theological
knowing.¹⁷

AREAS AND POSSIBILITIES OF CHANGE IN DALIT THEOLOGY.

Although dalit theology has succeeded in highlighting and rectifying some of the blemishes in the Latin American brand of liberation theology, dalit theology itself is not flawless. It is, indeed, beyond the task and scope of this chapter and the thesis to give an overall critique to dalit theology, from various angles such as the implications of dalit theology's insistence on dalit exclusivism, sometimes, seeming Christian dalit exclusivism and its evident anti-Brahmin stance which tends to take the form of anti-Hinduism, for inter-religious dialogue and so on. What is attempted here, is to point out the drawbacks and possibilities of dalit theology from an integral ecotheological perspective. As the cause of the dalits are integrally interrelated with the issue of land in India, especially among the tribals, with whom the dalits are forging a common ideological bond, it is to be viewed as a serious neglect on the part of dalit theology to have overlooked ecological concerns. The main reason why ecological concerns have been left out in dalit theology is the same anthropocentrism which liberation theology also adopted. The same critique which was made in the case of liberation theology is applicable to dalit theology as far as anthropocentrism is concerned. It would suffice, therefore, here, to give an example

¹⁷. Ibid., p.142.

or two from dalit theological literature to illustrate this point.

Elucidating the ecclesiology of dalit theology, M.E.Prabhakar follows an anthropocentric line.

The Church in its true sense is its people who are at the heart of Church's search for a meaningful and relevant self-understanding.¹⁸

Or when he outlines the mission of the Church as follows:

...the oneness of humanity, particularly the suffering humanity, and their fellowship... and the oppressed people participating together.¹⁹

Overlooking the cosmological dimensions and implications of Christology, Prabhakar gives an anthropocentric definition of Christology . According to him:

Christology is not to be understood in terms of Power, but what is humble and frailly human... it is a call to make sacrifice on behalf of the poor.²⁰

It has already been noted that Nirmal has lately identified anthropocentrism as a serious flaw in any theology and has already committed himself to adopting a cosmological perspective, although he is yet to incorporate the cosmic dimensions in dalit theology.

As the question of anthropocentrism has already been discussed

¹⁸. M.E.Prabhakar, "The Search For A Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.45. [emphasis mine]

¹⁹. Ibid., p.46. [emphases mine]

²⁰. Ibid. [emphasis mine]

with regard to liberation theology (which is equally applied to dalit theology as well), this section dwells more on certain other areas in dalit theology, highlighting the reasons why dalit theology should integrate ecology in its theological system, offering certain possibilities, both at the level of hermeneutics and theological and sociological reflections, for dalit theology to internalise the ecological values as an integral part of dalit theological thinking.

THE DALIT-TRIBAL SOLIDARITY CAN OFFER AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.

Dalit theology, despite being a specific theology of the dalits, the outcastes (having to do with the caste system in India), is rightly involved in efforts to formulate a common ideological framework for the dalits and the tribals in India. These two sections form the most oppressed people in India. They are officially known as the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs), although they are both looked at by one Government commission. Of course, there are also distinct differences in socio-political conditions of these two sections of the Indian society. For example, the dalits live in close proximity with the four caste people in India, although they are considered and treated as outcastes. The tribals, on the other hand, live in isolation from the dominant caste groups and they are totally independent of the high castes for their socio-political life. The dalits are a much more scattered and spread-out people. Having said that, as Nirmal Minz acknowledges, modern scientific and technological power, in the name of development, is trying to break down this geo-political structures of the tribals. Against this threatening context, it is imperative for the dalits and the tribals to come together and to construct a common ideological platform to face the impending threat in the form of Government onslaughts on their diverse distinctiveness in the Indian society. This calls for a genuine search for commonalities among the dalits and the tribals. According to Nirmal Minz, there do exist such common grounds:

...the basic socio-cultural ingredients of Dalit and Tribal identities are land, labour, and language.²¹

The question of land, being a common factor, in my view, offers enormous possibilities for dalit theology to integrate the ecological concerns.

THE TRIBALS AND THE LAND.

The link between the tribals and land is fairly well established. For the tribals, the land is their home. There is no home without land for the tribals. Interestingly enough, the Greek word for 'home', ('oikos') is the root of 'ecology'. In other words, for the tribals, land is ecology. The dream of a homeland for the tribals in India is a very real one. It is the belief of the tribals that the land where they live (their ecology) is God-given and that any encroachment on it needs to be resisted. Land, therefore, becomes life for them. When they refer to land as their ecology, they, quite literally mean it. As Nirmal Minz makes this point clear:

Land here means the land he lives on now, the trees and plants he relates himself with day and night, and even the whole earth.²²

When the tribal belt in India fights against the destructive developmental projects like the controversial Narmada dam project, they are, in fact, proclaiming that land is ecology and that when the land is taken away, the whole ecology is endangered.

In the tribal culture, land is the abode of the 'Mother Earth'.

²¹. Nirmal Minz, "Dalit-Tribal: A Search For Common Ideology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), Towards A Common Dalit Ideology, U.E.L.C.I, Gurukul, Madras, 1992, p.100.

²². Nirmal Minz, "Primal Religion's Perspective on Ecology" in Daniel D.Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.50.

Being a gift of God, it is not individualised, but shared in common. The tribal world view of collective ownership and sharing and co-operation in their jobs like agricultural works, and sharing of their produces is totally antithetical to the capitalist, market oriented, consumerist world views. Land is central to their life. As one of the reports of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Commissions has it:

A crucial distinguishing feature of the tribal society is their association with a territory to which they belong and command over which is sanctified by their tradition.²³

Now when dalit theology attempts to suggest a common ideology with the tribals, the most important factor that can unite them is land. Unfortunately, as yet, this has not been taken up seriously in dalit theological reflection. There have been calls for it such as the following one, although it is yet to become a theological reality, which also explains why dalit theology has overlooked eco-concerns.

The statement of a Seminar on "Common Ideology for the Dalits and the Tribals" highlighted the urgency of the issue of land in this process.

While the tribals have been more able to survive the onslaught on their socio-cultural roots by the dominant caste due to their geo-political togetherness in pockets of India, dalit population need to reclaim their essential relationship with the land-their homeland.²⁴

²³.Johnson Vadakumchery, "The Earth Mother And The Indigenous People of India" in The Journal Of Dharma; Vol.XVIII, No.1, Jan-March, 1993, p.90.

²⁴. A.P.Nirmal (ed), Towards A Common Dalit Ideology, op.cit., p.129.

DALITS AND THE QUESTION OF LAND.

While presenting the right to a homeland as a unique tribal cause, Nirmal Minz also appeals that the dalits must make land a dalit cause as well and that the issue of the right to a homeland (ecology) is absolutely indispensable as far as a tribal-dalit coalition is concerned.

The Indian rural society had been built on the edifice of casteism and feudalism. Both had its role in the land distribution patterns in India. Gail Omvedt describes the caste based ownership pattern in India as follows. According to him, the rich people who owned substantial acres of land were from the high caste groups of Brahmins (the priestly caste), Ksatriyas (warriors) and Vysyas (traders). The artisans came from the lowest caste group of Sudras and the landless agricultural labourers from those outside the caste groups, the so called untouchables.²⁵

According to V.Devasahayam, the majority of the dalits live in villages and they depend on agriculture and contribute disproportionately to the landless agricultural labourers.

Caste played an important role in the allotment of land to the people. Caste was the defining factor in the village economy. The agricultural producers were divided into several subcastes or 'jatis'. In order to have a share in the harvest, each subcaste was required to perform its specified caste duties.²⁶ The dalits, being the lowest on the caste ladder, were subjected to the most severe bondage in this respect. Not only were they deprived of any right to possess land, but they also suffered harsh slavery in the form of severe agricultural labour.

²⁵. Gail Omvedt, Caste, Land and Politics in Indian States, Delhi, 1982, pp.87-88.

²⁶. Ibid., p.43.

It must be noted that there are attempts to idealise the ancient Indian caste-based village system as ecologically friendly. The caste-based village society, according to this school of thought, had developed a variety of institutions to control resource use. The caste village developed a system of diversified use of living resources, which resulted in the reduction of inter-caste competition over resources.

Thus sedentary endogamous groups living together, display a remarkable diversification of resource use.²⁷

It is argued that even among those groups that are identical in resource use, there existed no inter-caste competitions, as they tended to have a non-overlapping geographical distribution or the so called 'territorial exclusion'.

To take such a 'romanticised' view of the caste-based village of ancient India is to overlook the exploitations and the denials of human rights, especially the right to own a land for the lowest caste groups and the dalits. In other words, it would be an elitist ecological world-view, bereft of social justice, totally in contrast to the spirit of 'eco-justice'.

During the British Colonial regime, the caste-ridden village system gave way to 'Zamindari' system, where land ownerships were conferred on those who collected revenue on behalf of the Government, from the peasants. The lower castes and the dalits still remained landless.

The post-colonial situation in India is no better, if not worse, for the dalits, as far as the land ownership rights are concerned. The dalits continue to be landless. The Green Revolution added fuel to the fire. Those involved in small scale farming were forced to sell off their tiny pieces of land at

²⁷.Ramachandra Guha, This Fissured Land, op.cit., p.98.

throw away prices, unable to cope with the high costs of the new technology. The growing monetarisation of the Indian economy, which had already been initiated by the British, is now continued under the pretext of 'development' and it victimizes the landless dalits who depend on agriculture for their survival. As the Second Citizen's Report puts it:

Social tensions are increasing as people fight over scarce resources and because the caste system continues even after losing its *raison d'être*, it has become a source of social power and oppression.²⁸

The dalits, on account of their low status within the caste system, have been and continue to be deprived of their right to a homeland and a healthy environment to live in. To realize the importance of owning a homeland for the dalits as part of their liberation, is to take ecology seriously, because land is not just a piece of land, but an integral part of the whole ecology. Re-establishing the dalit attachment to the land, as in the case of the tribals, can lead dalit theology to integrate the concerns of ecology with the concerns of dalits. This is very important in India because most of the environmental movements there today are also movements to protect the rights of the tribals and the dalits to their homeland, especially when about 90 per cent of the dalits in India are landless agricultural labourers. Dalit theology must therefore address the issue of land and hence of ecology as its own concern, as the dalits and the environment together form the 'torn asunder' in India.

THEOLOGICAL CHANGES NEEDED AND THE PROSPECTS WITHIN DALIT THEOLOGY.

The ecological implications of a dalit-tribal solidarity.

The dalits, along with the tribals, claim to be the indigenous

²⁸. Anil Agarwal (ed), The State of India's Environment: The Second Citizen's Report, op.cit., p.162.

or the 'Adivasi' (meaning first inhabitants) people of India, though the Indian Government has never officially recognized this claim. However, it is indeed a strong claim that these two sections of the Indian society make. Although, it is still debatable, a powerful argument has been made, over the years, that the 'adivasi' people were invaded by the Aryans who eventually displaced them geo-politically.

Thus says Nirmal Minz:

...all "Adivasis" (Tribals-Dalits) of India are the indigenous people-the original inhabitants of land from which they were displaced by invaders.²⁹

While Nirmal Minz makes this claim on behalf of the tribals in India, the dalits have also affirmed this proclamation. M.E.Prabhakar, while making this claim, also points to the early dalit-tribal culture and faith:

The dalits (as much as the tribals) are the original people of India, having Pre-Dravidian and Dravidian, therefore pre-Aryan origins and culture... The early dalit culture/religion was animistic- pantheistic, interpolated by fertility cults and tantric forms of worship and later on Saivite.³⁰

For the dalits, to claim the status of the indigenous people, along with the tribals, and to reclaim a pre-Aryan culture, does have serious ramifications for dalit theology, from an ecological point of view, as the ancient 'adivasi' culture and faith were truly ecologically sensitive. Dalit theology, therefore, to be an integral theology, needs to reclaim and reintegrate some of these 'submerged' adivasi insights. Because

²⁹. Nirmal Minz, "Dalit-Tribal: A Search For A Common Ideology" in Daniel D. Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.42.

³⁰. M.E.Prabhakar, "The Search For A Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.45.

of dalit theology's structure and its affinity with the tribal identity and culture, this ecological integration becomes, methodologically speaking, an easier task, and once done, it will go a long way in correcting the existing limitations of dalit theology, its neglect of eco-concerns and its anthropocentrism.

Dalit theology is a theology of identity.

One of the distinctiveness of dalit theology is that it is a theology which affirms the very identity of the dalit communities as the 'adivasi' people of India. The Deuteronomic creed as its paradigm also points to this aspect. The holistic tribal-dalit vision now faces a heavy onslaught by the Government and the ruling class in India. They are trying to 'integrate' these communities into the 'mainstream' culture, annihilating, in the process, the unique culture and identity of these peoples. Dalit theology is an effort to resist these trends of assault on their unique singularity, and to affirm their distinct identity.

Now, the question of 'identity' of the dalits assumes ecological dimensions as the identity of the 'original' people in India is inseparably coupled with its close proximity to nature, especially to forests and land, and with a harmonious relationship between them and their environment. This is, of course, more true in the case of the tribals than in the case of the dalits, as the latter were scattered when they were displaced on account of their low or the non-existent status of caste. Hence it is of paramount importance for dalit theology (as also expressed through the seminar statement quoted earlier) to reclaim this identity vis-a-vis its relationship to a homeland and a friendly and rich environment.

Dalit theology is not determined by history alone, but by oral traditions as well.

One of the important areas of divergence between liberation theology and dalit theology is that the latter is not obsessed with 'history', because for the dalits, their stories are mostly found in legends, myths and in other forms of oral traditions. Nirmal says:

... more often than not the dalit people have no written historical traditions. Their histories are oral histories based on oral traditions.³¹

The evident absence of 'history determinism' should provide dalit theology with a greater opportunity to avoid anthropocentrism. It opens up ways for what can be called 'creation history'. For example, the myths about creation in dalit tradition present human history from an ecological point of view. Indeed, A.P.Nirmal has now begun to acknowledge the importance of the ecological paradigm and calls for a synthesis of history and ecology (nature) in such a paradigm. According to him:

In the ecological paradigm, human histories must be studied within the context of creation history (nature). This means that God must be conceived of not only as a God of History but also as God of nature. The new paradigm, therefore will bring history and nature together.³²

The above quotation comes from a paper presented by A.P.Nirmal at a Seminar on "Ecology and Development: Theological

³¹. A.P.Nirmal, "Doing Theology From A Dalit Perspective" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.144.

³². A.P.Nirmal, "Ecology, Ecumenics, and Economy in Relation: A New Theological Paradigm"; in Daniel D.Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.25.

Perspectives", not in any reflection on dalit theology as such. The immediate task for dalit theology is to take on board the above perspective in its theological system.

Dalit theology finds itself in a very good position, methodologically speaking, on account of its focus on myths and legends, to incorporate some of the mythical and the legendary in its ancient culture and faith that are profoundly ecological in spirit and are even today retained by the tribals, into its theological scheme.

For example, the creation myths, prevalent among some of the tribal communities can be meaningfully appropriated into the Christian doctrine of creation in dalit theology. (It may be added here that dalit theology, like liberation theology has not yet developed the doctrine of creation in any significant theological manner.)

A creation myth is fundamental to the tribal/dalit spirituality. Jyoti Sahi describes a creation myth, held by the Uraon tribe of Chotanagpur.³³ According to their creation story, the first human beings were made out of clay by God whom they call Dharmes. It is, indeed, striking to note the similarities it shares with the second creation story in the Bible. They believe that the earth first came out of a primal earthworm and from the clay Dharmes formed the first man and woman. Dharmes left the new creatures made of clay in the sun to dry. The story goes on to say that a flying horse ('hamsraj pankraj') descended to the earth and stamped on the clay, shattering the first human models into pieces. Dharmes, therefore, had to fashion the human again, this time, though, taking enough precautions. He made two ferocious dogs as well which would guard the models while they were being dried in the sun.

Although this account is a myth, it does have social and

³³.Mathai Zachariaiah (ed), Ecology and Spirituality, India Peace Centre, Nagpur, pp.41-42.

ecological implications for a dalit theology, as the 'mythical' in the biblical creation stories is now being reinterpreted to bring out its ecological insights. (This is dealt with in chapter 9).

Jyoti Sahi also dwells, briefly, on the significance of this creation myth for the dalits and tribals in India, which I think, is also very crucial for an ecological dalit theology. The flying horse, for example, in the story, seems to have a rather negative function. According to Jyoti Sahi, the flying horse here could well represent the Aryan conquerors who were believed to have come on horses which were previously unknown to the 'adivasis'. Thus, the flying horse is a powerful symbol of social destruction of the dalits and the tribals by the Aryan invaders. Likewise, the dog also seems to be related, thinks Sahi, to a very ancient level of Indian myth where the dog symbolises the protective power in nature and knowledge. It is an aspect of the human self, in that, this animal projects something animal in human beings, thus bringing out the close tie between humanity and the animal world- yet another cosmic dimension. The fact is that the creation in this myth, as in the second creation account in Genesis, can be viewed from an ecological world-view, to establish an integral bond between 'adam' (humanity) and 'adamah' (earth).

This is just one creation myth among many, present among the tribals in India, which dalit theology can reflect on as part of its theological reflection on creation. There is a need to sift the pantheistic elements from the tribal vision. Related to the tribal view of creation is the concept of the 'Mother Earth' which is a very powerful ecological symbol or concept for a genuine eco-dalit theology in India. For instance, to the 'Muria hond' tribes of Bastar in North India, the human population is considered to be one of the 'crops' of God, raised by Mother Earth. As the crops depend on the soil, all human beings rely on Mother Earth. What a powerful image does this view provide for the dalits in India whose dependence on the

soil, especially on agriculture, is vital for their subsistence.

The intermittent insight in these myths of creation, God, humanity, and nature are not totally distinct entities without any sort of interaction, but they are interrelated entities. This has been considered as an important paradigm by A.P.Nirmal who has this to say:

Both God and humans then share in earthliness. The earth is the common bond between God and humans. May I say that both of them smell earth and dust.³⁴

It can be said, then, that much of the tribal creation myths described above, does, in fact, 'smell earth and dust' and can, therefore, be assimilated as part of a creation theology within dalit theology.

It is not only in the area of the concept of creation that the primal vision of cosmos has much to offer to a genuine dalit theology. The tribal insights can greatly enrich the dalit theology and spirituality. As already pointed out, there are certain insights and tribal religious convictions which a Christian dalit theology will have to revise. One of them would be the whole question of pantheism and the worship of nature, or the belief in the 'sacredness' of nature. While appreciating the ecological sensitivity behind these notions, dalit theology can indeed modify them. Paulos Mar Gregorios offers such an example³⁵ when he modifies the ecological world view of Sundarlal Bahuguna, the father figure of the Chipko Movement in India.

³⁴. A.P.Nirmal, "Ecology, Ecumenics and Economics in Relation: A New Theological Paradigm" in Daniel D Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.23.

³⁵. Quoted in Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, "Restoring Harmony In Creation-Through A Trinitarian Sharing Life-Style" in K.M.George and K.J.Gabriel (eds), Towards A New Humanity, Essays in Honour of Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, I.S.P.C.K, New Delhi, 1992, p.87.

S.L.Bahuguna expressed the following convictions:

- (a) Nature is to be worshipped, not exploited;
- (b) One who takes less from nature and society should receive greater respect than the one who takes more;
- (c) There is a world inside a person that is richer and more worthy of cultivation than the outside world;

Paulos Mar Gregorios incorporates a modified version of these views, which is biblically based, theologically Orthodox and, of course, Christian in nature. His revision is as follows:

- (a) Nature and history are inseparable as the matrix of our origin, growth and fulfilment and so created order is to be respected and tended as God's creation. Worship only the Creator.
- (b) Simplicity of life is of high value, but enforced poverty is not...
- (c) Life is not to be divided into inner life and outer life, but to speak of the final fulfilment which is already implied in the present realm beyond our senses, which moves our world as its norm and goal.

This example shows us that it is possible to incorporate the tribal values and concepts in a critical manner. While the first point in Mar Gregorios's version shows how one could sieve the pantheistic elements in the tribal values, the second point serves as a good illustration of how the elitist view of conservation can be modified by an eco-just view of conservation. The third, of course, avoids the dichotomy between

the inner and the outer life.

A number of other insights from the tribal world view can be discerningly accommodated in a Christian dalit theology and spirituality. The human-nature-spirit (God) axis which is fundamental to any indigenous understanding of life has already been discussed. Yet another important conviction in the tribal spirituality is that they consider the earth and all its produces as God's gifts, and therefore they cannot be 'owners' of the earth and its gifts. Instead, they can only be 'custodians' of God's creation.

Once again to quote Nirmal Minz:

Tribal life is based and built upon a vision of human existence in which they are aware that land, forest, and the country they occupy are the gifts of God. They are not the owners, but custodians only... Therefore, man-nature,spirit continue as the basic texture of existence in what makes truly human... Any imbalance between and among these initiates a dehumanizing process and hence this harmony has to be protected and promoted from generation to generation.³⁶

As one can recognize, the above tribal view has many similarities with the Christian biblical faith which makes it easier for dalit theology to incorporate them. The view that God alone 'owns' the creation is a frequent theme in the Bible, especially in the Old Testament. (This is dealt with in chapter 9).

Some of the festivals observed by the tribals in India offer another such potential perspective to be integrated by dalit theology. The 'Mango festival' or the 'Mocca Pindum', among the

³⁶. Nirmal Minz, "Primal Religion's Perspective On Ecology" in Daniel D Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.49.

'Moria Gond' tribals is a good case in point.³⁷ It is the most celebrated event for this tribe. In the summer, when the mangoes are about to ripen, the priest (pujari) is invited to perform a 'puja' (religious activity) before which no one is allowed to pluck the mangoes. Once, the 'puja' is done, every one shares the fruits.

The Deuteronomic Creed: Wider Interpretation Needed.

Such practices among the tribals can be reconciled with a biblical faith, as the blessing of the fruits of the earth and the celebration of creation were common religious practices among the Hebrew people. In fact, the introduction to the Deuteronomic creed (Dt.26:1-5a)³⁸ has this dimension which, unfortunately, dalit theology has overlooked. It is, indeed, striking to note that the credal affirmation (Dt.26:5b-12), is expected to be done here, in an 'ecological' setting. According to the first five verses (the introduction to the creed), the people of God are expected to present a basket of first fruits at the central sanctuary each year. (26:1). This law has been cast in the Deuteronomic phraseology and put as an introduction to the credal confession. The fact that the faith affirmation is done in a context of religious observance (presentation of first fruits which has ecological overtones), does provide a cosmic touch to the creed itself which dalit theology has largely failed to appreciate so far. The blend of rite and creed, of the natural and the historic, is the most striking aspect of this pericope. It sets the pattern for the feasts of the Israelites. According to G.Henton Davies:

³⁷. Johnson Vadakumchery; op.cit., p.94.

³⁸. "When you have come into the land... you shall take some of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land... and you shall put it in a basket and go to the priest who is in office at that time...When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, you shall make this response before the LORD your God". (Dt.26:1-5a)

In these verses, history is being added to harvest festival, Israel's gospel is being added to harvest, to explain the harvest, to bring the harvest within the orbit of Israel's historical faith.³⁹

The implications for Christians are expressed as follows:

Christian Harvest Festival Services must likewise follow this pattern and relate the Christian Gospel to the Christian view of Nature, for there is no comparable parallel in the New Testament.⁴⁰

The message for modern Christian theology could not be clearer here. The 'historical' is synthesised with the 'cosmic', and the social and the political with the ecological. This is precisely the task of a Christian theology today, to integrate the socio-economic-political (historical) and the cosmic (ecological). Dalit theology, in failing to incorporate the rich ecological dimensions implicit in the Deuteronomic creed, makes itself vulnerable to the criticism that its hermeneutics lack exegetical depth.

More examples could be given to illustrate dalit theology's neglect of what are possible ecological insights in its exegesis and expositions on the Deuteronomic creed. The expression "wandering Ar.a.me'an" (v.5) offers a case in point. It is an expression of one's own identity, of being a particular people. The Authorised Version (AV) and the Revised Version (RV) of the Bible have in them the expression "the Syrian, ready to perish" instead of the "wandering Ar.a.me'a'an". To dwell on this seemingly insignificant textual variation, is to unravel some new wisdom. The expression, "the Syrian ready to perish" denotes in powerful terms, the pathetic (pathos) plight and situation

³⁹. G.Henton Davies; "Deuteronomy" in Matthew Black (ed), Peake's Commentary on the Bible, Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, London, 1963, p.280.

⁴⁰. Ibid.

of the outcaste people, the dalits. According to some scholars, this expression may have been used here because of the famine and that in the very land where his descendants are so blessed ⁴¹ which, in fact, can capture the plight of the dalits in India today succinctly. The dalits and the tribals are the real victims of famine and other catastrophes, often due to 'man'-made ecological destructions.

Verse.10 in the creed which talks about "the land flowing with milk and honey" is another instance where dalit theology could have concentrated more. It seems to have underestimated the significance of "the land flowing with milk and honey". According to Nirmal, the land flowing with milk and honey is only an outcome of the social and the political liberation already achieved. In his view, the land flowing with milk and honey is not the chief goal of the exodus. Rather, it is the release from bondage and captivity in Egypt that are the chief goals of the exodus event. Nirmal goes on:

...the implication for a dalit theology is that the liberation struggle we are involved in is primarily a struggle for our common human dignity and for our right to live as a free people- people created in the image of God.⁴²

It would however be incompatible with the spirit of the Deuteronomic creed to separate the socio-political liberation from the possession of fertile land (land flowing with milk and honey- ecological as well). These are two related themes in the creed. Or as Ernest Wright puts it:

It dwells on two great acts of God which have

⁴¹. Ibid.

⁴². A.P.Nirmal, "Towards A Christian Dalit Theology" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), A Reader In Dalit Theology, op.cit., p.63. [emphases mine]

actually taken place, the deliverance from Egypt and the gift of the land.⁴³

In a way, by making the issue of land a secondary one to the primary task of political and social liberation of the oppressed humanity and viewing liberation in purely socio-political terms, devoid of the ecological dimensions, dalit theology also slips into the same mistake of anthropocentrism and the narrow understanding of the concept of liberation of liberation theology. If one puts some of the views expressed by one of the prominent dalit thinkers in India, V.T.Rajashekhar Shetty, against this context, one could easily detect how dalit thinking also makes similar mistakes to traditional Marxists when they argued that the ecological problems are exclusively the results of the capitalist structures (as if the traditional Socialist/Marxist development model has been eco-friendly) and that the ecological balance will be in order, once Socialism, albeit traditional State Socialism, is ushered in.

V.T.Rajashekhar Shetty echoes such a dangerously simplistic view, of course in different terms, when he says:

Once our human rights (reservation) are safe and secure, ecology will be automatically taken care of... Ecological Problem is a byproduct of Aryan Colonialism.⁴⁴

The expression, "land flowing with milk and honey" is a recurrent theme in the Pentateuch. This fixed phrase also occurs in Ex.3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev.20:24; Num.13:27, 14:8, 16:3, 14 etc. The expression does have close parallels in classical writers and in Ugaritic texts. One of the arguments put forward by Waterhouse, makes it plausible to derive some ecological

⁴³. G.Ernest Wright, "Deuteronomy", in George Arthur Buttrich (ed), The Interpreter's Bible, Vol.2, Abingdom Press, New York, 1953, p.484.

⁴⁴. V.T.Rajashekhar Shetty, op.cit., p.5.

dimensions out of this expression. He argues that the expression, "land flowing with milk and honey", is not used here, simply to contrast it with the deserts which would have been experienced by a semi-nomad. It also,

...reflects the lushness of the land in past years. Progressive despoliation of the land by indiscriminate economic uses of its resources has led to its present relatively barren and sterile appearance.⁴⁵

This suggests that we are not stretching an analogy (flowing with milk and honey) too far in order to derive certain ecological thrusts. They may be, in fact, implied in the text. If we follow this argument, it will have great relevance for the present-day Indian context of dalits and their environment. Not only are the dalits and the tribals socially oppressed today, their once fertile land (land flowing with milk and honey literally) has been taken off them and rendered barren and sterile due to indiscriminate uses of its resources in the name of 'development'. Thus the creed offers a powerful framework for dalit theology to integrate the concerns of socio-political oppression with the ecological concerns, their right to land which is fertile and rich. These insights should help Christian theology, in this context, dalit theology, to shed its anthropocentrism and to adopt a cosmic perspective. It is high time that dalit theology, as also liberation theology, realizes that socio-political liberation alone will not be an integral liberation unless it is linked with the liberation of land and earth, and the whole ecology which is so integral to the survival of the dalits and the tribals in India. (It is necessary to add here that A.P.Nirmal, in an interview, when he was asked to respond to this view, shared the same concerns and expressed the need to widen the horizon of dalit theology further to incorporate the ecological dimension of dalit

⁴⁵. A.D.H.Mayes, Deuteronomy, New Century Bible, Oliphants, London, 1979, p.175.

liberation in India).

Pathos; A Powerful concept to integrate the concerns of the dalits and nature.

As has been repeatedly noted, dalit theology now faces the uphill task of exploring the possibilities of interpreting biblical passages from an integral dalit perspective which brings out the ecological dimensions as well. One important concept which is very central to the dalit epistemology, pathos, is very helpful in making this exploration possible and fruitful.

A.P.Nirmal, in his interview given to me, talked about this possibility. Explaining the neglect of eco-concerns in dalit theology as 'natural', he added that widening the scope of theology is a later task. He then went on to say that pathos, being the basic category in dalit theology, offers a host of possibilities to widen the frontiers of dalit theology. The pathos or the suffering of the dalits enables them to recognize the suffering and the cry of 'others' too, including those of nature, especially when the cry of the dalits and the travail of nature are so interrelated. In other words, dalits and nature become 'fellow-sufferers'. The rights of the dalits are then interrelated to the rights of the environment. The abuse of nature is, indeed, the abuse of dalits. Christology and Soteriology of dalit theology can, within this framework, be made cosmic in its scope, for example, by linking the 'groaning of the creation' in Romans (chapter.8:22) with the afflictions of the 'dalits' in the Deuteronomic Creed. (Dt.26:7)

Anti-Darwinism, the guiding principle for dalit theology.

Explaining the vast possibilities of the category of pathos for dalit theology, Nirmal offers a paradigm of anti-Darwinism, which he thinks could be the guiding principle for dalit theology. Social Darwinism propagated the gospel of 'the

survival of the fittest'. Dalit theology will replace it with the maxim: "the survival of the weakest". This should be seen as a powerful model in today's context of environmental destruction as it has to do with the very survival of the weakest sections of the Indian society, the tribals, the dalits and women. Not only would it challenge the dominant paradigm of development which in fact ensures the survival of the fittest, the rich and the powerful (as Nirmal argues the survival of 'the new world order' is dependent on the weakest), but would also encourage an indigenous model of development which is geared to ensure the survival of the weakest.

Operating from a perspective which is based on the guiding principle of 'pathos of the weakest for survival', the Scripture opens up enormous new meanings for dalits. A.P.Nirmal gives the example of Jesus extolling the flesh and blood in John.6. To him, Jesus was extolling the flesh and blood of the weaker sections. In John, of course, it assumes sacramental dimensions as well. The flesh and blood symbolised by the bread and wine, which are 'earthly' products, bring out the ecological thrusts also.

In John.4, there is a touching account of Jesus's encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well. If 'the Samaritan woman at the well' in this account can be taken as a symbol or an image and if we allow the image to be stretched somewhat, it then becomes a powerful symbol for the dalit and tribal women in India today. The Samaritan woman, being an outcaste or a Gentile, can represent in a very meaningful way, the 'dalit woman' in the fullest meaning of the term, 'dalit'. The dalit/tribal women who are forced to tread long distances, with pots in their heads and hips, to fetch water (as they are evicted from their homelands to make way for 'development') do remind one of the Samaritan woman, standing at the well. Aruna Gnanadason quotes a song by Daya Pawar, a dalit woman in Maharashtra, which captures the plight of the dalit women in India succinctly:

"As I build this dam
I bury my life...
.....
The dam is ready
It feeds their sugar-cane fields
Making the crop lush and juicy
But I walk miles through forests
In search of drops of drinking water
I water the vegetation with drops of my sweat
As dry leaves fall and fill my parched yard".⁴⁶

In short, dalit theology, can and must widen its theological and hermeneutical horizons, linking the social concerns of the dalits with their ecological issues. But dalit theology has still 'miles and miles to go' before it can be considered an integral eco-dalit theology.

There are also a few other areas where dalit theology needs to rethink its stances, especially when it is beginning to engage in the process of widening its frontiers and scope to integrate the ecological concerns. Two such areas deserve a brief discussion in this section. They are dalit theology's alleged rejection of 'anything Brahminic' and its supposedly anti-Gandhi rhetoric.

DALIT THEOLOGY AND BRAHMINIC TRADITIONS: CONCERN FOR ECOTHEOLOGY.

Dalit theology, by nature, is a counter theology, counter to the Brahminic Indian Christian theology which used the upper caste Hindu religious and theological system to reflect on the Christian faith. The anti-Brahmin stance of dalit theology is very understandable too. But a total blind rejection of Hindu religious and theological views in the name of Brahminism or casteism needs to be reviewed, especially in an effort to

⁴⁶. Aruna Gnanadason, "Towards a Feminist Eco-theology for India" in Daniel D Chetti (ed), op.cit., p.29.

widen the framework of dalit theology. It is not only for inter-religious dialogue or mission (as having to do with the question of conversion of dalit Hindus to Christianity) that the rather exclusive anti-Hindu (anti-Brahmin) stance of dalit theology will have its repercussions, but also for the process of developing an integral ecological theological perspective. A genuine Indian Christian theology cannot afford to leave out the ecological symbols and concerns in the Hindu, even those in the Brahminic, tradition. This section ventures to bring out some of these strands, which in my view, should be taken seriously by dalit theology, in order to develop an eco-dalit theology.

Sankara's Advaita and Ecology.

We have already seen Nirmal's criticism of the early Indian Christian theology, operating largely within the framework of Sankara's 'Advaita' philosophy or in some cases from the perspective of Ramanuja's 'Vishisht Advaita' school.

The notion of 'Advaita' or 'non-dualism' counters the view that the ultimate (God) is alienated from humans and the world. It should be conceded, however, that there is certain amount of ambiguity or as E.J.Lott puts it, a deliberate ambivalence, in the case of non-dualism, at least at the ontological level.⁴⁷ This is because only the transcendent selfhood, in its true state or undifferentiated oneness, is considered to be the ultimate real. From this point of view, everything else is only 'maya' or illusion or unreal. Nevertheless, the current interpretations on Advaita suggest that the empirical realm does have value proper to that level and there is no lack of reality here. The reason for this, according to K.P.Aleaz, is that both non-material and the material world are constituted by the same five elements ('panchabhuta') and each 'indriya' (sense organ)

⁴⁷. E.J. Lott, "An Eco-Theology for the Future: Resources from India's Past" in A.P.Nirmal (ed), Adventurous Faith And Transforming Vision, Gurukul, Madras, 1989, p.36.

is composed of the same substance.⁴⁸

In Advaitic view, history and nature are both manifestations of God's presence. God is revealed in and through creation. The Supreme 'Atman' (the Supreme self), according to Sankara, is totally involved in nature, as He/She is also the 'cause and the innermost self of all', whereas the 'Brahman' as 'Pure Consciousness' is the 'witness and self of all' and He/She pervades, illumines and unifies the totality of the human person as well as the totality of the creation.⁴⁹

The World as Body of God.

If the Advaitic ecological dimension vis-a-vis its conception of the universe is somewhat ambiguous, Ramanuja's view of the Universe as 'body of God' is lucid. This is probably the reason why Ramanuja's view of the world as Body of God has been accommodated by the ecotheologians, most notably by Sallie McFague.⁵⁰

The Universe as the body of God is a familiar theme in the Indian traditions. Ramanuja, of course, was the first proponent of this metaphor. He used the metaphor to affirm the world's oneness with Brahman. At the same time, he also distinguished between the world and God. Panentheism is the framework adopted by Ramanuja.

In spite of the anti-Brahmin opinion of dalit theology, it is heartening to note that A.P.Nirmal finds Ramanuja's concept ecologically pertinent. According to Nirmal, the model of the

⁴⁸. K.P.Aleaz, "Vedic-Vedantic Vision in Indian Christian Theology of Nature" in Bangalore Theological Forum, Vol.XXV, No.1, March, 1993, p.33.

⁴⁹. Ibid., p.36.

⁵⁰. Sallie McFague's books, Models of God, Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age and The Body of God dwell on this theme of the world as the Body of God.

world as the body of God views the relationship among God, humanity and the creation in an organismic relationship. Nirmal goes on to explicate the ecological implications of an ecclesiology based on the view of the universe as God's body in Ramanuja. The Church is popularly conceived as the body of Christ. From this perspective, if we extend the metaphor of 'eating the body and drinking the blood of Jesus Christ', to the world, it then has important ecological implications. Nirmal describes it as follows:

If the whole world is God's body and if God offers us His/Her body and blood, then the use of the world's resources becomes an ecological sacrament for us. As we eat and drink the body and blood of our Lord reverently and not greedily, so also the world's resources must be shared reverently and without selfish greed. The sacrament of the Lord's supper is a fellowship meal and has a community setting. What tremendous ecological implication this has, if we are to conceive of different eco-systems having a fellowship meal in God's OIKOS.⁵¹

If a dalit theologian of the stature of Nirmal himself finds some of the Brahminic wisdom relevant for modern context and brings out its contextual implications, it should be sufficient here to point out a few more ecological insights within the 'Brahminic' strand which, then, can be creatively appropriated by dalit theology.

The Cosmotheandric Vision of the Vedas.

In Vedic literature, especially in the 'Rig' Vedic tradition, there is an array of insights that are cosmic in perception. In the Vedas, humanity is not perceived as individuals but as 'persons', constituting a relationship between humans and

⁵¹. A.P. Nirmal, "Ecology, Ecumenics, and Ecology In Relation" in Daniel D Chetti (ed), op.cit., pp.24-25.

humans, and between humanity and nature. We encounter, in Tapas (concentration) and Diksa (consecration) of the Vedas, a fundamental human attitude to nature which is antithetical to the misunderstood Christian view of 'dominion over creation'. As Aleaz puts it:

Human person is here on earth, not to work on nature, to conquer it and thus to reign over it, but to consecrate it, to concentrate it and thus to attain strength and sovereignty.⁵²

The relation between nature and humanity is not based on exploitation or domination, but on inter-dependence and partnership. The hymn of the Lord of the Field ('ksetrapati') has a request to watch over ploughman's toil and to cause the earth to produce in bounty. The following lines are taken from this hymn:

O Lord of the field, like a cow yielding milk,
Pour forth for us copious rivers of sweetness,
.....
Sweet be the waters and the air of the sky.⁵³

The interrelation between God, humanity and nature or the 'cosmotheandric' vision is characteristic of the Vedic tradition. Purusha Sukta is considered to be a classic illustration of this cosmotheandric vision. For example, about the creation sacrifice, the Sukta has the following to say:

It is neither a merely divine affair, nor a purely affair, nor a blind cosmic process; it is human, divine and cosmic, all in one... That is it is cosmotheandric. God, Man and the universe are

⁵². K.P.Aleaz, "Vedic-Vedantic Vision in Indian Christian Theology of Nature", op.cit., p.27.

⁵³. Ibid., p.28.

correlates. God without man is nothing, literally "no-thing". Man without God is exclusively a "thing", not a person, not a real human being, while the world, the cosmos without man and God is "any-thing", without consistency and being; it is sheer un-existing chaos. the three are constitutely connected.⁵⁴

Such views are easily reconcilable for the Christian faith and theology, so it should for dalit theology. In a nutshell, then, there is a much highly relevant insights within the Hindu tradition, even in the much criticised, albeit justifiably, Brahminic tradition, which can be appropriated by dalit theology. A.P.Nirmal has already appreciated some of them like Ramanuja's view of the world as God's body. The point, though, is to incorporate them into dalit theology. The other area where a similar sort of transition should take place within dalit theology, is its attitude to Gandhi.

GANDHI VS AMBEDKAR OR GANDHI AND AMBEDKAR?

Dalit theology's adherence to Ambedkar's ideology of caste has led to a trend among the dalit thinkers and theologians to reject and even discredit Gandhi. The ideological rift between Gandhi and Ambedkar on the issue of the caste system is well known and is now beginning to become a popular research subject among dalit thinkers. It is not the intention of this thesis to go into that area, whether Gandhi was a casteist or if he wanted to maintain the caste structure by conferring on the outcaste people the title 'harijan' (God's people) in order to keep them under a culture of silence. The question I wish to pose here and reflect on is whether an anti-Gandhi stance on caste should make dalit theology blind to the many potential and highly relevant insights in Gandhi, particularly, his ecological world-view. The contention I wish to make is that the Gandhian vision is too

⁵⁴. Ibid.

important for any Indian Christian theology, let alone dalit theology, to be neglected. The view which A.P.Nirmal holds is encouraging as he says that although Gandhi cannot be considered as a dalit leader, because he came from an upper caste, he does not have to be viewed as an anti-dalit leader, as what Gandhi was involved in was addressing the upper caste and trying to change their attitude to the lower castes and the dalits. Nirmal also believes that in today's context, marked by social oppression of dalits and the environmental crisis of which the dalits are the real victims, a strong case can be made for the position that Gandhi and Ambedkar need each other. Here is an effort to bring out some of Gandhi's very relevant ecological insights that need to be considered in a genuine Indian Christian theology. Perhaps, the only notable attempt towards this direction has been the work of Ignatius Jesudasan, A Gandhian Theology of Liberation in which the author appropriates Gandhian views such as 'swaraj' (self rule), 'non-violence', and 'stewardship'. Dalit theology should follow suit.

Ramachandra Guha brings home the importance of Gandhi for the modern context when he says:

... it is probably fair to say that the life and practices of Gandhi have been the single most important influence on the environment.⁵⁵

Perhaps, the most noteworthy feature of the Gandhian conception of development is its village orientation. For him, India lives in its hamlets, which are about 600,000 in number and the neglect of these villages would result in the underdevelopment of India. In Harijan, Gandhi wrote in 1946:

The blood of the village is the cement with which the

⁵⁵. Ramachandra Guha, "Gandhi the Environmentalist?" in Seminar, Annual 1993, p.96.

edifice of the cities is built.⁵⁶

There could not be a more forceful affirmation of the importance of the village in India, especially in today's context of rapid urbanization in the wake of growing industrialization which puts the environment of both villages and the cities at great risk.

Here, of course, arises a problem for the dalits, as the concept of the 'ideal village' in Gandhi was viewed by Ambedkar as a problematic one because the village in Gandhian times and in Gandhian thought was caste based. This is why D.R.Nagaraj expressed the following apprehension:

For the Dalit Movement, the priority is to first empower the oppressed castes and theoretically it is yet to work out the ramifications of accepting the notion of total village as one of the crucial positive categories of praxis.⁵⁷

Whether Gandhi supported the caste system, in its pejorative understanding of the term, is a debatable point. In any case, the caste system within the villages should be fought against. In other words, the dalit theology need not reject the ideal of village totally, when it could purge it of its caste structures. To put it differently, the fight against the caste forces and the environmental destructions can and must go together, especially when it is the rural poor who are the main victims of ecological problems. Nagaraj himself is aware of this situation and urges the dalits to take ecological movements seriously:

...the Dalit movement will be forced to deeply think

⁵⁶. Ibid., p.96.

⁵⁷. D.R.Nagaraj, The Flaming Feet: A Study of The Dalit Movement, South Forum Press, Bangalore, 1993, p.37.

about the relationship between the immediate short term demands and the large term consequences. Unless the dalit and the ecological movements interact and build a commonality in perception, their existing notion of rights will make them permanent enemies.⁵⁸

Industrialization can be identified as one of the most threatening factors as far as growing ecological devastation is concerned. It is precisely on this aspect that Gandhi has much to offer. Because of Gandhi's emphasis on the village, it has been wrongly alleged that Gandhi was anti-development and anti-technology. Gandhi himself proves these critics wrong. All what he advocated was that India could not afford to develop after the fashion of the Western countries, unless at the expense of its culture, its environment and the poor.

Marx's obsession with industrialization still haunts the traditional left and offers little for an ecologically friendly development. But was Ambedkar any better on this count? A close analysis of his views on development would indicate that he was not, although he tried to 'better' Marx's economic development view. Though he was concerned about the proper utilization of the natural resources for 'common good' (which point can be granted to Marx as well) Ambedkar still held on to the view that industrialization was the answer to India's economic problems. He favoured industrialization as a 'natural and powerful remedy' for the agricultural problems in India.⁵⁹ A shift of focus from agriculture to industries all over India, which is still considered to be an agricultural country, can only be detrimental to the poor, particularly to the dalits. Ambedkar shows that he himself could not shake off the Marxist influence in his conception of economic development completely. The ideology of industrialization will have serious consequences in

⁵⁸. Ibid.

⁵⁹. S.K.Sarkar, "Socio-Economic Ideas of Ambedkar and their Relevance" in K.S.Chalam (ed), op.cit., p.136.

India:

the ideology of industrial society involves the total rejection of the gatherer view of man as part of a community of beings, or of the agriculturalist view of man as a steward of nature. Instead, it emphatically asserts the separation of man and nature, with every right to exploit the natural resources to further human well being....⁶⁰

It is self evident that such an ideology of industrialism is bound to have catastrophic effects on the dalits and the tribals in India, as their life is integrally related to the land and agriculture. And it is precisely here that Gandhi offers considerable hope. Gandhi was obviously opposed to limitless industrialization. He wrote in Young India in 1928:

God forbid that India should ever take to industrialization after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a Kingdom is totally keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million people [now 850 million] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.⁶¹

This does not mean that Gandhi was completely at odds with all kinds of industries or technologies. He only wanted industries or technologies to be indigenous as far as possible and to serve the poor. A 'liberative' technology was his ideal. He saw no reason why village structures and indigenous development could not co-exist. Hence he argued:

I do visualize electricity, ship building, iron

⁶⁰. Ramachandra Guha, This Fissured Land, op.cit., p.45.

⁶¹ Ramachandra Guha, "Gandhi the Environmentalist?", op.cit., p.96.

works, machine making and the like existing side by side with village handicrafts. Hitherto industrialization has been so planned as to destroy the villages and the village crafts.⁶²

Gandhi set at rest all doubts and apprehensions about his allegedly blind opposition to all technology when he answered S.Ramachandran who put to him, if he was against all machinery, in the following way:

How can I be when I know that even this body is a most delicate piece of machinery? The spinning wheel itself is a machine...What I object to is the craze for machinery, not machinery as such... I want to concentrate work not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all. Today, machinery merely helps a few to ride on the backs of millions.⁶³

One can easily infer from the above cited views of Gandhi how well could Gandhi combine social justice and ecological justice. Early roots of eco-justice are thus found in Gandhi. Gandhi always believed that a bias towards urban industrial development will result in lopsided development and one sided exploitation of the poor. He could even foresee the economic as well as the ecological implications of the commercialization of the agricultural sector in India which is causing enormous ecological disasters and further economic pauperization of the poor. In 1946, through the pages of Harijan, Gandhi prophesied:

... trading in soil fertility for the quick returns would prove to be disastrous, short sighted policy.

⁶². Alida da Rosa, "Gandhi and Schumacher: Some Views on Technology for Today's World" in Mercy Kappan (ed), Gandhi and Social Action Today, Sterling Publishers Pvt.Ltd, New Delhi, 1990, p.65.

⁶³. Ibid. p.71. [emphases mine]

It would result in virtual depletion of the soil.⁶⁴

It may be noted that when Gandhi wrote those words, biotechnology had not developed as it is today. We have now seen how damaging it has proved for the agricultural sector in India today. Gandhi's voice was indeed a prophetic one. Sadly though, it still remains a 'cry in the wilderness'.

It was against such exploitation that Gandhi propagated the ideals of 'swaraj' (self rule) and 'Khadi' (an indigenous cotton variety). According to Gandhi, industrialism had enslaved India. It had profited unduly from the labours of the poor who lived in penury and misery. For 'swaraj', this evil of industrialism is an anathema to be fought nail and tooth. Gandhi advocated village oriented small scale industries and a technology with a 'human face'. 'Khadi' symbolised an indigenous way of development. It represents a culture where the toil of the poor is respected. It is a powerful symbol of rejecting the multinational company culture and its consumerist luxury goods. All these have profound theological implications. For example, Ignatius Jesudasan, reflecting on the Gandhian ideals, sees the symbol of 'Khadi' as a liberative theological one by which Gandhi affirms that the most appropriate way of serving God is to serve the poor.

The use of Khadi was to serve the poor, and hence to serve God.⁶⁵

On stewardship of nature, Gandhi had this to say:

God works through earthly and human agents. The human being is God's steward and co-creator... by God's

⁶⁴. Ramachandra Guha, "Gandhi the Environmentalist?", op.cit., p.97.

⁶⁵. Ignatius Jesudasan, A Gandhian Theology of Liberation, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1984, p.75.

grace on the conservation of creation.⁶⁶

Here one can see roots of an ecotheology of liberation. Having said that, it should also be noted that there are within Gandhian thought elements of 'elitist' and quixotic elements of ecological concerns as well as pantheistic aspects. This calls for critical and selective use of Gandhi in a Christian ecotheology. This should not, however, hinder us from searching in the vast ocean of Gandhian thought. (The objective of this section is just to present a few of Gandhian insights and to bring home the point that this certainly is an area for Christian ecotheology to incorporate views from. This section is, by no means, an exhaustive account of Gandhian views on ecology, for it is such a vast area and is beyond the scope of this thesis)

As already seen, for dalit theology, to incorporate the ecological insights in Gandhi, will be to enrich itself. It may be that Gandhi is of little help in confronting and fighting the caste structure, because of his characteristic strategy of 'cling on to the other'⁶⁷ (here, it would mean that the dalits should patiently struggle and try to change the hearts of the 'other', the High caste Hindus, rather than fighting the structures itself). Ambedkar's confrontational approach is, no doubt, more liberative and challenging for the dalits in this regard. But when it comes to fighting the environmental destructions which also amounts to the exploitation and victimization of the dalits, Gandhi is much more relevant and helpful than Ambedkar, not to mention Marx.

SUMMARY.

Dalit theology, by nature, is a counter theology, countering the Brahminic Indian Christian theological tradition and the Marxist

⁶⁶. Ibid.

⁶⁷. D.R.Nagaraj, op.cit., p.79.

class analysis oriented liberation theology. While the former, being Brahminic in nature, did not concern the issues of the dalits (the outcastes), the latter due to the Marxist economic determinism, failed to address the caste factor in the Indian society.

Dalit theology is still in the making. While it shares the sociological and praxiological dimensions of liberation theology, it retains its distinctiveness in many respects. God, for example, in dalit theology, is not merely the God of the 'poor' (poor, generalised), but is a dalit God, a servant God who suffers. Christ, despite his being a Jew, is himself a dalit on account of the fact that he was also rejected and torn apart ('dalit') on the cross and because of his total identification with the dalits or the outcastes of his time, the Gentiles, the 'sinners', the publicans. This also forms the basis of dalit ecclesiology, as the Church is the body (broken/torn apart on the cross) of Christ.

The Deuteronomic Creed (26.5-12) is the paradigm of dalit theology. It affirms the identity, the afflictions, the pathos, and the dynamic nature of their liberation struggle. Pathos or suffering is the guiding principle for dalit theology. Pathos is prior to praxis. Along with history, dalit theology considers the oral tradition, the myths and legends as very important.

Although dalit theology, in many ways, contextualised the Latin American liberation theology in India, it also held on to anthropocentrism, which is a common factor in almost all kinds of liberation theology, except for a few strands within feminist theology. This drawback has now been realised by one of the pioneers of dalit theology A.P.Nirmal, although he is yet to give dalit theology a cosmological perspective. There are, of course, many possibilities within dalit theology, to widen its theological horizons, so that it could become an ecological dalit theology.

One of the possibilities comes from the fact that there is already a serious search for a common dalit-tribal ideology. As land is a crucial issue for the tribals, which the dalits have been deprived of and should now reclaim the right for, it offers itself as a theological category for the dalits to take up the ecological concerns seriously because most of the ecological movements are also movements for the rights of the indigenous people for land. There are also other implications for a dalit-tribal solidarity. Many of the tribal myths and legends such as their creation stories and their religious practices and views are very ecological in nature, which, can then be appropriated in dalit theology of course critically, sifting the pantheistic aspects of the tribal vision. This is fairly easily done in dalit theology because of its own reliance on myths and legends.

Dalit theology, being a theology of identity, must also appreciate the fact that the identity of the tribals is so integrally linked to their immediate environment, land and forests, which opens yet another way for dalit theology to be an ecological theology. Operating from such an ecological paradigm, dalit theology needs to widen the scope of its hermeneutics; especially its interpretation of the Deuteronomic creed, its paradigm, as the prelude of the creed (Dt.26:1-5a) does provide an ecological setting for the creed to be affirmed. The Creed itself brings in the question of the fertile land ("land flowing with milk and honey"). This dimension, unfortunately has been underestimated by dalit theology, thus losing a possible link between socio-political freedom and ecological balance. Pathos, being the central guiding principle for dalit theology, is very helpful, as already seen, in establishing the connection between the pathos of the dalits and the suffering of nature.

Two other areas where dalit theology needs introspection concern its exclusive negative attitude to the Hindu, Brahminic theological traditions as well as towards the Gandhian thought. Although, dalit theology's opposition to the Brahminic Hindu

religious and theological traditions is, to some extent, justified (because of the upper caste nature of Brahminic theology), it does not have to reject the Brahminic or the Hindu religious schools totally. Particularly, in an ecological age, Brahminic and other Hindu traditions can offer a wealth of insights such as Sankara's 'non-dualism' or Ramanuja's view of the world as the body of God or the cosmotheandric vision in the Vedas. These can be appropriated by dalit theology, in an effort to update dalit theology. Gandhi, no doubt, cannot be considered a dalit leader as he himself belonged to an upper caste and could not advocate a radical strategy for the dalit emancipation. But his ecological wisdom, in terms of his views on the 'village' system (once the concept of the village is purged of its caste moorings can offer an ecological model of development), or 'Swaraj', or 'Khadi' or 'Ahimsa' (non-violence), and his opposition to the Western, capitalist kind of industrialization is too costly to be ignored by any serious ecologically sensitive theology in India. Ambedkarism, while representing a powerful dalit ideology, vis-a-vis its socio-political dimensions of dalit struggle, betrays the same limitation of Marx in terms of his attitude to 'development' and industrialization. Gandhi is much more helpful on this front. This suggests an alliance between Gandhism and Ambedkarism in dalit theology. These are some of the ecotheological challenges dalit theology should boldly face today.

PART. 3.

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED LIBERATION THEOLOGY FOR INDIA.

CHAPTER 8. THE ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PROCESS THEOLOGY.

INTRODUCTION.

Liberation theologies have been the focus in the previous chapters. Process theology as a political theology has certain insights which can integrate the concerns of liberation theologies and ecotheology. Process thought has been one of the radical developments in conceptual studies which has had a strong impact on both philosophy and theology. Process theology has several overlapping meanings. It was in the 1950s that the term 'process thought' came into currency. It, then, referred to the type of theology which had developed at the University of Chicago, mainly under the influence of the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead.

Process theology may refer to all forms of theology with their emphases on concepts such as 'event', 'occurrence', and 'becoming'- a theology which conceives reality in terms of organisms; concepts as developing; and persons (entities) as becoming. It may also refer to a theological movement that developed at the University of Chicago during the 1930s. It can also be considered as a theology that employs the philosophical concepts of Whitehead in a systematic way. This chapter attempts to bring out the ecological insights in process thought and its resources in integrating the related concerns in ecological theology and liberation theologies.

THE ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF SOME OF THE PROCESS CONCEPTS.

'Inter-relatedness'.

According to process thought, the universe and everything in it are 'interdependent'. Everything affects everything else. The past influences the present which, in turn, affects the future. The 'actual entity' ('actual entity' or 'occasion' is what constitutes the basic feature of a reality) 'becomes', when it

absorbs influence from other entities within its environment, including God. The process of absorbing influences from other entities is called 'prehension' or grasping. This, unlike 'apprehension', need not involve consciousness. Therefore, Whitehead rejects the idea of a 'mere matter' and argues that at least rudimentary elements of mind are found in everything. For example, a stone has 'feelings' and prehends its surroundings. According to Charles Hartshorne, except in the case of animals, what acts as one is indivisible. It is cells in the case of plants, and molecules in the case of clouds or stars. He writes:

... A cell really does things. And so does a molecule. Its acting may thus involve feeling, though, of course, not human feeling. Even an ape does not have that. The language of feeling is not literal but analogical.¹

The ecological significance of the emphases on interdependence and prehension is clear. Ecology, in fact, is the study of interconnections among things, between organisms and their environment. Process thought, thus, provides an ecological attitude conceptually.

The 'living' and the 'non-living'.

In Whitehead's thought, an absolute distinction between the 'living' and the 'non-living' is avoided. The distinction has to do with the aspect of 'novelty'. The question of life and non-life is a question of degree of novelty. For example, a stone which is composed of a vast number of interrelated molecules, does not remain unchanged for ever. In Process and Reality, Whitehead uses the term 'living person' to refer to the seat of central direction or self consciousness. Later, he used

¹. From the postscript by Charles Hartshorne in Santiago Sia, God in Process Thought, (Studies in Philosophy and Religion.7) Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Boston, 1985, p.117.

the term 'soul' which he applied for non-human life as well. For him, the difference between human and non-human life is immense, but not absolute- once again a truly ecologically friendly attitude. He rejects an exclusive anthropocentrism which is at the heart of present day ecological crises.

'Enjoyment'.

Another significant process term is 'enjoyment' which characterises all units of process. All units, both at human and non-human level, possess an intrinsic value, and enjoyment, therefore, is not necessarily 'consciousness'. Whitehead rejects the notion of a 'vacuous actuality' which lacks enjoyment and thus rejects the dualism of 'expressing' and 'non-expressing' actualities. Experience is not to be equated with consciousness because, along with Freud, Whitehead holds:

...consciousness presupposes experience and not experience, consciousness.²

Like Teilhard de Chardin, Whitehead affirms that all actualities have inner realities as well as outer ones. This understanding of experience is again related to another key concept of Whitehead, namely 'one, many, and creativity'. All actual entities are a process in which 'many' feelings are 'creatively' unified into 'one' subject. Hence enjoyment, to Whitehead, is:

the self-enjoyment of being one among the many, and of being one arising out of the compositions of many.³

The concept of 'enjoyment' has far reaching ecological implications, as 'enjoyment' is attributed to all levels of

². John Cobb, Jr and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition, Christian Journals Limited, Belfast, 1976, p.17.

³. Ibid.

actualities. Theologically, as God's aim is to evoke enjoyment which at all levels are valued by God, it means that reverence for our neighbours extends to reverence for all creatures. It does, however, need qualification. For example, rocks, oceans, mountains, and stars are, *per se*, not actualities of very high level, as they do not have a co-ordinated originality of response. In other words, duality is in terms of organisation, not in terms of being. Those things which seem to be mere objects are still affirmed to be mere objects in process thought. Although they are not subjects, they are still constituted by subjects. For instance, Whitehead understands plants as 'aggregates'. "A tree is a democracy": he said.⁴ There is no centre of enjoyment in a plant other than its individual cells. Nonetheless, the survival of the individual cells depends on the survival of the plant. Here, a consideration of the ethical justifiability of destruction of trees should also include a consideration not only of external instrumental value, but also of the instrumental value in supporting their members. This is very relevant in an age where large scale ecological damage is being done by humanity.

THE ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROCESS DOCTRINE OF GOD.

The doctrine of God in process theology is radically different from the 'via-eminatiae' concepts of God in traditional classical theology. It rejects the traditional notions about God such as 'The Cosmic Moraliser' (God as the divine law giver and judge), 'The Unchanging and passionless Absolute' (unaffected by other realities), 'The Controlling Power' (God as one controlling and determining every single detail of the world), 'The Sanctioner of the Status-Quo', and God as 'Male' (as dominant, inflexible, unemotional and completely independent archetype of male).

⁴. Ibid., p.79.

The di-polar God.

According to Whitehead:

God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles to save their collapse. He is their chief exemplification.⁵

A purely ontological view of God is against the process view of God. God's being is to be seen in God's becoming, according to process thought. A recognition of the need for an interpenetrative societal view of the world makes process thinkers emphasise 'becoming' as active movement of development rather than 'being'. This, for them, provides a better model to understand God. This does not mean that there is no sense in which God 'is'. It simply means that for God 'to be' God must imply actuality and capacity to adapt, as God is not static and abstract, but dynamic and concrete. The divine 'concreteness' lies in God's participation in the world. God is 'processive' in nature. According to Whitehead, God is the 'non-temporal actual entity'. Like other actualities, God is 'dipolar' in nature with 'mental' and 'physical' poles. Whitehead calls the mental pole God's 'primordial nature' and the physical pole, God's 'consequent nature'. Being primordial, God contains all possibilities in 'abstractions'. God's consequent nature is the concrete side of it. As John.J.O'Donnell puts it:

This is God's concreteness as he is related to the world and as the world's events are objectified in him. God receives from the world the effects of the world's action.⁶

⁵. Norman Pittenger, Process Thought and Christian Faith, p.26.

⁶. John J. O'Donnell, Trinity and Temporality: The Christian Doctrine of God in the light of Process Theology and the Theology of Hope, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1983, p.74.

God is affected by what happens in the created order, for it enters into God's life. It also influences God's decision by opening new ways and possibilities for further divine activity. While remaining God, God also is 'enriched' by what happens and the satisfaction in providing new possibilities for the future. Therefore, God is the ground of 'novelty' which will answer the question why new things do occur rather than history merely repeating. According to Whitehead:

What is done in the world is transformed into reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reasons of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is "the great companion- the fellow-sufferer who understands".⁷

God presents several future possibilities and leaves freedom to entities to choose. Thus, God influences the world 'persuasively' without determining it. God remains God because (not in spite of) of God's capacity to relate to situations and events in new ways. So God is 'eternal', ever creating new possibilities. This way, process view of God vis-a-vis 'mental' and 'physical' poles of the divine, overcomes the problem of emphasising some aspects of God at the expense of the others. The polarity in process God (dipolar theism) affirms a God who is both abstract and concrete, transcendent and immanent, and being and becoming.

Not all thinkers consider this as a balanced view about God's transcendence and immanence. Some of them hold that process God lacks the transcendence and power that are characteristic of the biblical God. The nature of process God with God's consequent

⁷. Quoted in Philip Knight, God-the Gift for All: A Discussion of the Doctrine of God Current among a Number of Recent Panentheistic Writers, (M.A.Thesis, The University of Kent), p.74.

nature often emphasised is seen by them to be a 'weak' one. One of them has this to say:

...such a weak God would evoke our pity than our worship.⁸

Ian Barbour answers this criticism when he explains the process position:

Process thinkers may sometimes seem to make God powerless, but in fact they are pointing to alternative forms of power in both God and human life.⁹

John Polkinghorne agrees with process thought to the extent that the biblical God is far from remote, and is involved in this world. He, however, does not hold the view that God of the Bible is tied to the world to the extent of process supposition. He believes that process theology has overemphasised the immanence of God at the cost of transcendence. According to him, God is the:

King of Kings and the Lord of Lords who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light.¹⁰

In the view of Colin E. Gunton, the process view of God is not balanced. He cites Hartshorne who said:

becoming is reality itself and being, only an aspect

⁸. Ian G. Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science; The Gifford Lectures, 1989-91, Vol.1, S.C.M.Press, London, 1990, p.74.

⁹. Quoted in John Polkinghorne, Science and Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker, The Gifford Lectures, 1993-94, S.P.C.K, London, 1994, p.67.

¹⁰. John Polkinghorne, One World: The Interaction of Science and Theology, S.P.C.K, London, 1986, p.35.

of this reality.¹¹

According to him, God's immanence within a panentheistic framework limits the freedom of God to be immanent where God wills. John Polkinghorne further says that Whitehead's emphasis on 'events' oriented metaphysics is bound to lead to such lopsided views. Hence, he argues:

while it is true that God of becoming is needed if God is to be responsive to his evolving and suffering creation, it is also true that the God of being is needed if he is to be the guarantor of the order of creation and the ground of its hope.¹²

But, as Ian Barbour argues, although transcendence may seem to be less emphasised in process theology than in classical Christianity, it is still strongly represented. God is still distinct from the world, not identified with it. God's freedom and priority in status are upheld. Every entity is dependent on God and God alone is everlasting and not perishing. This means that God of process theology is in fact 'powerful' and transcendent. The difference, though, is that God's transcendence in process theology is not expressed in terms of God's 'remoteness', but in the divine 'inexhaustibility'. God is not 'up there' or 'out there', but 'here'. God is to be obeyed in our 'experience'. Thus, process God is not detached from the world and nature, but close to it.

B.Dermarest also criticises the dipolar theism of process theology. According to him, the dipolar God is nothing but a hoax and amounts to pantheism, although it is presented in the guise of panentheism. This is because the primordial (mental) pole of God is devoid of any reality and, therefore, can be no

¹¹. Ibid.

¹². John Polkinghorne, Science and Providence: God's Interaction With The World, S.P.C.K, London, 1989, p.80.

actuality. Hence, in his view, the dipolar God can be considered:

not as a brilliant spark of genius, but as a separate act of expediency without it, panentheism would have nothing to prevent its inevitable collapse into sheer pantheism.¹³

But, as Philip Knight argues, this critique may hold good for Whitehead, but not for Hartshorne. This is because, for Hartshorne, God in the divine transcendence, is the abstract character which is:

...permanently the expression of his concrete (relative) pole, namely love.¹⁴

Thus, process theology faces the critique about its 'neglect' of transcendence squarely. As Mar Gregorios sets out, process thinkers deem it naive to conceive of God's transcendence in spatial terms. God's transcendence is temporal and future oriented. God always moves beyond to the future, and therefore, cannot be enclosed by either space or the past. In fact, Hartshorne himself, in a post-script he wrote for Santiago Sia's God in Process Thought, underlines his emphasis on God's transcendence. He takes his distance from Whitehead in this regard. He writes:

I prefer dual transcendence to "dipolarity" (Whitehead) in this application, for I am serious about transcendence, which for me implies, surpasses all possible rivals.¹⁵

¹³. Philip Knight, op.cit., p.83.

¹⁴. Ibid.

¹⁵. Santiago Sia, op.cit., p.119.

God in the world and the world in God: Panentheism.

Whitehead expresses God's immanence in three ways:¹⁶

(i) God supplies all entities with the basic conceptual aim.

(ii) God is present with the entities throughout its concrescence, in its world. Everything is interdependent and everything is immanent in everything else, but only objectively. God's immanence in other actual occasions is also objective. This means that God is transcendent as well.

(iii) God is also immanent as the ground of givenness of the past, as the environment of all entities includes the past.

Hartshorne validates the dimension of God's transcendence by maintaining that everything exists in God (panentheism). God is both the system (cosmos) and also something independent of it. This mutual influencing of God and the world has positive consequences. If our actions do affect God, then it means that our actions and influences will live in God everlastingly. If God affects our actions, then our actions which are prehended into the consequent nature of God will also affect the world. This makes process God a God who is a "fellow sufferer who understands". Process God is at the same time the source of all value and the recipient of all experienced value. God not only gives to the world, but also receives from it, as God feels the joys and the sufferings of creation.

Philip Knight provides an interesting discussion on panentheism.¹⁷ 'Panentheism' was first formulated by K.C.F. Krause as a symbol in the early nineteenth century. Krause coined the term 'panentheism' to refer to an organic kind of

¹⁶. Peter Hamilton, The Living God and the Modern World: A Christian Theology Based On the Thought of A.N.Whitehead, Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1967, pp.163-64.

¹⁷. Philip Knight, op.cit., pp.84-85.

relationship between God and the world. Panentheism, in other words, affirms an intimate relationship between God and the universe. In this sense, it is at odds with classical theism and Neo-Orthodoxy. For example, the completely non-relational view of God in classical theism is perhaps best expressed in these words of Aquinas:

...the world is to God what a horse is to a horse-owner who wishes only to travel by foot.¹⁸

Karl Barth, probably the most representative figure of the neo-Orthodox school of theology talks of God as "completely independent" of the world. God, despite the incarnation, is still the "great independent". Interpreting Acts.17:28, Barth adds:

God can allow (the) other which is so utterly distinct from Himself to live and move and have its being within Himself.¹⁹

Unlike these 'wholly-other' images of God, in panentheism, as Donald Neil puts it:

...God is not thought of as a "being" in a supernatural world but as "being-itself" in the world of space and time.²⁰

Panentheism, thus, implies a genuine bond and an intimate relationship between God and the world; the Creator and creation; the cause and effect.

¹⁸.Ibid., p.9.

¹⁹. Ibid.

²⁰. Ibid., p.4.

By panentheism, Hartshorne implies two things:²¹

(i) God depends on the world and therefore is inclusive of it.

(ii) God is independent of the world and therefore transcends it.

He further holds that the existence of God, in so far as God is the cause, will necessarily require that there be a world. At the same time, God will be independent of it and in that sense, God will not require any particular world. But God will not be independent of world as such. In other words, God as Creator presupposes a creation, but not a particular creation. It was not necessary at all for God to have created this world. God, however, had to have some creation if the term 'Creator' were to mean anything. In as much as it is not imperative that we exist, God remains completely independent of us. This is the abstract (mental) aspect of God. We may call it the transcendental aspect of God. As regards God's concrete aspect, God is both effect and cause. God interacts with, receives from, and influences the world. While being the supreme power, God is one power among other 'lesser' powers. This can be considered as an answer to the charge that the process God is powerless. God, therefore, requires beings other than God to be what the divine concretely is. It is in this sense that God 'depends' on creation.

In Hartshornian philosophical system, God never was without a world. However, God was once without this particular world. God does not choose to have a world because God needs one. In this sense, panentheism holds that God includes the world. But this is not to be confused with pantheism, as God and the world are not identical. Hartshorne employs the concept of 'whole-part' to explain this position. According to him, God is a whole of whom the whole qualities are distinct from the properties of the

²¹. Santiago Sia, op.cit., p.85.

constituents. While this is the case for every 'whole', it is more true of God since God is the 'supreme whole'. The constituents are in the whole but they can be distinguished from the whole because:

God as whole possesses attributes which are not shared by creatures.²²

This is what makes panentheism a balanced view of God and creation. And this is why Sia sees panentheism as a middle axiom. He writes:

Panentheism may be conveniently described as midway between the orthodox theistic view which maintains that God is the independent universal cause or source and the universe is his extrinsic effect or outcome (that is the universe is "outside the divine activity" and is not a part or constituent of it), and the pantheistic view which holds that God is the inclusive reality and that there is no ultimate cause distinct from and independent of the cosmic totality (that is, the universe and God are identical).²³

The process panentheism, thus, bridges the gap between the 'absentee-God' of Deism and the pantheistic God who is totally identified with the world. In panentheism, however, a relative independence of the world order is preserved. At the same time, God cannot be envisaged as totally separated from that order because the world is organic to the divine reality. Critics of process theology, however, are still not convinced, and express doubts about this panentheism. According to Polkinghorne, both panentheism and pantheism are:

²². Ibid., p.86.

²³. Ibid., p.85.

not satisfactory theologically, for they fail to do justice to the experience of the otherness of God which is a basic religious insight.²⁴

According to him, all panentheistic beliefs, as far as they 'enmesh' God and the world, will threaten the mutually free relation of God and creation. Panentheism claims to accord God a direct relationship with the physical universe, but also prevents the divine from being totally tied to it. The problem, then with such a view, according to John Polkinghorne, is that it compromises the world's freedom to be itself and also the otherness of God. Moltmann, in his early writings, expressed the same concern when he said:

the elements of truth in this view are turned into their opposite once the capacity to distinguish is suppressed by the will to synthesise.²⁵

One also notes that Polkinghorne's criticism of process theology and panentheism gradually gets milder, particularly in his later writings. In Science & Christian Belief: Theological reflections of a bottom-up thinker, he identifies the absence of hope in process theology as its main limitation. In his words:

I do not find the God of process theology to be an adequate ground of hope, and I believe hope to be central to an understanding of what is involved in a Christian view of God's reality.²⁶

Or as he puts it in another way:

²⁴. John Polkinghorne, One World, op.cit., p.73.

²⁵. John Polkinghorne, Science and Providence, op.cit., p.16.

²⁶. John Polkinghorne, Science & Christian Belief: Theological Reflections of a bottom-up thinker, S.P.C.K, London, 1994, p.65.

...the God of process theology does not seem to be the God who raised Jesus from the dead.²⁷

One only needs to look at the way the resurrection theme has been dealt with by process theologians to rebut this criticism. For example, in process thought, the continuing fact of Christ's presence with his followers matters more than the precise nature of his initial appearance (which is derived from the traditional emphasis on 'the empty tomb'). Pittenger, along with Peter Hamilton, holds this view. For Pittenger, it is not the empty tomb that matters much but:

the basic fact that in the resurrection faith is the disciples's conviction that God had vindicated Jesus' obedience and that therefore Jesus was alive with them...The resurrection was not merely an event in the past...it is a continuing event...²⁸

Almost all biblical affirmations about the resurrection (example Jesus is Lord; Christ is risen) are in the present tense. 'Livingness of Jesus' is in harmony with the process thought. It is this living Jesus who makes it possible for us to 'live' and live in the future with new directions and possibilities. This is the radical dimension of 'hope' which process theology offers and Polkinghorne fails to notice. However, an important development in Polkinghorne's thought is that he now sees process panentheism as an eschatological destiny of creation. Referring to the Orthodox theological notion of "theosis" (divinization) as the ultimate destiny of creation, Polkinghorne writes:

In this sense, one might say panentheism is true as

²⁷. Ibid., p.67.

²⁸. Norman Pittenger, God in Process, S.C.M.Press, London, 1967, pp.38-39.

an eschatological fulfilment, not a present reality.²⁹

The radical changes which have occurred in the understanding of eschatology ever since C.H.Dodd's notion of 'realised eschatology' or eschatology understood in proleptic terms can answer Polkinghorne here. What is to happen in the future is actualised in the present, at least partially. In fact, 'eschatological panentheism' is something which is ascribed to Moltmann as well.³⁰ But Moltmann's understanding of eschatology is radically different from what Polkinghorne seems to hold. According to Moltmann, the relation between God and the world is implied in the promise of the eschatological Kingdom of God. He says:

Through his mission and his resurrection Jesus has brought the kingdom of God into history. As the eschatological future, the kingdom of God has already begun...Since the eschatology becomes historical in this way, the historical also becomes eschatological.³¹

Polkinghorne's criticism of process panentheism with the help of Moltmann's view of God's relation to the world does not stand on a close scrutiny of Moltmann's theological position. Polkinghorne writes:

...I find the theology of Jurgen Moltmann, with its concept of God's "making way" for something other

²⁹. Ibid., p.168.

³⁰. Philip Knight quotes Warren McWilliams who said; "Moltmann's mature system might best be described as an eschatological panentheism". Philip Knight, *op.cit.*, p.155.

³¹. Jürgen Moltmann, The Church in the Power of the Spirit, S.C.M.Press.Ltd, London, 1977, p.192.

than himself, to be extremely helpful.³²

Let us now briefly look at Moltmann's position on the nature of the relationship between God and the world. Philip Knight considers Moltmann as a panentheistic theologian.³³

Moltmann, in his later writings, has looked into eschatology, Christology, and pneumatology from an ecological perspective. His panentheistic framework is quite evident in his Trinity and the Kingdom of God, and God in Creation. Whereas for process theology the 'divine ontology' is conceived in terms of 'process', for Moltmann, it is conceived vis-a-vis the holy Trinity. In Trinity and the Kingdom of God, he talks about the 'pathos' of God in relation to the world instead of 'apathy' of God vis-a-vis creation. The Cross, for Moltmann, is the basis of this pathos. He writes:

In the end... The whole world will become God's home... But then the whole creation will be transfigured through the indwelling of God's glory. Consequently the hope which is kindled by the experience of the indwelling Spirit gathers in the future, with panentheistic visions. Everything ends with God's being "all in all" (1Cor. 15.28 AV). God in the world and the world in God...³⁴

The adoption of panentheism as a framework in Moltmann is much more apparent in God in Creation. Again from a Trinitarian perspective, Moltmann, here, argues that the creation which was created by God the Father, exists in God the Spirit. It is moulded by God the Son. Therefore, creation is from and in God. Panentheism, in his view, maintains the balance between the

³². Ibid., p.64.

³³. Philip Knight, op.cit., pp.155-171.

³⁴. Jürgen Moltmann, The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God, S.C.M.Press, London, 1981, pp.104-105.

extremes of deism and pantheism. He says:

The trinitarian concept of creation binds together God's transcendence and His immanence. The one-sided stress on God's transcendence in relation to the world led to deism, as with Newton. The one-sided stress on God's immanence in the world led to pantheism, as with Spinoza. The trinitarian concept of creation integrates the elements of truth in monotheism and pantheism. In this panentheistic view, God having created the world also dwells in it, and conversely the world which He has created exists in Him. This is a concept which can really only be thought and described in trinitarian terms.³⁵
[emphasis mine]

It, then, suggests that, now that Moltmann has come to appreciate and adopt panentheism as a valuable Christian position, Polkinghorne cannot use Moltmann's theology of hope to criticise a process panentheism. It also tells us that panentheism in process theology, as against deism and pantheism, does provide a cosmic perspective in that God is seen essentially as one who includes the world within the divine reality, rather than detached from it. As the first Genesis account of creation tells us, God's spirit was with the creation. This panentheistic perspective, therefore, corrects traditional theology's view of God as hostile to nature, itself viewed essentially to be 'profane'. As God relates directly and with concern towards nature (although not tied to it), nature is accorded God's care and intrinsic worth.

Divine Love as Persuasive Love.

'God as Love' is an important assertion in process theology. The divine love is 'persuasive', not 'coercive' which goes along

³⁵. Jürgen Moltmann, God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation; op.cit., (quoted in Philip Knight, op.cit., p.168)

with the traditional concept of God, the omnipotent controller of all events in the world. Process theology affirms that the divine love is persuasive because God seeks to persuade all occasions towards the possibility of its own existence. This 'self-actualization' is not 'controlled' by God (much of today's problems in society has to do with the motif of control). In trying to control others, love cannot truly be expressed. It has to be a persuasive influence which is more intrinsically rewarding. However, a coercive influence on the part of God is not completely ruled out in process theology. But it is used only as a last resort and with a sense of regret, not with 'triumphalist thrill'.

God as 'persuasive love' has radical implications. This is one of the concepts which makes process theology as a political theology different from other political theologies. Although it agrees with other political theologies such as liberation theology in its emphasis on God's creative action in the world, it differs on the nature of God's creative action. Process theology views it as persuasive or 'non-violent', to use a modern socio-political category. The centrality of persuasion over against coercion gives an ethical grounding for action. The idea of non-violence can be derived from it. The use of force is minimised in a healthy society. However, it should not be misunderstood. As John Cobb says:

The preference of process theology for the extension of the role of persuasion is not ad hoc.³⁶

The Cross is the symbol and model of God's persuasive love. The cross represents not weakness, but the power of powerlessness. This requires that we build:

institutions that encourage persuasive relationship

³⁶. John Cobb, Jr, Process Theology as Political Theology, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1982, p.107

and provide a context in which the possibility of such relationships is safeguarded.³⁷

Politically, it enhances a non-violent approach to social action (violence only as a last resort). This is very relevant in a society which is dominated by the forces of violence directed at people and nature. The ecological dimension of persuasive love is brought out by Thomas Derr who is a critic of process theology himself. According to him:

...The God who does not compel, who only lures beings into future presents a model of respect for the integrity of all life. If that integrity is so valuable in its own right that not even God overrules it, surely no man would presume to violate it in his fellow creatures, human and non-human. Here in short is the much desired ecological consciousness.³⁸

Discussing Teilhard de Chardin's concept of spirituality and the relevance of his focus on 'love', Ursula King concludes that only a spirit of love can bring out the spirit of one earth. According to her:

The most powerful energy to transform our world, the energy most needed today, is the spirit of love. Love alone is capable of creating one earth, one human community. Love is the spirit of one earth, the life-giving, transforming dynamic at the heart of the noosphere.³⁹

³⁷. Ibid., p.108.

³⁸. Thomas Siegger Derr, Ecology and Human Liberation. A Theological Critique of the Use and Abuse of Our Birthright, A W.S.C.F.Book, Geneva, 1973, pp.27-28.

³⁹. Ursula King, The Spirit of One Earth: Reflections on Teilhard de Chardin and Global Spirituality, Paragon House, New York, 1989, p.176.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PROCESS THEOLOGY IN INTEGRATING LIBERATION THEOLOGIES AND ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY.

As already seen in chapter 1, the prevailing trend in India is one of polarization within different progressive theologies such as liberation theology, feminist theology, dalit theology, and ecotheology. Although the concerns of the poor, the dalits, women, and those of the environment are integrally related, the respective theologies often stand divided today as if they are entirely unrelated theologies. Therefore, it is important that process theology with its rich resources, is able to offer insights that can synthesise the related concerns of these strands of theology.

The concept of 'process' in process theology, for example, is a very helpful insight. In process theology, to be actual is to be a process. Anything which is not a process is an abstract, not an actuality. This means that to see what is actual or fully real (God) beyond the process of change is to devalue life in the world. In traditional Christian thought, harmony with the fully real demands an escape from the worldly realities. Process thought corrects this view. According to Whitehead, the 'temporal process' is in transition from one actual entity to another. These entities are momentary events or 'true individuals' or actual occasions. This also means that what is normally called 'individuals' are, in fact, 'societies'. A personal human existence is a 'serially ordered society' of 'occasional experiences'. The transition establishes the importance of time. The present is influenced by the past which influences the future. This scheme cannot be circular as every moment is new and nothing can be repeated exactly the same way.

The combined notion of the world and everything in it being in a process and change, and its relation to the time scheme, has radical ethical consequences. This means that in a created world order, everything is open to change and novelty. Nothing is pre-determined or fixed, and there is always scope for change. It

is precisely this view which provides the basis and impetus for various liberation movements to engage in actions to change status-quo structures. In this sense, process theology holds a common ground with liberation theologies.

The concept of 'enjoyment' and its ecological significance in terms of affirming the intrinsic worth of nature is also noted. Process theology, within this framework, also provides insights that can overcome the 'elitism' of some forms of Green Movements. Process theology does not treat 'reverence for life' in a romantic manner. In fact, as John Cobb holds, there is nothing in process theology to suggest that there should be 'equal' reverence for all actualities. In a situation where choice is to be made, there is a basis for positively discriminating value judgements. There may be situations where destroying some types of actualities is seen as more serious than others.

Everything else being equal, those with greater intrinsic value are to be preferred when a choice is to be made.⁴⁰

This suggests that process theology is careful in elucidating a hierarchy of values, from the vibrant earth to lesser creatures through mammals to human beings. In relation to humanity, the rest of nature has both intrinsic and instrumental value. Charles Birch strikes this balance of values succinctly when he says:

...in the ecological view of nature when the interests of people and elephants and kangaroos come into conflict the non-humans count for more than zero

⁴⁰. John Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, Process Theology: An Introductory Exposition, Christian Journals Limited, Belfast, 1976, p.79.

in the equation.⁴¹

In other words, in process theology, there is no 'biocentric egalitarianism'. A criterion of 'richness' is employed in process theology. Stephen Clark, however, thinks that this criterion of richness is obscure and expresses this concern:

My further suspicion is that the criterion of richness will turn out in practice simply to excuse the old familiar hierarchy: men; women, children; dogs and cats and horses, donkeys and other "higher" mammals, "lower" mammals, birds, fish and reptiles... and the rest.⁴²

But, as already seen, some kind of anthropocentrism (as also the 'kenotic anthropocentrism' delineated in this thesis suggests) is inevitable, as long as social justice is taken as an important component of ecological concerns. Thus, process theology, while affirming the intrinsic worth of nature, also employs a 'positive discrimination' of values when choice is to be made in terms of social justice. Issues of freedom and equality and therefore of justice are sociological concerns which are important for process theology. Sociological theologies have emphasised the concerns of justice for humanity whereas it is extended to the concerns of sustainability of nature in process thought. In this way, process theology corrects the neglect of ecological concerns in liberation theology. As justice is not confined to the present generation alone, but to the future generation as well, a sustainable relationship with the environment is vital. However, it is wrong, as John Cobb argues:

⁴¹. Denis Carrol, Towards a Story of the Earth: Essays in the Theology of Creation, Dominican Publications, Dublin, 1987, p.168.

⁴². Stephen R L Clark, How to Think about the Earth: Philosophical and Theological Models for Ecology, op.cit., p.107.

to violate the sense of justice of the people involved...⁴³

To cite an example, blaming the tribal people in the Third World who collect firewood from forests for deforestation while large scale deforestation being carried out by mafia in the Third World to cater to the demands of the Multi-National Companies go uncriticized, is surely a denial of justice. Thus the process view of 'intrinsic worth' can correct both the exclusive anthropocentrism of traditional socialist and capitalist ethics as well as the 'quixotic' notion of 'intrinsic worth' being propagated by some of the Green Movements.

Apart from the ecological implications of God as Love in process theology, the concept also has social dimensions in terms of integrating social justice with environmental concerns. In process theology, God's own emotional state is also responsive to the feelings of the worldly beings. God enjoys our joys and shares our sufferings. In this sense, God's love is not only 'creative' but also 'responsive' in nature. God's love is to overcome evil and create new things. It is related to the issue of justice. God of process theology not only loves every one equally, but also acts directly in the world in order to create just conditions where love is experienced. This is the dynamic side of God's love which is also at the heart of various liberation movements. Traditional theology often talks about God's love in terms of sudden and mysterious interventions as if everything is caused by God without any natural cause at all. Process theology holds, in its place, a view of God's creative activity in the world. This demands an independent perspective, a responsive action on the part of humanity rather than a passive acceptance of God's 'sudden and mysterious interventions'. God's love is intertwined with justice, as justice is the expression of God's love, according to process theology. One without the other is cold and inert. This again

⁴³. John Cobb. Jr.; Process Theology as Political Theology, op.cit., p.105.

has radical ethical ramifications. Often 'patronizing acts of charity' are seen to be the ideal Christian forms of justice even when it helps only to maintain status-quo. Process theology with its concern for change, love, and justice calls for an ethic which goes beyond the charitable actions of love to the real needs of social action to bring about changes in systems. This challenges and corrects the lack of concern for structural change in some forms of Green Movements.

The same liberative concern for social change is also noted in another feature of God's love in process theology. Process theology views God's love also as 'Creative Adventurous Love'. This view can be seen against the traditional view of God as the 'sanctioner of the status-quo'. According to process view, 'order' is essential to maximise enjoyment. God is the source of order by virtue of being the ground of novelty. For Whitehead, an aim towards order which is impersonal is subservient to the love of individuals (personal). Social order, which does not maximise the enjoyment of its members is not order and is to be resisted. God, then, becomes the source of 'unrest' so that it can lead to a higher type of order which will contribute to richer enjoyment. Since God is also not the 'absolute controller', existence of a given state of affairs (status-quo) cannot be seen to be bestowed by God. As God wills and encourages the actualization of new possibilities, status-quo (order) need not represent the divine will. As Henry Nelson puts it:

We should worship the creative good not the created good.⁴⁴

The implications of the divine 'adventurous love' are quite obvious. This has been, again, one of the bases of various liberation movements, challenging the unjust status-quo's (order which does not maximise enjoyment (justice) in a society). Thus

⁴⁴. John Cobb. Jr. and David Ray Griffin, op.cit., p.60.

the process view of God as adventurous love provides a liberative perspective which encourages people to fight against and change the unjust structures - yet another parallel concern in liberation theologies. These are important insights for an integral ecological theology, especially in a context where some of the theological reflections on ecological themes such as 'stewardship' and 'intrinsic worth' of creation are perceived in such a way that they can still be comfortable within the existing unjust and dominant structures. In a context where most liberation theologies overlook ecological concerns in the name of social justice, and most of green theologies fail to treat ecological concerns from a social justice point of view, process theology integrates the concerns of social justice and ecological balance.

'Praxis' - another parallel concern.

'Praxis' is a characteristic dimension of liberation theologies. Process theology, with its own praxis notion, has both to offer and receive from the Marxist understanding of praxis, employed in liberation theology. The praxiological dimension present in the process doctrine of God and the concept of 'amorization' can illustrate this process. Teilhard de Chardin describes the ultimate consequence of the divine activity as 'amorization', by which he means a development in creation of a relation in which all creaturely constituents share in love. God's influence is manifested at each level of this process. At the human plane, for example, this will be manifested in a society of men and women in God in love - the Kingdom of God. Thus, the process doctrine of God is not an abstract one. It presupposes dynamic action to change the world. God is what (God) does. As in the case of other process concepts, the praxis dimension is quite obvious here. Process theology perceives situations as those in which all thinking is done in a concrete and socially determined situation. It expresses the interests that come out of that situation. Thus it is involved in practice before reflecting. But, according to John Cobb, what process praxis

lacks and can learn from Marxist praxis, is the importance of a critical analysis of the interests a situation gives rise to, and the way that social situation controls thinking which does not become self-critical.

But, the traditional praxis model is more difficult to work in a situation where there is an interaction of diverse communities, guided by pluriform experiences, practices and theories (as in the case of traditional Marxist praxis which has been insensitive to feminist and ecological concerns). Process theology has a contribution to make here. According to Whitehead:

truth grows through interchange with those whose experience and understanding are different from ours.⁴⁵

This is the essence of the concept of 'one, many, and creativity' in process thought. Politically it can suggest that there is perhaps no one political or social guide or programme or ideological system to secure justice or liberation, as there are 'diversities of operation'. The same spirit can guide these diverse movements. This view protects people from political or ideological determinism. Neither rejecting new ideas nor compromising with our own views is the right attitude. As Whitehead puts it, growth occurs when conflicting views are creatively converted to contrasts where a new perspective is reached, where truth of each can be realised along with the limitation of each. "In this relation", says Cobb:

each experience and vision is widened and enriched.
We attain a new basis for a new praxis.⁴⁶

⁴⁵. John Cobb, Process Theology as Political Theology, op.cit., p.61.

⁴⁶. Ibid.

The praxis dimension can also be noted in process Christology. For Whitehead, what has already been said about God is also Christological in two ways. Firstly, his understanding of God is indebted to the life and insights of Jesus. Secondly, the creative love of God, as far as it is incarnate, is the Cosmic Christ. For Teilhard de Chardin,

the Universal Christ means that Christ exerts a physical influence on all things.⁴⁷

Christianity begins with the life of Christ which is:

not exhibition of overruling power.. its power lies in the absence of force. It has the decisiveness of a supreme idea.⁴⁸

The liberative and praxis orientation of process Christology is very evident here. Jesus's teachings and sayings were indeed 'actions'. He reached out to those who were shunned for social and political reasons. He identified with the poor and the needy. He overturned the accepted boundaries of society in his openness towards the outcastes. Jesus not only 'gave' but also 'received' in the reciprocity of love. For instance, he received water from the Samaritan woman and dined with Zacchaeus. The ethical implication of this liberative and incarnational Christology is that it conveys the message that in a world of justice and love, the welfare of one does affect the welfare of others as well. By trying to exclude the 'sinful woman', Simon was being self conscious and thus deprived other's welfare. Jesus here responded in a judgemental manner in that he revealed Simon's true need and provided the catalyst for change - thus initiated a process of inclusion in place of exclusion. He

⁴⁷. N.M. Wildiers, "Cosmology and Christology" in Ewert H. Cousins (ed), Process Theology: Basic Writings by the Key Thinkers of a Major Modern Movement, Newman Press, New York, 1971, p.262.

⁴⁸. John Cobb.Jr. and David Ray Griffin, op.cit., p.97.

confronted both Simon and the woman with the demand for a fresh future and a new order. Thus, there is an openness for a vision of an independent society of love and justice. Jesus is the basis for such a future, the foundation of the hope for the future in the present. Since God in Christ 'lures' us through out our existence, we are called to live out love and justice.

To act in love is to act "with" creation; to act against love is to act "against" creation.⁴⁹

The praxiological resonance in terms of its ecological and liberative dimensions, is also found in process eschatology. The Old Testament reveals the values of the Kingdom of God in terms of justice, welfare of all nations, and a concern for nature. The New Testament tells us that Jesus also affirmed the prophetic vision of the Kingdom. Given the continuity with the past, Jesus also added novel elements to it by which new possibilities and the dimensions of 'unexpectedness' were brought in. The shape of the Kingdom is to be manifested in the concrete everydayness of events which is so clearly exemplified in the parables. Jesus not only preached, but also embodied the Kingdom. The resurrection signals that all will be risen and that the Kingdom which is already begun, will be fulfilled. The triumph of good (Kingdom of God) has both eternal (resurrection of the dead through divine power) as well as temporal (The kingdom is realised in our just and loving relationships) dimensions. Traditional theology has often interpreted eschatology exclusively in terms of its 'eternal' dimensions. The ethical significance of process eschatology is that what we do here on earth does matter. Our actions have everlasting implications.

God's aim is always oriented towards the well-being of the world. Process eschatology with its emphasis on 'newness', and new possibilities, makes the Kingdom a very dynamic reality,

⁴⁹. Ibid., p.102.

everlastingly in process. This has again far reaching ethical implications. From this perspective, as we look at such issues as justice, eco-justice, and unity of nations as criteria for the Kingdom of God, we are called to be open to new ways of looking at them, and not to be determined by past approaches. It demands ever changing actualization, as history does not stop, and new generations do appear, and new groups, societies, and governments replace old ones. The actualization of concerns like justice, then, should reflect the realities of time and space. This approach will also help correct one of the serious anomalies of ideologies like Marxism, committed to the classless society. Once 'revolution' is achieved, then it tends to absolutize the resulting system which leads it to be uncritical of its own pitfalls. The 'once-future-possibility' becomes unchangeable, once it is achieved. Process theology, on the other hand, transcends this, as future is never static, but is in process. The future is fully and radically open to the lure of God. This is the dimension of hope. As Teilhard de Chardin puts it, once the vision for future possibilities is lost, then there is no 'zest for life'. In his own words:

...we would lose heart to act, and man's impetus would be radically checked and "defeated" forever, by this fundamental discouragement and loss of zest ⁵⁰

Although liberation theology, like other political theologies, does not believe in a complete 'consummation' of the historical process, however, fails to anticipate (as Marxism also does) new problems which the new order can bring in. Of course, liberation theology is careful in not totally identifying any new social order with the Kingdom of God. Process eschatology, or belief in the Kingdom of God functions to relativize human attainments. God enters into the constitution of all occasions in the form of relevant possibilities and 'lures'. Progress, therefore, can

⁵⁰. Ibid., p.112.

still occur and new ideas enter history and produce changes.

SUMMARY.

Process thoughts whilst being philosophical in nature, are also concrete in their meanings. They are concrete ideas with praxis dimensions attached to them. Against a prevailing anthropocentrism, process theology affirms interrelatedness of all creation and intrinsic value of non-human life. It does not dichotomise between spirit, mind and body or between reason and emotion in a water tight manner and thus overcomes a sharp separation of God, humanity and nature. It balances the transcendence and immanence of God in a creative way. God's influence is persuasive rather than coercive. God of process theology allows choice - even to the extent of allowing evil such as nuclear holocaust to happen. This would encourage, as Ian Barbour argues⁵¹, human responsibility to co-operate with God in averting such tragedies and in bringing order out of chaos. This praxis orientation is possible because in process theology we are not determined by the past, but God provides us with new opportunities for future.

The liberative and dynamic aspects of praxis themes such as 'process', 'becoming', 'incarnation', and 'creative /responsive love', and the ecological significance of concepts such as 'enjoyment', 'lure of God', and 'inter-penetration' are immense. Thus, process thoughts have strong and far reaching sociological and ethical consequences. Process theology shares a praxis orientation with liberation theologies. With the framework of a future being open to the lure of God, process praxis can correct the 'one-dimensionalism' (pluralism not respected) apparent in Marxist forms of praxis, also applied liberation theology.

Like other sociological theologies, process theology is also

⁵¹. Ian G Barbour, Ethics in an Age of Technology, The Gifford Lectures.Vol.2, S.C.M.Press, London, 1992, p.207.

'future oriented'. Traditional theologies tend to see things as pre-determined by God. This attitude leads to a kind of 'fatalism', whereas process theology envisions a future with all new possibilities to be attained by humanity, by co-operating with God. Another common factor in sociological theologies is the importance given to the doctrine of eschatology. As in other political theologies, process theology follows a prophetic eschatology with political and social implications. Process theology shares the concerns of justice and liberation with other political theologies. The difference, however, is that, unlike most political theologies, process theology does not confine justice and liberation to the realm of human beings alone. It extends those concerns to the whole creation, providing an ecological dimension which is grossly missing in other political theologies. This, then, is what makes process theology a distinct political theology - an ecological thrust, perhaps the most important facet of process theology. Process concepts like 'enjoyment', 'lure', and 'incarnation' uphold the intrinsic worth of creation. The process of 'inter-relatedness' is truly ecological. God, humanity, and the rest of creation are in an interpenetrative relationship. Panentheism also affirms this. Justice to nature is parallel to justice to the oppressed. The cosmic Christ and cosmic salvation are integral doctrines in process theology. The ecological sensitivity in the process thought corrects the exclusive anthropocentrism of classical traditional theology. It also transcends the elitist and 'utopian' attitudes to nature by linking social justice to environmental balance. Process theology as an ecological theology is concerned with the whole course of nature. Thus, in process theology, we also see an interaction between sociological theology and ecological theology in an interdependent relation. This, then, is the prospect which process theology offers - an integration of liberation theologies and ecological theology:- a synthesis of radical metaphysics with sociology and ecology in theology.

**CHAPTER 9. TOWARDS AN INTEGRAL ECOTHEOLOGY RELEVANT FOR
INDIA.**

INTRODUCTION.

Having looked at Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology, dalit theology, and process theology, with a view to formulating an integral ecotheology relevant for India, this chapter arrives at some of the vital ingredients of such a theology. This chapter assumes, for the sake of avoiding repetitions, inclusion of the reinterpreted themes in the theologies discussed so far. The goal of this chapter, then, is to give the integral ecotheological doctrines a specifically Indian Christian theological perspective. Theological notions from Hinduism and the early Indian Christian theology are used in this chapter to illustrate the fact that they can be contextually applied in India today. The doctrines will have dimensions of ecological and social justice - eco-justice - the meta-theory which the present radical theologies in India do not possess. This chapter also critiques some of the highly influential themes from the emerging ecotheology such as the 'stewardship' image and the 'Creation Spirituality'. Bringing out their irrelevance in India, it also proposes alternative conceptions of such views from an integral ecotheological perspective.

DOCTRINE OF GOD.

Panentheism.

Panentheism provides a relevant model to conceive of God in India. Panentheism which sees 'everything in God' not only radicalises God's transcendence and views creation vis-a-vis God, but also strikes a harmonious chord with Indian religious ethos. Hinduism, the predominant religious tradition in India,

is considered by many scholars as a panentheistic religion as opposed to the popular view of Hinduism as a pantheistic religion.

A closer look at the Bible reveals that panentheism is biblical. At the time of creation, the Spirit of God was "brooding over the waters" (Gen.1:1). The relation between nature and God is described by the prophet Hosea as follows:

On that day I will answer, says the LORD,... and the earth shall answer the grain, the wine and the oil, and they shall answer Jez're-el (Hosea.2:21-22).

Commenting on this passage, Klaus Koch says that the view presented here by Hosea is closer to panentheism, that is to say, God is to be found within nature and that the divine is not wholly separated from it. He sees this view as:

a much truer reflection of the Old Testament message than the radically transcendent Deity of later Christian tradition. ¹

By adopting panentheism, liberation theologies can overcome their anthropocentrism. This is one of the urgent challenges facing the progressive theologies in India. Panentheism can radically re-visualise God's transcendence in such a way that it will have distinctively Indian overtones. God's transcendence is often perceived in terms of 'heights' ('God up there') in traditional Christian theology. By adopting panentheism as one of the basic frameworks, an integral ecotheology will be able to view God's transcendence vis-a-vis 'depth' as well. Gen.1:1 tells us that God's Spirit was brooding over the deep waters at the time of creation. This panentheistic view has some Indian resonance about it in that in Hinduism creation is not seen as a conflict between God and chaos, as in the Babylonian creation

¹. Ian Bradley, God is Green, Darton Longman and Todd, London, 1990, p.42.

myth. Instead, Hinduism sees creation as 'regeneration' where creation springs forth from the depths, from the waters. Sebastian Kappan had, in fact, made a strong plea to Indian Christian theologians to reconstruct the biblical creation story in terms of this Indian vision of creation as regeneration. He believed that such a doctrine would provide a panentheistic vision. He said:

In the symbolic discourse appropriate to this myth, the world of names and forms remain within the Divine and the Divine within the world of names and forms. In this perspective, the Divine is the hidden meaning of that primal discourse spelt out into hills and lakes and rivers and oceans and stars. Therefore there is no growing in wisdom and grace without harkening to the telluric vibrations of the Divine.²

This 'in-depth' perception of God's transcendence complements God's transcendence seen in terms of God's physicality as explained by McFague in her embodiment model. Such an 'immanent' reading of God's transcendence will provide a doctrine of God who can be 'searched' through a 'Christian' life in harmony with nature.

A Trinitarian Doctrine of God.

No language can be perfectly sufficient to talk about God. At its best, God-language can only be analogical or metaphorical. The language of Trinity may be the best available language, if we are to talk about a God who is inclusive, loving and one who transcends all dualities. One of the strengths of the model of Trinity for India today is that it has ecological significance and that it fits in perfectly well with a panentheistic framework. The Trinitarian model can also be a corrective to the

². Sebastian Kappan, "The Asian Search for a Liberative Theology: Theology and Transformative Praxis" in T.K. John (ed), op.cit., p.105.

traditional 'omnipotent God'. Moltmann, elucidating his Trinitarian doctrine of creation, argues that 'the omnipotent God' is largely a product of the European Renaissance. As a consequence, nature has been considered to be an 'object' to be subjected by humanity. Moltmann offers the doctrine of Trinity as a corrective. A Triune God, according to him:

is not a lonely Lord in heaven incapable of feelings who subjects all things to himself but a God who is rich in relationships, a God in community in love.³

Through the Spirit, God creates, reconciles, and saves the whole creation. God is present in creation in the power of the Holy Spirit. The principle underlined here is that of mutual interpenetration ('perichoresis') or mutual indwelling. Leonardo Boff holds the same view. According to him, the world is constituted by the overflowing of the union of the Trinity. The universe which is a diverse, complex, and interconnected reality, is also the mirror of the Trinity. The following words bring out the ecological dimensions of this Trinitarian vision:

God appears in every being, beckons in every relationship, bursts forth in every eco-system.⁴

These views help us from sliding into pantheism and the other extreme of distancing God and humanity from the rest of creation which leads to a distorted perception of human 'dominion' over the rest of creation.

Teilhard de Chardin's notions are similar to these views. According to him, a synthesis of 'communion with God through earth' is a new order. In his view:

³. Jürgen Moltmann, Creating a Just Future, S.C.M.Press, London, 1989, p.56.

⁴. Leonardo Boff, "Ecology and Theology: Christian Pan-in-theism" in K.C.Abraham (ed), Voices From the Third World, EATWOT, Vol.XVI, No.1, 1993, p.115.

The initial experience of 'cosmic consciousness', the love of the earth and all its realities, is prolonged and transformed through the experience of God as both immanent and transcendent presence.⁵

The Trinitarian conception of God is in harmony with the Indian religious ethos. Hinduism shares with Christianity a Trinitarian vision of God with its concept of 'Trimurthy' on the popular level of 'bhakti' tradition. In Hindu Trinity, the universe is created by Brahman, sustained by Vishnu, and perfected by Siva. Trinity, apart from providing an inclusive dialogical perspective, much needed in the multi-religious context of India, also brings out the ecological implications in ethical terms. Mar Osthathios outlines the relevance of the Trinity for a context like India, marked by injustice on social and ecological fronts:

(i) As God is social, cosmic and kenotic in the Triune existence and in the Incarnation, humanity must be social, cosmic and kenotic.

(ii) Creation is spoiled by selfish exploitation and it can be restored only by sharing of resources for all the children of God without distinction of caste, creed or colour... In an ideal earthly family, sharing is to create equality and it should continue till equality is achieved in the eschatological consummation.⁶

Unlike in the early 'Brahminic' Indian Christian theology, where the integration of the Hindu as well as the Christian doctrines of Trinity was done exclusively in metaphysical terms, here, the

⁵. Ursula King, Towards a New Mysticism: Teilhard de Chardin And Eastern Religions, Collins, London, 1980, p.111.

⁶. Geevarghese Mar Osthathios, "Restoring Harmony In Creation- Through A Trinitarian Sharing Life-Style" in K.M. George and K.J. Gabriel (eds), op.cit., pp.90-91.

social (in terms of equality and sense of sharing) and the ecological (in terms of interdependence) dimensions of the Holy Trinity are brought out- a highly relevant eco-justice theme for India today.

Indigenous Images of God.

While 'traditional' language such as 'Trinity' can thus be reinterpreted to make it relevant for an eco-justice context, an integral ecotheology in India also has to employ indigenous images in portraying God. One such image of God has been delineated by Masao Takenaka in his God is Rice, where he pictures God as Rice.⁷ According to Takenaka, the concept of God as 'Rice' is very relevant in today's context, marked by poverty, injustice, ecological crisis, especially nuclear threats to peace (peace with justice). According to him, we tend to think of 'wheat' or 'bread' as the symbol of food everywhere. But, in fact, to many Asian people, 'bread' is a foreign product. Rice is the indigenous food for Asians. Hence it would be more meaningful for Asians to say, "God is Rice" rather than to say "God is Bread". He quotes a Korean Christian poet who wrote:

Heaven is Rice.
As we cannot go to heaven alone
We should share rice with one another
.....
Yes, rice is the matter,
We should eat together.⁸

This, Takenaka argues, reminds us of the Holy Communion, the occasion to share our daily food with all people as a symbol of eternal life. Here, he introduces another important and related

⁷. Masao Takenaka, God is Rice: Asian Culture and Christian Faith, W.C.C, Geneva, 1986, pp.8-26.

⁸. Ibid., p.18.

concern of 'peace'. The Chinese character of 'peace', for example, is 'harmony'. The word 'wa' in Chinese, meaning 'peace', is derived from two words which mean 'rice' and 'mouth', symbolically suggesting that there can be no peace ('shalom') without food for all (justice). This is very important in a nuclear age which often tries to establish peace (often devoid of justice) through the arms race and militarism. It may be noted that there have been similar expressions of the nature of God in India as well.⁹

The relevance of this view of God for an integral ecotheology in India is obvious. 'God is Rice' is a powerful image of God in India. Rice, being the symbol of Indian ethos and culture, provides an indigenous concept to conceive of God. This, of course, is understood symbolically, that is to say, in a panentheistic manner. This image carries a powerful contextual message in today's India where neo-colonialism has already crept in. The neo-imperial economic and development policies being pursued in India today are threatening the 'Rice' (indigenous) culture of India through its indiscriminate policies which replace the cultivation of staple food crops such as rice and wheat with cash crops. This not only destroys the fertility of

⁹. An anonymous poem from India titled "God as Food for the Hungry" reads:

Every noon at twelve
In the blazing heat
God comes to me
in the form of
Two hundred grams of gruel.

I know Him in every grain
I taste Him in every lick.
I commune with Him as I gulp
For He keeps me alive, with
Two hundred grams of gruel.
.....
That He gives His beloved Son
Every noon through You.

Quoted in Ursula King (ed), Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader, op.cit., pp.259-260.

the indigenous soil but disrupts the indigenous culture as well. Again, symbolically, from the perspective of a doctrine of God as Rice, the new context has to be seen as an attempt which promotes an alien, neo-colonial, and unjust theology. Against this context, the indigenous peoples of India must preserve and even fashion indigenous images of God.

CREATION.

Christianity inherited the story of the genesis of the universe from Judaism. Lynn White, among others, has put the blame of modern ecological crisis on the alliance of modern science with this creation story. There have been many attempts to reinterpret the biblical creation stories ever since this allegation. As far as an integral ecotheology relevant for India is concerned, at least two principles are important for reinterpreting the Genesis creation accounts.

(i) The principle of 'remythologization'.

The impact of the Bultmannian school of 'demythologization' has been mixed. While on the one hand, it helped Christians to adopt a critical approach to the Scripture, on the other hand, it also took away some very important thrusts contained in the various 'mythical' accounts in the Bible. For an integral ecotheology relevant for India, the principle of 'mything the myths' or 'remythologizing' is of crucial importance. In a sense, one can see the principle in operation in the Genesis creation accounts. Whilst avoiding some of the 'mythical' elements in the Babylonian and Mesopotamian creation myths, the authors of the 'Pentateuch' also retained and even added some significant 'mythical' elements in their own version of God's creation. For instance, the 'mythical' in the specific account of God forming humanity ('adam') with God's own hands out of clay ('adamah') is full of ecological significance. This close link between humanity and earth is highlighted in Genesis:

...then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground... (Gen.2:7).

The very words 'adam' and 'adamah' are from the same root, symbolically implying the intrinsic bond between the two. Claus Westermann makes this point in his commentary on Genesis.¹⁰ After creation, God entrusts human beings with the task of "tilling and keeping" the earth (Gen.2:8). The Hebrew word 'abad' has the overtone of 'service'. The same word appears in the so-called 'abad-Yahweh' ('the servant of Yahweh') passages in Isaiah. 'Shamar' has the connotation of 'preserving' something from harm. It is, in other words, also a command to preserve creation and not to exceed the limits of freedom, leading to the exploitation of nature.

The relevance of the principle of 'remythologization' for the Indian ecological context, especially for dalits and tribals, is that these communities can employ the same principle in formulating an ecological doctrine of creation. The treasures of ecologically pertinent creation myths in the culture of dalits and tribals in India can be integrated into dalit and tribal theologies, thus enriching the biblical doctrine of creation. One notes that the integral bond between humanity and earth, one of the characteristics of the Genesis creation story, is also found in the creation myth of the Uraon tribe, explicated in chapter 7. Dalit theology, in the future, can work out an ecological doctrine of creation.

(ii) The principle of social and ecological justice (eco-justice).

An interpretation of the Scripture in a value-free manner or

¹⁰. According to Westermann, the word play here indicates what 'אָדָם' says more clearly namely that the person with its limitations is an 'earthly creature'. "The relationship attests that human beings and earth belong together...". in Claus Westermann, Genesis 1-11: A Commentary, SPCK, London, 1984, p.206.

from a capitalist or utilitarian perspective cannot be relevant for the Third World context such as India. These thrusts are clearly evident in the current explications of the 'stewardship' image. The following is a reinterpretation of the creation story from an eco-justice perspective.

The Priestly account of creation (Gen.1:1-2:4a) tells us about God's concern for the whole creation. But the words, "to fill the earth and subdue it" have been often grossly misunderstood. Some translations render it as 'dominion' over creatures which has often been interpreted as a license to 'lord over' nature. But the central theme here is God's sovereignty and lordship over creation and not humanity's dominion. Ps.24:1 ("The Earth is the LORD's and its fullness there of...") affirms this position. The thrust here is, therefore, to assert the fact that God alone has absolute control over creation. It follows that human beings have a responsibility towards God's creation and that human beings have equal right to the resources of the earth. These theological and ethical principles are being violated in India today. Growing privatization of land by the rich and the elite (as a result of growing capitalism) and by the ruling class for 'development' projects result in the victimization of the poor. About 60 per cent of India's land is in the hands of the rich and the elite who constitute only 20 per cent of India's population. The ecological movements in India today, it may be noted, are mostly dalit and tribal movements fighting for their survival and their right to a homeland. In India, as everywhere, the tribals and the indigenous communities proclaim: 'Land is Life'. Hence a theology of creation should also be a theology of land.

Claus Westermann refutes the traditional interpretation of 'dominion' as 'right to exploitation'. According to him, the subjection of the earth has royal overtones which is clarified by the concept of Kingship in antiquity. This meant that the King was responsible for the whole creation. The ethical implications of this concept are expressed in the following

words by Westermann:

...Man would fail in his royal office of dominion over the earth were he to exploit the earth's resources to the detriment of the land, plant life, animals, rivers, and seas.¹¹

This is the idea suggested by the Hebrew word 'radah' ('to subdue'). God expects human beings to act like viceroys, to be just and responsible and render real service to the created order. Viceroys are forbidden to exploit people on the earth. What is expected of God's viceroy on earth is to:

defend the cause of the poor and be concerned about the fertility of land. (Ps.72:4-6)¹²

The relation between God's concern for the poor and concern towards nature is a recurring theme in the Old Testament.

'Image of God'.

The 'image of God' is also suggestive of this idea. In Hebrew, it has the connotation of the representative of God on earth as an agent, often associated with the rule of Kings. Monarchs in ancient Israel were not seen as autocrats, but as responsible viceroys of God sharing justice and mercy. According to Moltmann, 'image of God' presupposes an 'archetype' in God- a pattern on which human beings are modelled. This is based on the Platonic 'archetype-representation' thinking employed in

¹¹. Claus Westermann, Creation, SPCK, London, 1971, p.52.

¹². "May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy
and crush the oppressor
.....
in his days, may righteousness flourish,
and peace abound, until the moon is no more".
(Ps.72:4-6)

Patristic theology, with the New Testament Christology behind it. (Col.1:15 ff - Christ is presented as the 'image of God'). The Hebrew words used for 'image' and 'likeness' respectively are 'selem' and 'demuth'. The corresponding Greek and Latin words are 'eikon' and 'homoiosis' (Greek) and 'imago' and 'similitudo' (Latin). The former words in each set refer to the concrete representation whereas the latter ones imply the inward relationship. Moltmann also dwells on the historic context of these Hebrew words. They have their roots in the Egyptian royal theology where Pharaoh is the ruling copy of God on earth. In the same vein, humanity is perceived as the emblem of God's sovereignty appointed on earth. Thus, as God's image, humanity rules over the earth. But the commissions to 'rule over' and to 'subdue' are not identical with the image of God, but they are specific additions to it. This means that the human likeness to God is not to be appropriated essentially in these commissions to rule. The human lordship on earth should be like that of a tenant appointed on God's behalf. In other words, it may be argued that the idea of 'stewardship' is implied here. Douglas John Hall agrees with Moltmann when he says:

although one cannot disassociate "image" and "likeness" from "dominion", it cannot be identified absolutely with either.¹³

Hence, the real message for humanity with regard to their attitude to nature is that it has to be responsible towards God's creation.

The Idea of Stewardship

It may be noted that even the concept of 'stewardship' is not without problems. As the Indian Orthodox theologian Mar Gregorios argues, there is still an inherent attitude of 'management' which leads to an objectification of nature.

¹³. Douglas John Hall, Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship, New York, 1986, p.71.

According to him, replacing 'dominion' with 'stewardship' will not lead us far, because:

we would still be reducing nature to...nothing but an object given into our hands for safe keeping and good management.¹⁴

Clare Palmer offers a detailed exposition of the 'stewardship' image in the Bible and of its present-day implications.¹⁵ According to Palmer, the term translated as 'steward' in the Bible refers to 'the man over the house' with responsibility to the master for the affairs of the household and its possessions. (Ref: Daniel.1:11) The New Testament also uses the term in the same way. But in some of the parables of Jesus, the term does take on particular meanings, with the focus moving on to the relationship of the master to the steward. The household and the possessions are important only as far as the steward's obedience and faithfulness. Nevertheless, the Bible does not refer to humanity as the 'steward of the natural world'. In other words, strictly speaking, there is no 'biblical concept of stewardship of nature'. Nonetheless, certain passages such as Gen.2:18 can be described as implying the 'stewardship' idea. It may be added that there are passages like the 'Speeches of Yahweh' in the book of Job where God's care for nature irrespective of humanity and its role is very evident (Job.38-41).

The political message implied in this concept is that of power and even of oppression in hidden forms. Its popularity in the West, according to Palmer, reflects the dominant position the rich economies have over the struggling nations of the Third World. 'Stewardship' can go hand in hand with oppressive structures without necessarily challenging them. In other words,

¹⁴. Ian Bradley, op.cit., pp.19-20.

¹⁵. Clare Palmer, "Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics" in Ian Ball, et.al. (eds), The Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology, S.P.C.K, London, 1992, pp.69-82.

the stewardship image does still retain anthropocentric and instrumental approaches and therefore does not take us far enough.

Sean McDonagh in his latest book Passion For the Earth: The Christian Vocation to promote Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation provides the same critique of the 'stewardship' concept.¹⁶

The central biblical and theological concept of Benedictine monasticism, the notion of 'stewardship'- humanity is entrusted with the task of 'tilling and keeping the earth'- is an example to bring home the inadequacies and dangers inherent in the 'stewardship' concept. The Benedictine 'taming of the earth', as Sean McDonagh sees it, is an extension of 'the garden tradition' in the Bible. The concept of 'labor' was very central to St. Benedict. As Warren.G.Hansen says, most forms of Western monasticism held on to the proposition: "to labor is to pray".¹⁷ It was considered to be a revolutionary maxim during the time of St. Benedict.

The Benedictine model of relating to the natural world was marked by a sense of gratitude for the good gifts of nature and by a respect for nature in order to ensure its continued fruitfulness for human beings. The human perspective took precedence over the integrity of creation. There was always the fear and concern that unless nature was properly controlled by humanity, it could overrule them. The tendency to 'domesticate' nature and bring it under human control was inherent in this tradition.

Interestingly enough, the impact of the concept of 'labor' of

¹⁶. Sean McDonagh, Passion for the Earth: The Christian Vocation to promote Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Geoffrey Chapman, 1994, pp.128-134.

¹⁷. Warren G. Hansen, St. Francis of Assisi: Patron of the Environment, Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, 1970, p.30.

St. Benedict was extraordinary. 'Dignity of labor' slowly became the hallmark of the Benedictine ethos. People began to take pride in labor and in the objects (products) of labor. Warren Hansen argues:

the ultimate development of this attitude, however, was not destined to occur in the monasteries, but among the Calvinist Puritans. Diligent labor in one's 'calling' became both an absolute moral necessity and the chief, if not the only, means of serving and praising God.¹⁸

It may be recalled that it was the same doctrine of Calvin, in the view of Max Weber, which contributed to the "Spirit of Capitalism". Hansen is not alone in holding this view. According to Sean McDonagh, many historians pointed out that the tradition of caring for the land was not very effective even during St. Benedict's own time, with the result that over the years, the Benedictine monasteries amassed more and more land.

More and more they became powerful economic and political centres and the superior, the abbot, began to look and act like a feudal lord.¹⁹

From these views, one can, in fact, develop a 'Benedictine Ethic Thesis', that is to say the link between 'the Benedictine Ethic and the Spirit of Feudalism'. It also confirms that such an understanding of 'stewardship' (as applied in the Benedictine tradition) does not meet the challenges of social justice.

The 'stewardship' concept is found in the Indian traditions. Hinduism, although it emphasises the intrinsic worth of creation and the human responsibility towards it, has little focus on

¹⁸. Ibid.

¹⁹. Sean McDonagh, The Greening of the Church, op.cit., p.131.

eco-justice. This is also noted in Gandhi's concept of 'stewardship'. The elitism in the Gandhian stewardship image was noted in chapter 7. As in the Benedictine tradition, Gandhi's concept of the 'dignity of labour' also did not address the social justice aspect of the theme, as Gandhi left the caste-oriented division of labour in India unchallenged. It follows that the 'stewardship' image applied in the West and the East does not go far enough in integrating the concerns of ecological balance and social justice.

The Current Popularity of the 'Stewardship' image.

Interestingly enough, the 'stewardship' concept has become very popular today, both in religious and secular spheres. It was the 1950s and 60s that witnessed the upsurge of the use of the concept of 'stewardship' of nature. Since then, it has been at the forefront of Churches' campaign for more resources, often financial resources. The concept has been used within a feudal framework-based on a God who is seen as a master. 'Stewardship' is often adopted in the West as a convenient way of expressing the place of human beings in the natural world. The social significance in terms of the political implications of this concept is that 'stewardship' sits comfortably with the status-quo. It often does not oppose the oppressive structures which are at the root of nature's exploitation, but only calls for a 'responsible management' of nature within the existing system. The political message implied in 'stewardship' is still one of power and mastery. (The same deficiency was noted with regard to the Marxist anthropocentrism in Chapter 5).

The ecological implication of the stewardship concept is that it operates with a view that nature is there for humanity to use. Its attitude is implicit in the feudal perception of stewardship in that the natural world is seen as an estate to be treated as the master wishes, albeit in a qualified manner. The consequences are immense, as anything can be interpreted to be of benefit to humanity and therefore justified. Pope John

Paul II echoes this idea when he says:

Exploitation of the riches of nature must take place according to criteria that take into account not only the immediate needs of the people but also the needs of future generations. In this way the stewardship over nature, entrusted by God to man...are directed to the good of all humanity.²⁰

Nature is still there to be 'exploited' by humanity. Within this framework, the exploitation of nature, if it benefits humanity, (or rather particular sections of society) is morally justifiable. In real terms, this would make the cultivation of all practicable land for use justifiable. The destruction of wildwood for agriculture is morally acceptable because it will feed more and more people. The flooding of river valleys such as the Loire project in France or the Narmada valley in India are justified to produce hydro- electric power, even if it is at the cost of millions of native people being evacuated forcefully. In short, 'stewardship' understood in this way can only further the interests of the elite and the powerful in a society.

The stewardship concept allows humanity to continue to have an instrumental view of nature, and often softens the prevailing attitudes of domination over nature by adding a comfortable 'responsibility' on the part of humanity. The following statement brings out the political significance of this concept:

It fails to change the fundamental human centredness of the original premise. It is this concept of stewardship which allows Chris Patten, M.P., to accept the building of a theme park on Rainham Marshes and a marina in Cardiff Bay, both wildlife reserves, in order to serve human recreational and

²⁰. Ian Ball et. al (eds), op.cit., pp.72-73.

aesthetic ends.²¹

This shows that a concept of stewardship applied in capitalistic and utilitarian ways does not really contribute to the political and ecological cause, approached from a prophetic (social-justice) perspective. In other words, although the 'stewardship' concept is certainly an improvement on the traditional 'dominion' image, it still remains anthropocentric and fails to accord nature an intrinsic worth. It still retains the 'managerial' role of humans. Hence the model of stewardship is still far from a credible alternative to the traditional 'dominion' approach because, as Martin Palmer maintains:

The stewardship model is still a distancing model. It is a managerial model. We are the managers and the rest of creation is therefore for us to use. It does not make us part of creation. And without recognising that we are just part of creation, we will continue to work with a mindset which is not geared towards the protection of creation per se. ²² [emphasis mine]

As the discussion so far establishes, this 'stewardship' model cannot be relevant for India because it neglects the concerns of social justice and the dimension of intrinsic worth of creation. In other words, the concern of eco-justice, much needed in the Indian context, is absent in this model.

The Principle of Kenosis or a Kenotic Anthropocentrism.

It is in this context that the relevance of the 'self-emptying image' ('kenosis') of Christ especially for Indian theology needs to be seen. 'Kenosis' was developed as an exclusively

²¹. Ibid., p.85.

²². Martin Palmer, "New Occasions Teach New Duties" in The Expository Times, Jan. 1995, Vol.106, No.4, pp.102-103.

Christological theme, particularly in relation to the Incarnation, in theology. This theory was an attempt to answer the questions, raised by the early Christian debate on Jesus' humanity and divinity.

The Greek word 'keno' means 'to empty'. The Kenotic Christology is based on Phil.2:6-11, where, in the words of Paul, Jesus emptied himself of his 'glory' and divine authority, and became a servant to save the world. As Charles Gore explicates:

The Incarnation is the supreme act of self-sacrificing sympathy, by which one whose nature is divine was enabled to enter into human experience. He emptied himself of divine prerogative so far as was involved in really becoming man, and growing, feeling, thinking, and suffering as a man.²³

According to Frank Weston²⁴ kenosis was the way Jesus restricted voluntarily his divine consciousness and powers to the measure of manhood at each stage of its growth.

Whether Patristic theology had developed this theory is still debated. During the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, it led to a controversy between two schools of kenotic theology.²⁵ The Giessen school interpreted kenosis in terms of 'a kenosis of use'. It argued that the Incarnate Word renounced the use of attributes like omnipotence and omniscience. According to the Tübingen school, Jesus only hid these attributes and did not reveal them externally ('a kenosis of concealment'). In the nineteenth century, the kenotic theory was taken up vigorously as a theological doctrine of incarnation. It sought to answer

²³. Quoted in Ralph J. Tapia, The Theology of Christ: Commentary, The Bruce Publishing Company, New York, 1971, p.175.

²⁴. Quoted in Ibid., p.175.

²⁵. For a detailed discussion, Walter Kasper, The God of Jesus Christ, S.C.M. Press, London, 1982, pp.192-193.

the old questions regarding the nature of Jesus' humanity and divinity. But it raised more questions than it answered. Questions such as 'What was happening to the rest of universe during the period of our Lord's earthly life?', 'Was kenosis merely temporary, confined to the period of the incarnation?', 'What was the nature of the divine in the light of kenosis?', and 'How can the impassable suffer?' were raised. In other words, 'kenosis' was approached as a theological notion from an ontological Christological perspective, relating to the 'person' of Christ. Various theologians have responded to these questions in different ways. According to Walter Kasper, kenosis is not about de-divinizing of God in Christ, but kenosis consists in:

taking the form of a slave and not in the surrender of the form of God.²⁶

Or as William M. Thompson responds:

...in the Jesus experience divine self-limitation is not a divestiture of divinity, but a revelation of it by peace, justice and love.²⁷

In Russian Orthodox theology, kenosis is applied not in an ontological Christological sense and in relation to the specific event of Incarnation, but as indicating something which is involved in creation. Process theology, to give another example, interpreted kenosis in terms of panentheism and God's love. God's transcendence, according to process theology, is manifested in an immanent way, as divine love in action. Because God is love, God can suffer and reveals divinity in suffering. Kenosis is also taken up by many other modern theologians such as Hans Küng, Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann and K. Kitamori whose Theology of the Pain of God illustrates how the kenotic

²⁶. Ibid., p.189.

²⁷. Quoted in William M. Thompson, The Jesus Debate: A Survey and Synthesis, Paulist Press, New York, 1985, p.318.

suffering of Christ is a powerful theme in the Asian context.

All this shows that kenosis can be applied at least in two ways; from the perspective of an ontological Christology and also from a functional (praxiological) perspective. That is to say that the principle of kenosis can be applied in a radical way, bringing out its social and ecological implications for our context. It is in this way that kenosis is approached and applied in delineating a 'kenotic anthropocentrism' here.

Orthodox theology affirms 'dominion' as part of 'image of God'. Gregory of Nyssa, for example, did affirm this position, but in a qualified sense. 'Dominion' should be exercised in love and justice. Delineating this notion and linking it with the idea of 'kenosis', the Indian Orthodox theologian K.M.George advocates a 'kenotic image of God' exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, despite his equality with the Father, did not cling on to this authority and equality, but emptied himself of all privileges and came down to sacrifice himself for the world. Hence, as K.M.George argues, the image of God in humanity need not be seen in terms of 'ruling over' creation but can be seen vis-a-vis human discipline, justice and love. As Mar Gregorios holds:

We best see the royal stature of man in those who have really become free by learning to control their own wills....²⁸

This is still anthropocentrism, but with a difference. Janet Martin Soskice puts forward what she calls a 'divine servant' or 'divine regent' anthropocentrism over against the 'divine hamster cage anthropocentrism'. In the latter case, God is the hamster owner, and humans the hamsters, and God creates the world as a vivarium for human beings with freedom to do anything with it. The former model is different, in that human beings are

²⁸. K.M.George, "The Self-Emptying Image" in K.M.George and K.J.Gabriel (eds), op.cit., p.115.

part of the created order, but human beings have a privileged responsibility within it. As she succinctly puts it:

...we are dust... But we are dust that has come to know itself as dust, to know that dust can do right and commit wrongs... the rest of the created order.²⁹

The same perception is shared by Fr. Andrew Ross, although he expresses the same idea in different terms. He prefers to call this attitude a 'voluntary self-divestiture'.³⁰ This means that human beings are called to divest themselves of some of their potentials and powers for the sake of the earth. Andrew Linzey airs basically the same view when he spells out what he terms 'the suffering servant humanism'. He draws upon the idea of a God who suffers. For him, the uniqueness of human beings is better defined as the capability of human beings for service and self-sacrifice over against the conventional arguments for human beings in terms of rationality, culture, and self-consciousness.

The uniqueness of humanity consists in its ability to become the servant species.³¹

The 'kenotic anthropocentrism' is similar to these views. This is modelled on the Christ who emptied himself of all his 'dominion' and became a servant of all. In fact, the word 'dominion' ('dominus'-Latin origin) is the root word used to refer to the 'lordship' of Christ who demonstrated his dominion in humility and service, not in mastery over others. A 'servant Christ' is the 'Lord Christ' of all (Phil.2:6-11). It is in this sense of service-mindedness and getting rid of mastery that one should exercise human 'dominion', given by God at the time of

²⁹. Janet Martin Soskice, "Creation and Revelation" in Theology, Vol. XCIV, No.757, Jan. 1991, p.38.

³⁰. Quoted in Milton B. Efthimiou, "Orthodoxy and Ecological Crisis" in David G. Hallman (ed), Ecotheology: Voices From South and North, op.cit., p.94.

³¹. Andrew Linzey, Animal Theology, op.cit., p.57.

creation. Christ as the 'Dominus' should be our model for our entire understanding of human dominion over nature. As K.M.George urges:

The paradox of Christ making the whole creation his body by the kenotic act of dispossessing the self sets the paradigm for a Christian approach to creation.³²

Mar Gregorios argues along the same lines when he introduces the distinction between 'mastery' and 'mystery'. While human beings have been given 'mastery' over creation, creation is also a mystery. Both of these have to be held in dialectical tension. Our mastery of the universe must be like the mastery of our bodies. Nature is not just for our use. We are called to offer nature, our extended body, to God. This is the mystery of the Eucharist and the mystery of kenosis.

Christ gave himself, with humanity and nature to God, in self-denying God, and thereby saved humanity and nature. It is in that eternal act of sacrifice and love that we too are called upon to participate.³³

We may recall the words of Jesus Christ who emptied his dominion and became a servant:

...but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant... (Mk.10:43)

Once again, 'kenosis' has specific Indian and 'eco-just' overtones. In fact, the concern for the preservation of the universe is part of almost all religions. This is more true in the case of Indian religions, particularly in Hinduism. For

³². K.M.George, "The Self-Emptying Image", op.cit., p.162.

³³. Paulos Mar Gregorios, The Human Presence: An Orthodox View of Nature, C.L.S, Madras, 1978, p.89.

example, as Jacob Kurien argues³⁴, the whole thrust of the Vedas is to keep the balance and beauty of the world, to sustain the cosmic order ('Rta'). Whenever this order is disrupted, the Vedas prescribe 'yaga' (sacrifice) to reestablish the 'rta'. This is only possible when there is a sense of dedication ('arpana') and self-emptying ('thyaga') or 'kenosis'. In fact, in Rg Veda, one reads that the world emerged out of the self-sacrifice of the 'Adimahapurusha'. The 'kenotic anthropocentrism', in today's context, asks us to exercise 'thyaga' or self-emptying of dominion for the sake of the universe. However, the ecological dimensions of 'kenosis' will only be partial, if it is bereft of social justice concerns. Jesus self-emptied his power and dominion and became a servant for the sake of both human as well as non-human creation. It was on the cross that Jesus' 'kenosis' reached its culmination. This follows that our self-divestiture of dominion should lead us to 'cross bearing' ('necrosis'), to an identification both with the suffering humanity and the groaning creation. In other words, a 'kenosis' for the sake of the endangered nature and a 'necrosis' (sharing in the struggles) for the exploited should go together in India where ecological destruction and victimization of the poor go hand in hand. This brings us to the doctrine of sin.

DOCTRINE OF SIN.

The Bible presents the reality of sin in a very concrete manner. Sin is not only a distortion of inter-personal relationships, but also a breaking of the bond of harmony between humanity and nature- an insight which is particularly important in India. Emil Brunner expresses this view of sin as follows:

The more man distinguishes himself from the rest of creation, the more he becomes conscious of himself as

³⁴. Jacob Kurien, "Puthiya Bhumikkuvendi Atmarpanam" (Malayalam) "A Dedication for A New Earth" in M. Kurien (ed), Paristhithi Sabhayude Dharmam (Malayalam), op.cit., pp.52-55.

the subject, as an "I" to whom the world is an object, the more does he tend to confuse himself with God, to confuse his spirit with the spirit of God, and to regard his reason as the Divine reason.³⁵

Human beings have, thus, misunderstood the 'image of God' and misused the 'dominion' given to them by failing to exercise it with care and respect for the integrity of creation.

The notion that the earth is cursed as a punishment on humanity is a recurrent theme in the Old Testament. (Jer.4:23-26; Is.24:3-5; Jer.14:4-6). Jeremiah pictures drought as God's punishment for the sins and rebellions of the people. He also explains how, as a result of the sins of human beings, even animals had to suffer:

Even the doe in the field, forsakes her new born fawn; The wild asses stand on the bare heights...their eyes fail, because there is no herbage. (Jer.14:4-6)

India knows only too well that even today, droughts and desertification of lands are often directly caused by insane human policies and activities such as large scale deforestation, poor irrigation, and intensive farming.

Causing damage to the environment should be seen as a sin against God's will. Air, water, land, flora and fauna are all God's creation to be saved. Polluting and destroying them is to disregard God, and, therefore, sin. Dt.24:4 reads:

...and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession.

McFague deals with the sin of 'social injustice' in an

³⁵. Quoted in Sean McDonagh, To Care For the Earth: A Call to a New Theology, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1986, p.3.

ecological context. A concept of God as mother (explicated in the chapter on Eco-Feminist theology), McFague argues, can meet this challenge. Sin is defined as the:

refusal to be part of an ecological whole whose continued existence and success depend upon a recognition of the inter-dependence and inter-relatedness of all species. The mother God as creator, then, is also involved in 'economics', the management of the household of the universe, to ensure the just distribution of goods.³⁶

Such a perspective helps us treat ecological problems as sin and also rediscover the link between social justice and ecological crises.

An ecological doctrine of sin is vital for an integral ecotheology relevant for India. The social and ecological dimensions of sin are to be combined in such a theology. Against the current Indian socio-ecological context where the socio-political oppression of the poor and the exploitation of ecology go hand in hand, 'sin' assumes new dimensions. From this perspective, the Priestly account of creation in Genesis can be contextualised in such a way that it will combine the social and ecological dimensions of sin. An attempt towards such a contextualisation is made here:

God created humankind in God's own image and likeness.
(Gen.1:27)

Today, the image and likeness of God in humanity have been distorted in a majority of the masses in India by the forces of casteism, patriarchy, and consumerism.

³⁶. Sallie McFague, Models of God: Theology for an Ecological Nuclear Age, op.cit., p.114.

God created the heavens and the earth... (1:1)

Today, through large scale industrialization the atmosphere has been badly polluted and most of India's arable land has been turned barren through indiscriminate commercial agriculture.

God's Spirit was brooding over the face of the waters. (1:1)

Today, through the dumping of effluent in seas and oceans and through overfishing by means of indiscriminate trawlers, the waters of India have been polluted and its marine wealth endangered, leaving the traditional fisherfolk in disarray.

God made the earth put forth vegetation. (1:11)

The modern lopsided capitalist development policies and projects in India result in an alarming scale of deforestation and desertification of land which, in turn, impoverish those who live in close proximity with forests.

God created all kinds of living creatures. (1:21-24)

Large scale deforestation today threatens the survival of many species of animals some of which are already extinct.

God saw everything God had created pleasing and very good. (1:31)

The 'technocratic' and capitalist development model in India today treats nature as a mere object possessing only instrumental value.

All this exemplifies the relevance of the three dimensional view of sin explicated by McFague in terms of social injustice (Us versus Us), injustice to animals (Us versus Them), and injustice to nature (Us versus It). These are some of the sinful conditions present in India. They also warrant a genuine

repentance on the part of those forces that promote such sinful conditions and demand a liberative praxis on the part of the victims of these structural sins. The concept of 'process' in process theology, in this context, has serious ethical ramifications in India, as this notion helps to overcome the predominant Indian perception of 'fatalism' associated with the Hindu notion of 'karma'. Often, 'karma' is understood, albeit wrongly, as 'fate' which means that every evil situation is the result of one's own evil doings (sin), perhaps those sins committed even in a previous birth. Caste status, for example, is seen by many as God-given and, therefore, unalterable. The concept of process with its emphasis on 'new actualities and possibilities' gives a liberative and praxiological grounding which will be able to challenge the unjust status-quo structures that cause social and ecological injustices.

CHRISTOLOGY.

The Christology of an integral Indian ecotheology must combine the historical thrusts in liberation theologies with the cosmic dimensions of Christology. The early Indian Christian theology developed its Christology largely against a Hindu theological setting. However, an integral ecotheology for India can find new meaning in them and make them relevant for the present context.

Jesus, the 'avatara'.

Some of the early Indian Christian theologians, notably V. Chakkarai, portrayed Jesus Christ as 'the avatara', 'the incarnation'. Like liberation theologies, an Indian integral ecotheology must start with a concrete, manifest and immanent God- the God manifest in Christ. Whereas Chakkarai perceived this immanent Christ in purely human terms, an Indian ecotheology should extend the scope of Christ's immanence to the cosmic realm. The cosmic (ecological) perspective on Christology will, then, have positive ethical implications in the Indian social context, particularly in a dalit/tribal milieu. Christ

was born in a manger, lying in a bed of straw, surrounded by animals, thus identifying totally with the whole creation in its pain and suffering. From an integral Christological viewpoint, the whole Christmas story assumes new eco-justice dimensions. For instance, in the Lucan narrative, Mary was denied access to homes and inns and finally had to give birth to Jesus in a manger. For the dalits, this is a perennial problem in India. They are still denied access to public places like hospitals, inns, schools, and hospitals, and even temples in some parts of India. The ecological setting of the birth of the messiah, that is, in the company of the beautiful nature and animals is, in fact, a truly tribal/dalit environment. Incarnation, thus, becomes an ecological/dalit doctrine, the doctrine of Jesus, the dalit son of man being born in an ecologically friendly atmosphere (Yet, paradoxically enough, one of the ways Christmas is celebrated today is by destroying trees and plants for 'Christmas trees'). Thus, in an integral ecotheology relevant for India, the Christ who takes sides with the oppressed and the poor is also the Christ who 'springs' from the 'shoot' of Jesse. The Christ who hears the cry of the oppressed is also the Christ who listens to the groaning of the whole creation.

One of the reasons why some of the early Indian Christian theologians were hesitant to use the term 'avatara' to refer to Jesus was that because they thought it would reduce Jesus to the status of other incarnations, and thereby compromise on his uniqueness. In an 'eco-just' context in India, the theme of Christ's uniqueness can point to new directions. In India today, marked by inter-religious conflicts and social and ecological injustice, the uniqueness of Christ, if at all it is to be affirmed, should be affirmed in terms of Jesus' 'dalitness' and his identification with the oppressed and nature, the 'new poor'. In Hinduism, 'avatara' only 'appears' in history, only when needs arise. It is more of a theophany rather than a concrete incarnation. In an Indian ecotheology, Jesus's incarnation is a real and continuous process whereby Jesus continues to identify with the oppressed humanity and the

exploited nature. Incarnation is God becoming human and being born on earth, through which the earth is blessed.

'The Unknown Christ in Creation': A Cosmic Christology.

The immanent God in Christ (the 'avatara') brings us to the Cosmic Christ. A Cosmic Christology, the doctrine of Christ who is experienced in all things, is in harmony with panentheism. In today's ecological context in India, what is needed is not a Christology of 'The Unknown Christ of Hinduism' (which the Indian Jesuit theologian Sebastian Kappan had described as a 'neo-colonial' approach artificially to place Christ in Hinduism), but a theology of 'The Unknown Christ in Creation', a theology which sees the presence of Christ in all forms of life. A Cosmic Christology is well founded in the Bible.

The letters to the Colossians and Ephesians, in Denis Carroll's view, depict Christ as the Recapitulator of Creation. Creation moves towards a 'resume' or recapitulation in Christ. Christ is "the summit of creation upon whom all converge" (anakephaliosis) ³⁷ Therefore, creation, as it were, is 'Christoform' which is called to its 'pleroma' (fullness). Teilhard de Chardin put it this way:

Cosmic Christ is found in every atom and molecule of existence. All around us Christ is...transforms and divinises....³⁸

In this sense, Jesus can be understood as the 'antaryamin' ('the cosmic indweller'), a term which A. J. Appasamy used to refer to Christ. The evangelist John pictures the mystery of incarnation when he says:

³⁷. Denis Carroll, Towards a Story of the Earth: Essays in the Theology of Creation, Dominican Publications, Dublin, 1987, p.33.

³⁸. Quoted in Ian Ball et.al (eds), op.cit., p.92.

Logos became flesh and pitched his tent on the earth... (Jn.1:14).

This view corresponds to Ramanuja's conception of Brahman as the 'Sariri' and the world as the 'sarira' (body). Brahman pervades the cosmos as its 'antaryamin'. The ecological aspect of incarnation, then, is that God cannot be experienced except through the world. The social aspect of the incarnation is contained in the phrase "pitched his tent" (Jn.1:14). This strikes a powerful chord in India, as a large number of the oppressed, the homeless and dalits live in 'tents' in slums. Jesus Christ identified with the oppressed; the poor and the environment, the most vulnerable sections of any society.

According to Ursula King, the Cosmic and the Christic in Teilhard de Chardin converged into a powerful vision of the Universal and Cosmic Christ. This vision of Teilhard:

remains inseparable from the mystical quality of his nature experiences, but the monistic pantheism of earlier years had gradually been prolonged and transcended into what he occasionally referred to as "pan-Christic monism", and what might also be called a person-centred theistic mysticism or pantheism.³⁹

This is a Christ who transcended the watertight dualisms between the divine and the human in the incarnate Christ. This 'non-Chalcedonian' Christology is of great importance in India. Such a Christology overcomes all forms of exclusive dichotomies; between the sacred and the profane, transcendence and immanence, history and nature, and the human and the earthly. This is important especially when dualism is identified as one of the root causes of ecological problems. Jesus unites the whole creation with God. Through the 'naturalization' of God in Christ the creation is being saved (Theosis). This unifying Christology

³⁹. Ursula King, The Spirit of One Earth, Paragon House, New York, 1989, p.86.

has a distinctive Indian resonance again, especially with Sankara's 'Advaita' philosophy which upholds non-dualism. The strength of Sankara's 'Advaita' is that the Ultimate Self (God) is not alienated from human beings and the world, thus transcending all kinds of dichotomies. As Sankara's 'non-dualism' has often been mistaken for 'monism', the non-Chalcedonian inseparability of divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ has largely been misunderstood as 'monophysitism'. A Christology which transcends the dualism of history and nature, transcendence and immanence, divinity and humanity, provides an ecological Christology.

Matthew Fox analyses some of the New Testament passages which portray the Cosmic Christ, in his The Coming of the Cosmic Christ.⁴⁰ According to him, the cosmic hymn in Phil.2:6-11⁴¹ is a celebration of Christ as exalted by God to be the cosmic ruler. The cosmology used here is the Hellenistic one which includes heaven, earth and the under earth over all of which Christ is the Lord. Col.1:15-20⁴² is yet another Pauline passage which presents the Cosmic Christ. The phrase "all things" ("ta panta") occurs six times in this passage and suggests that they all hold together in Christ. The same message is emphasised in Eph.1:3-14. Here the idea is that Christ is the head of both the Church and the whole universe. Fox also describes Jesus Christ as "mother earth crucified and resurrected". The symbolic portrayal of Jesus Christ as Mother Earth crucified is justified, according to Fox, because Mother Earth is also being crucified and wounded today. Also like Jesus

⁴⁰. Matthew Fox, The Coming of the Cosmic Christ, Harper and Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1988, pp.87-109.

⁴¹. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God...so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth". (Phil.2:5-11)

⁴². "He is the image of the invisible God...and in Him all things hold together...and through Him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven...of His Cross". (Col.1:15-20)

at Golgotha, Mother Earth is innocent of any crime. Jesus can be understood as Mother Earth also because Jesus called himself 'mother' when he wept over Jerusalem:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem...How often have I desired to gather your children together as hen gathers her brood under her wings... See your house is left to you... in the name of the Lord". (Lk.14: 34-35)

Here 'the house' that is forsaken is the Temple itself. Yet, argues Fox, Mother Earth is:

the Temple, the sacred precinct in which holy creation dwells and praises God.⁴³

Fox cites Hildegard of Bingen who also talks about how earth is divinized. According to Hildegard, earth is divinized:

first because it is so holy and second it provided the body by which the Son of God was made human flesh.⁴⁴

This particular view, like many other controversial views of Fox is not only too arbitrary, but also very close to pantheism. Nature is not only idealised but 'idolised' as well. One needs carefully to sift the romantic elements in Fox's views and his almost pantheistic views of God and creation, while appropriating his views for an integral eco-theology.

Is 'Creation Spirituality' relevant for India?

The elitism of some of the reflections in ecotheology is conspicuous in the iconoclastic theology of Matthew Fox and the Creation Spirituality Movement. This, as Margaret Goodall and

⁴³. Ibid., p.146.

⁴⁴. Ibid.

John Reader observe⁴⁵, is basically a movement promoting yet another version of American life style although called 'green way of life'. The following quote from Matthew Fox himself illustrates the rather eclectic, ideologically neutral, and Western-oriented nature of Creation Spirituality Movement and therefore its irrelevance in a Third World context like India:

As a movement, Creation Spirituality becomes an amazing gathering place, a kind of watering hole for persons whose passion has been touched by the issues of our day- deep ecologists, ecumenists, artists, native peoples, justice activists, feminists, male liberationists, gay and lesbian peoples, animal liberationists... all these groups find in Creation Spirituality Movement a common language and a common ground on which to stand.⁴⁶

Besides his tendency to slip into pantheism, his rather quixotic idealism of the 'celebration of the cosmic splendour' also betrays a serious neglect of social justice such as economic and ecological exploitation of the 'poor' countries by the 'First World'. He finds the solution for the problems of the poor and ecology in a human resolve to "learn to release the 'mystic child' within human beings". This will make humanity share their resources with one another, he holds. This is far from reality and far too simplistic. 'Creation Spirituality' must realize, as Sallie McFague points out⁴⁷, that there are a vast majority of people, the oppressed sections of any society, who are not able to enjoy this 'mysterious splendour', the universe, that is, and there should be a structural change in unjust societies where these 'powerless' people are enabled to share and enjoy

⁴⁵. Margaret Goodall and John Reader, "Why Matthew Fox Fails to Change the World" in Ian Ball et.al (eds), op.cit., p.105.

⁴⁶. Matthew Fox, Creation Spirituality: Liberating Gifts For The Peoples Of The Earth, Harper, San Francisco, 1991, pp.16-17.

⁴⁷. Sallie McFague, The Body of God, op.cit., p.70.

the gifts of this 'gorgeous' splendour, the universe. This underlines the fact that in the Third World countries, the ecological concerns can only be discussed and approached from the perspective of the oppressed and the victims. This is the distinctiveness of a Third World ecotheology.

Robin Gill conveys the importance of this perspective, namely the need to look at ecological problems from the perspective of the victims. He brings out the paradox in the Western clamour for a sustainable and eco-friendly development, while the West continues to indulge in consumerism. He says:

Many of us in the North are far too compromised by our cars and labour-devouring gadgets to be serious critics of unsustainable use of natural resources... Yet whatever the potential fruits of biotechnology, at least according to our present knowledge, those of us who live in the North do seem to be committed to a path of unsustainable use. As a result we scarcely make the most independent or credible critics.⁴⁸

Matthew Fox and Creation Spirituality Movement need to take up the issue of the South being exploited economically and ecologically by the North and recognise the importance of an eco-just perspective which is being advocated by those engaged in the task of developing an integral ecotheology from the perspective of the oppressed. It is precisely this new perspective with regard to ecological concerns that Gill wants those in the North to pay attention to when he says:

Yet I am heartened by growing voices from the South which see a need to link a concern for political liberation with a concern for environmental protection. In India, for example, I am aware of

⁴⁸. Robin Gill, "A Response To Clare Palmer" in Studies in Christian Ethics, Vol.7, No.1, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1994, pp.66-67.

local theologians voicing that it is the poor in India who are often the main victims of pollution and environmental degradation.⁴⁹

Against this changing context in the South, in the place of 'Creation Spirituality' which is far from the realities of the oppressed, an eco-spirituality that is more realistic and down to earth can be developed. The Orthodox theological notion that the earth is sanctified and given as a gift from God to humanity is a powerful assertion. Creation Spirituality's depiction of earth as 'sacred' can well slip into pantheism. Creation per se is not divine or sacred. It is, on the other hand, sanctified by God, and therefore, demands respect and care. In the Orthodox tradition the sacraments and the liturgy have immense ecological significance. The use of natural resources like incense adds a 'natural' and an environmental dimension to worship. The liturgy for Palm Sunday is of particular importance. The prayers offered in this liturgy are not just for human beings but for the whole creation. Earth is depicted as a theological category, the medium of incarnation (God became 'earth' in Christ) and the locus of our salvation. The ecological message contained in the observance of harvest festivals where people offer back to God the gifts of nature is also very profound. This spirituality should also be a 'worldly-ascetic' spirituality which is neither an escape from the world of realities nor consumerist, but a 'simple' one (in the sense of 'anti-consumerist' where people take from nature only for their needs and not for their greed). It must also be a spirituality which is rooted in solidarity with the oppressed, the dalits, the tribals, women of these communities, and their ecology in India. This eco-spirituality will correct the elitism of 'Creation Spirituality' which focuses on a return to the 'original state of the garden'. An integral eco-spirituality cannot and must not be a journey backwards to the garden of Eden but it ought to be a journey forward to the paradise, to a 'new heaven and a new earth', the

⁴⁹. Ibid.

Kingdom of God where peace, justice, and the integrity of creation will reign in abundance.

SOTERIOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY.

Cosmic Salvation.

'Salvation' in Hebrew thought involves the total human and the earth reality, comprising therefore, social, political, ecological as well as other-worldly dimensions. Again this is particularly relevant to Indian theology. As Charles Birch holds, 'salvation' is an ecological word, for it denotes the restoration of a right relationship that had been corrupted. As has already been seen, the Flood story brings this concern of God that the non-human world is also to be saved. The Psalmist makes this point even clearer when he says:

You save humans and animals alike, O Lord (Ps.36:6).

This is integral to a social view of sin. If humanity's irresponsible cruelty to nature is sin, then, redemption involves a repentance and a concern towards the integrity of creation. Eph.1:8-12 also confirms this cosmic vision of salvation where Paul affirms that 'all things' are unified in Christ. Perhaps the most noteworthy passage which brings in this dimension clearly in the whole Bible is Rom.8:19-23 which says that the whole creation looks forward to the final revelation in agony and pain:

For the creation waits with eager longing...the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now....

In the view of Alexander Ganoczy, a specifically Christian 'soteriology of creation' can be found in Rom.8. According to him, here, the word 'creation' ('ktisis') is used several times in cosmological terms. (Ref.8:19; 20f; 22; 39) Ganoczy also

holds that the word 'ktisis' stands primarily for the community of creation outside humanity.⁵⁰

John McCarthy also elucidates the cosmological dimensions of salvation in the New Testament, particularly those in the Pauline epistles. According to him, the New Testament views on cosmic salvation are based on Israel's eschatological experience. Whenever the Jews were confronted with historic tragedies and predicaments, they always turned to hope in redemption that would radically transform their environment. Christianity extended these spiritual horizons to a cosmic redemption. In Judaism, there is no dichotomy between history and culture. This has influenced New Testament writers like Paul in developing their cosmic perceptions of doctrines. The cosmic dimensions of salvation is very evident in Col.1:15-20. In the first strophe of the hymn (1:15-18a), Christ is presented as the mediator of all creation- the head of the whole cosmos. This passage actually is panentheistic, while defending God's (Christ's) distinctiveness from the creation. The opening descriptions, "image of the invisible God", and "first born of all creation" project Christ as unique and distinct from creation. J.B.Lightfoot, on the other hand, brings out the insight of 'perichoresis' or mutual indwelling, when he interprets the phrase 'in him' in the hymn. It also means that Christ is the final cause and source of all creation.

Christ is the principle of cosmic cohesion making creation "a cosmos instead of a chaos".⁵¹

The expression 'pleroma' (fullness) which appears in the second strophe (1:18b-20) is also suggestive of the cosmological dimensions of redemption. Whilst some scholars take the phrase

⁵⁰. Alexander Ganoczy, "Ecological Perspectives in the Christian Doctrine of Creation" in Concilium, 1991/4, S.C.M. Press, London, Aug.1991, p.44.

⁵¹. Quoted in John McCarthy, "The Cosmic Christ and Ecology" in Theology Digest, 41:2, Summer, 1994, p.126.

to mean "the fullness of divinity in Jesus Christ", others interpret it as the universe filled with God's creative presence. According to McCarthy, it can only be understood in the context of the relationship between creation and redemption, which theology, in turn, makes sense only if we take the Pauline notion of the 'lordship of Christ'. Everything is created in, by, and for Christ and in this one Christ, the whole creation is saved. As Samuel Rayan puts it:

Redemption is re-creation and creation is the beginning and basis of salvation.⁵²

The notion of cosmic salvation is also found in the early Indian Christian theology. P. Chenchiah, for example, explained the cosmic unity in Christ in soteriological terms:

We have exhausted in a way the meaning of Christ to the individual. But we have to discover the purpose and achievement of our Lord in the redemption of the social order or in his relation to the cosmic evolution... Today we have to realize Jesus as the head of a new world order.⁵³

As Robin Boyd notes, these words remind one of Teilhard de Chardin's notion of 'Christification'. Dhanjibhai Fakirbhai, another Indian Christian theologian, called this process of final redemption of the whole cosmos in Christ, the 'Christadvaita' ('unity in Christ'). Two of the six kinds of unity in Christ which Fakirbhai enumerates are of particular relevance for an Indian ecotheology. They are:⁵⁴

⁵². Samuel Rayan, "Contemporary Reflections on the Faith of our Mothers and Fathers: A Personal Witness", Kunchala Rajaratnam Endowment Lectures, Series.1, p.16.

⁵³. Quoted in Robin Boyd, An Introduction To Indian Christian Theology, ISPCK, New Delhi, 1989, pp.156-157.

⁵⁴. Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp.333-334.

(i) Christ's unity with the created order.

(ii) Man's unity with nature, in the sense that physically we are part of the created world, and therefore should use it for God's glory, not exploiting it by pollution, erosion and so on.

Although the cosmic dimensions of salvation is apparent in the early Indian Christian theology (as also in Hinduism), the focus on history and therefore on social justice is not strong. An integral Indian Christian theology of ecological liberation can achieve the balance by integrating the liberative soteriology of various liberation theologies and the cosmic dimensions in ecotheologies.

The eschatological dimensions of salvation also need to be looked into so as to formulate a complete Christian ecological perspective. The consummation of God's mission in Christ is often described in terms of the realisation of 'a new heaven and a new earth' or the Kingdom of God. The 'earthly' as well as 'the 'beyond' dimensions of consummation should be held in dialectical tension. This is not an other-worldly existence of human beings after death. It is very much 'earthly' and ecological.

Linking Creation, Salvation and Eschatology with Christology, Denis Carroll argues that Jesus is the link between Protology and Eschatology; Creation and Salvation. According to him:

The bond between creation and salvation is tied up by means of the concept of eschatological judgement in Christ.⁵⁵

In this sense, salvation is not to be understood as a departure into nothingness. Salvation is, rather, an actual advance into

⁵⁵. Quoted in Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, "Covenant and Creation" in Charles Birch. et.al (eds), op.cit., p.30.

the real world, a new heaven and a new earth. This also calls for a new understanding of death. As Kappan insists, the recovery of our integral bond with the earth necessarily involves a new understanding of death as:

the final resting-in-peace of humans on the lap of Mother Earth- vehicle of grace.⁵⁶

Viewed from this perspective, death, then, is no more a farewell to earth and also not a journey into an overworld of disembodied beings. It is rather 'returning to the dust' from which humanity came. "You are dust and unto dust you shall return" are no more words of curse, but of blessing. Here, one may instantly think of the Hindu and Buddhist concept of 'reincarnation'. According to this notion, one reincarnates after death in some one else's body or in some animals and lives on. This, however, is not reconcilable with the Christian notion of life after death. Here process theology's notion of 'objective immortality' is helpful in avoiding both the 'reincarnation' concept as well as traditional Christian theology's perception of life after death as totally 'other-worldly'. Process eschatology with its related concept of God's 'persuasive' love opens new possibilities. As God is dipolar who is also involved in the temporal process, the rather dangerous concept of 'reward in the next life' in traditional Christian theology is corrected. As God prehends us and these prehensions become part of God's consequent nature eternally, both reward and punishment do occur 'here' and 'now'. Humanity and the universe, therefore, live objectively in the consequent nature of God. This means that the experience of salvation or the Kingdom of God cannot be achieved in isolation from our fellow human beings and the environment. It also challenges us to 'work out' our salvation rather than merely waiting for it, because what we do, does matter to God. What is done in the world is transformed in heaven and comes back to the world. (God also prehends 'negatively' and, thus, rejects from

⁵⁶. Sebastian Kappan, "The Asian Search for a Liberative Theology: Theology and Transformative Praxis", op.cit., p.106.

God's consequent nature the evil in the world). Thus, the Kingdom is established on earth and our prayer "May your Kingdom come" finds its fruition.

The Isaianic vision of the future is again suggestive of the cosmic eschatological future. In the peaceable kingdom:

the wolf shall live with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the kid...
for the earth will be full of knowledge of the
LORD. (Is.11:6-9)

In this sense, the Kingdom of God is 'Brahmaloka' ('the world of Brahman') where the whole created order is transformed and assimilated into God. Those who take the future vision of a 'new heaven and a new earth' cannot but take seriously the concerns of environment. Rev.22:1-4 talks about the "water of life" and the "tree of life" for the "healing of the nations". Metaphorically, it implies that a commitment to the eschatological kingdom also demands a commitment to 'trees', 'waters' and the whole creation. If we allow these metaphors to be stretched somewhat, then they will assume some vital Indian contextual relevance. For example, an important tree in India called 'Neem' (mentioned in Chapter 2.) has been recently patented by Grace & Co., an American Multi-National Company. The Neem tree is considered by the tribals and the rural poor in India as 'the tree of life', the 'sarva roga nivarini' ('curer of all ailments'). For hundreds of years this tree has provided medicine, toothbrush (its twigs are used as toothbrushes) and pesticide (its seeds can become pesticides) to the Indian rural poor. Today, as a result of neo-colonialism, this American company, through an unjust patent, has taken the rights of the tribals and the rural poor, away from them. They no longer have any free access to their own natural resource. The loss of this 'tree of life' is indeed a 'Paradise Lost' and the fight of these peoples to regain their rights is indeed a fight for a 'Paradise Regained'. This illustrates the importance of the

paradigm of eco-justice in India.

Since the Christian concept of future is not a pre-destined one, but one which is open to the lure of God, humanity has the responsibility to partake in the process of realisation of this future vision, through a new life-style based on service mindedness and concern for the integrity of the whole creation.

Perhaps, it is fitting that a voice from an early Indian Christian theology be heard which will also illustrate how those 'old' and 'Brahmanic' utterances can still find new meaning and relevance in the present Indian context. Reflecting on the eschatological vision, P. Chenchiah wrote:

After Christ we do not abide in the woods of God-realization: we search for the waterfalls of God that would release the new energy for the transformation of the world.⁵⁷

Chenchiah's voice indeed was a prophetic one. His message, with its ecological resonance about it, is very relevant for India today. The task for an integral Indian ecotheology, though, is to turn this eschatological vision into a present reality.

⁵⁷. Quoted in Robin Boyd, op.cit., p.158.

CONCLUSIONS.

The progressive theologies in India today, liberation theology of the Latin American orientation, dalit theology, and ecofeminist theology, are not radical enough as they have failed to integrate theologically the concerns of ecology with those of the poor, dalits, the tribals, and the women of these communities who form the immediate victims of environmental destruction in India. As progressive theologies cannot afford to fail in India today when socio-political, economic and ecological injustice is on the increase, the need of the hour for the liberation theologies in India is to adopt an integral ecotheological perspective (oriented towards eco-justice) which will bring the respective concerns of these theologies together. However, for this to materialise, these theologies need to undergo comprehensive revisions in the areas of theological expositions of their themes and doctrines, hermeneutics, and social analysis.

The hermeneutics of liberation theology, especially that of the exodus event, its paradigm, is shallow. This lack of exegetical depth is clearly evident in its interpretation of the exodus in a monolithic manner. By concentrating exclusively on the J and E accounts of the exodus with their focus on the socio-political dimension of liberation, liberation theology has neglected the cultural and ecological aspects of liberation contained in the P account of the covenant themes such as the sabbath and the jubilee, themselves part of the exodus movement. These themes in the Priestly corpus integrate the concerns of social justice for the poor and justice for nature- eco-justice- which must be central to a liberative hermeneutics. These are pertinent themes for the present day Indian context, marked by neo-colonial destruction of the environment and the consequent victimization of the poor. The failure to treat the exodus event in a comprehensive manner, treating the 'settlement' of Israelites in Canaan also as part of the exodus movement has deprived liberation theology of an integral liberative perspective. The

model of 'retribalization' (various sections of the oppressed coming together despite their ideological differences), for example, provides a relevant model for the oppressed in India, the poor, dalits, the tribals, and women to come together, transcending their ideological differences, for the sake of facing the threat of ecological destruction of which they form the immediate victims. Liberation theology, in order to become an integral ecotheology, should revise its 'hermeneutic circle', applying an ideological suspicion in relation to its Marxist social analysis, a theological suspicion in relation to its anthropocentric treatment of theological doctrines, and a hermeneutic suspicion vis-a-vis its history determinism in interpreting the Scripture.

Dalit theology also suffers from this shallowness of exegesis in its hermeneutics. Due to an apparent anthropocentrism, dalit theology overlooked some highly relevant ecological thrusts present in its paradigm, the Deuteronomic Creed, itself presented in an ecological setting. The implicit radical ecological thrusts contained in some of the themes and phrases in the Creed can help dalit theology develop an integral ecotheological perspective in India. For example, by taking the theme of 'the land flowing with milk and honey' pointing to the lushness and fertility of the land in the past which has been spoilt by indiscriminate resource use, dalit theology can realize the importance of land, both in terms of its intrinsic worth (sustainability) and in terms of people's right to a homeland. This is particularly important in India where dalits and the tribals continue to fight for land and their environment. All this calls for a new perspective to be adopted by liberation theology and dalit theology- a perspective of eco-justice.

An evident anthropocentrism characterises both liberation theology and dalit theology in their theological expositions of doctrines. There have been some studies done on this area. One also notes certain changes already taking place within

liberation theology on this count. Although some liberation theologians, notably Leonardo Boff, now adopt a cosmological perspective, this is not reflected in the areas of social analysis and hermeneutics without which the changes will not go far enough to provide an integral ecotheological framework. Both liberation theology and dalit theology have neglected the doctrine of creation which also explains why so far they have been ecologically insensitive. A theology of 'liberation' must complement a theology of 'creation'.

Liberation theology's social analysis with its continued reliance on Marxist class-oriented economic perspective is one of the major reasons for its failure to take ecology seriously. The sweeping category of 'class' with its economic determinism, apart from its inability to give distinct focus on such important categories as caste, gender, and race, also tends to subsume ecological concerns within its class framework. The industrial determinism of the class concept fosters a culture of industrialism (which it shares with Capitalism), geared to a model of development achieved through large-scale industries and mega projects, leads to ecological destruction. Historical Materialism, even in its reinterpreted form (as proposed by Grundmann), due to its failure to put limits to economic growth and production, and its ambiguity on the nature of the technology it would adopt, can only be anti-ecological. The current interpretations of Marxism vis-a-vis 'responsible anthropocentrism' is little better than the recent capitalist expressions of 'stewardship' image, as both fail to accord nature an intrinsic worth. Although there have been several studies on the use of Marxism in liberation theology, most of them focusing on the compatibility of Marxism and Christianity, there has been no serious effort to look at the relevance of Marxism in dealing with ecological issues in relation to liberation theology. (The critique of liberation theology's use of Marx from an integral ecotheology perspective in this research is, by no means, an exhaustive one and further research on Marx's inadequacy in taking up the concern of eco-justice

convincingly needs to be undertaken.) Ecological problems are to be treated as both causes and results of poverty and other social deprivations. In a context where rain forests in the Third World are being converted into hamburgers, at the cost of the poor and their environment, liberation theology must transcend the Marxist social analysis and adopt an integral ecological perspective. Liberation theology has, therefore, 'failed' not because it has not been Marxist enough, but because it has not been critical enough with Marxist social analysis. Hence, the challenge facing liberation theology today, is not to 'add' ecology to economy, as Leonardo Boff proposes, but to accept ecology as the fundamental category.

The same critique applies, in some way, to dalit theology as well. Dalit theology has rightly rejected Marxist class analysis as it fails to give specific attention to caste-based oppression. Its following of the caste analysis of Ambedkar is highly relevant in dealing with the caste concerns in India. However, an exclusive following of Ambedkar will not do justice to an eco-justice perspective. This is because Ambedkar, like Marx, also prescribed industrialism as the answer for India's economic problems. This is where dalit theology must shed its total antagonism towards Gandhi and adopt his ecological framework with its emphasis on village (although the caste-orientation of his vision of an ideal village needs to be purged), non-violence, 'swadeshi' (anti-colonialism), and his opposition to 'industrialism'. Thus, an integral ecotheology in India should adopt an integrated ecological social analysis, making use of Marx (a critical and selective use of Marx's critique on Capitalism still has much force), Ambedkar (in relation to casteism) and Gandhi (as regards ecology). There is a resurgent interest today in India, among dalit thinkers, in research on Gandhi's irrelevance to dalits on account of his alleged defence of the caste system (often unconvincing). In the light of this research's finding that Gandhi's wisdom on eco-justice is vital for an integral ecotheology in India, there is scope for further research for future dalit theology on the

specific area of an integration of Ambedkar and Gandhi in dalit theology. Likewise, dalit theology also needs to end its antagonism towards the Brahminic theological strand in India. Although the social justice element in relation to the issue of casteism is not apparent in this strand, the ecological insights in Brahminic theology, as expressed in Sankara's 'Advaita' (dualism overcome), Ramanuja's panentheistic vision of the world as God's body (which A.P.Nirmal has taken on board), and the cosmotheandric vision of the Vedas (harmonious inter-relationship between God, humanity, and nature), are far too costly to neglect in the name of caste. These insights must form part of an integral ecotheology relevant for India.

Dalit theology can come up with an integral ecotheological perspective by taking the dalit-tribal solidarity seriously. It can incorporate the tribal attachment to land and make it a theological category. The epistemological framework of dalit theology, the category of 'pathos', is an additional advantage in this process, as 'pathos' can enable dalit theology to realize the interrelation of the groaning of nature and the cry of the tribals and dalits in India. Its reliance on oral tradition (history determinism absent) with its enormous wealth of ecologically significant myths such as the creation myth explicated in this thesis can help dalit theology develop a Christian ecological doctrine of creation by integrating such myths critically into the biblical doctrine of creation- yet another important area for further research in dalit theology.

Eco-feminist theology, unlike other liberation theologies, has transcended anthropocentrism, and approached theological doctrines from a combined feminist and ecological (eco-just) perspective. Its radical reinterpretation of traditional doctrines such as God, creation, sin, and Christology from an eco-feminist perspective must form part of an integral ecotheology in India, as women, especially women of the dalit and tribal communities, are the main victims of social and ecological exploitation. For example, the radical interpretation

of God's transcendence from an 'embodiment' model establishes an eco-just framework (in an 'embodiment' model, 'bodies' do count and can relate to the justice concerns of women and other oppressed sections). However, an integral Indian ecotheology must effect some serious changes in eco-feminist theology. For example, the nexus between women and nature, much focused in eco-feminist theology, is treated at two levels, conceptually (women and nature as feminine categories) and ideologically (women and nature as the oppressed). But in India today, where women bear the brunt of social and ecological problems, the bond between women and nature must be taken to a praxiological level too. Moreover, as ecological problems in India are also caused by caste oppression, especially through the sexual division of labour, caste must be taken very seriously alongside a critique of Capitalism and patriarchy.

Process theological concepts are useful in integrating the concerns of liberation theologies and ecotheology. Their main strength is that they combine the themes of social justice and the integrity of creation in an integrated manner, avoiding the elitism apparent in some schools of eco-concerns such as 'deep ecology' and Creation Spirituality Movement. Its praxis notion establishes the importance of plurality of perspectives and avoids all kinds of determinism. The concept of panentheism (God in everything) provides an ecological framework.

Panentheism must form an important part of the doctrine of God in an integral ecotheology for India. Besides radicalizing God's transcendence in immanent terms, it is also in harmony with the Indian religious ethos where panentheism forms an important thrust in Hinduism. (It must be noted here that a Christian theology on its own, Christianity being a minority religion in India, will not go far enough in influencing the Indian context on ecological issues. The theological, moral, and spiritual insights on ecology in various religions, particularly those in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, need to be integrated so that it may foster an inter-faith dialogue, specifically from the

perspective of eco-justice in India. This area of an inter-religious theology of ecology was beyond the scope of this research, although some ecotheological insights from Hinduism are integrated in this study. This area, being an important one in the multi-religious context of India, needs to be taken up separately for further research). Liberation theologies can overcome their anthropocentrism by adopting panentheism as a central theological notion. Indigenous images of God such as 'God is Rice' are relevant for an 'eco-just' theology, as its ethical implications are of vital importance to the present Indian context where the cultivation of staple food like rice is being replaced by cash crops which not only destroy the fertility of the indigenous soil, but also further impoverish the poor.

'Eco-justice' and 'remythologization' are important principles in formulating an ecological doctrine of creation in India. The similarities found in the 'mythical' accounts of the Genesis creation story and some of the tribal/dalit creation myths should enhance the development of an ecological doctrine of creation. The 'production' model in the Genesis account must be complemented with a 'procreation' model (God bodies forth creation), as Sallie McFague suggested. The Genesis creation accounts have undergone extensive reinterpretation in recent years. The divine commandment to humanity to 'subdue' and have 'dominion' over creation has been reinterpreted in terms of a 'stewardship' model. However, the capitalist and instrumental ways in which this notion has been propagated make it irrelevant for an integral ecotheology. Not only does it neglect the dimension of nature's intrinsic worth, but it is also devoid of a social justice orientation (eco-justice violated). A 'kenotic anthropocentrism', after the model of Jesus' self-emptying of his dominion for the sake of the world, can encourage humanity to renounce its dominion over creation and thus be responsible towards it. Again, 'kenosis' in this context must be complemented by a 'necrosis' (an identification with the suffering humanity), as ecological justice and social justice

in an integral ecotheology are inextricably intertwined.

A doctrine of sin assumes cosmic dimensions in an integral ecotheology. Sin, then, is experienced not just in the destruction of inter-human relationships (denial of social justice and human rights), but also in the disruption of the harmony between humanity and non-human creation (eco-justice). Poverty, exploitation based on caste and gender, ruthless exploitation of nature in the form of deforestation and desertification of land which also result in dalits and tribals being evicted from their homeland are manifestations of sin, as sin is viewed as human refusal to be part of an ecological whole and our unwillingness to share 'space' with our neighbours.

The Christology of an integral ecotheology must combine the historical Christ who identified with the oppressed (Jesus the 'avatara') with the cosmic Christ who is revealed in nature (Jesus the 'antaryamin'). Jesus Christ the Cosmic Liberator will, thus, be the pivotal focus of such a Christology. The Christ who was born in a manger, having been denied access to inns, (thus undergoing the 'dalit experience'), identifying with nature and the 'dalits' of his time, and the Christ who harmonised the divine, the human, and the natural in his incarnation must be at the centre of this Christology.

The purview of salvation in an integral ecotheology is extended to non-human creation as well. Liberation of the oppressed from all dehumanising forces and deliverance of nature from its destruction are part of the salvific experience of attaining the final unity in Jesus Christ. From this point of view, salvation is not seen as a departure into a void of disembodied beings, but as an entrance into a real world, a new heaven and a new earth. 'Life before death' (focus on social justice) and 'life after death' will have radical implications, as an integral ecotheology views death as a 'return to earth'. This is the radical eschatological vision of an integral ecotheology. The eschatological visions of Isaiah (Is.11) and Revelation (Rev.21)

envision a peaceable kingdom. As these visions challenge, humanity is urged to engage actively in the approximation of this kingdom by participating in the struggles of the oppressed, the poor, the tribals, dalits, the womenfolk of these communities, for the preservation of their earth (land and forests), the 'waters of life', the 'trees of life', the 'wolves' and the 'lions' with whom these communities live in harmony. This is the praxiological significance of an integral ecotheology. In short, an integral ecotheology will, thus, be the voice of the 'torn asunder' people (dalits, the tribals, the poor and women) and of the groaning creation. In India today, this voice must be heard.

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