

# Institute of Indian Culture

## News and Views

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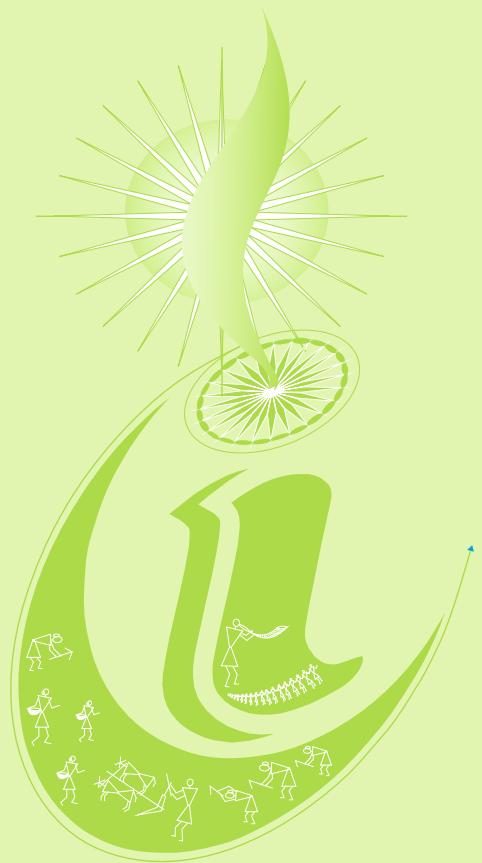
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**INSTITUTE OF INDIAN CULTURE**

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# **INSTITUTE OF INDIAN CULTURE (IIC)**

A Post-graduate Research Centre  
for degrees of M.A. (by research) & Ph.D.  
in Anthropology and Sociology  
Recognized by the University of Mumbai

## **Vision of the Institute**

IIC Works with a Vision of  
providing reliable and  
researched data on  
Indian Culture, Religion and Society,  
towards the goal of building a just and humane society

## **EDITORIAL**

### **UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR PLURALISTIC HERITAGE AND IDENTITY**

The challenges facing Indian society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century depresses many of us in different ways. With Covid-19 infecting more than 50 million people worldwide and killing in excess of 1.25 million, India stands second with its 8.55 million affected cases and 127,000 deaths as on 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020; and the trend is increasing day by day. India is also confronted with the biggest economic calamity, in its recession, loss of jobs, increasing unemployment; child trafficking, child-marriage and poverty. The escalating India-China tension along the Line of Actual Control leading to a cold war, and the increasing skirmishes between India, Pakistan and Nepal add further complication for peace and harmony with our neighbours. The increasing ecological disasters in terms of changing of rain pattern, destruction of our green cover which affect all of us are another important concern.

The image of India in the world scenario is getting tarnished and giving way to a sense of shame with the increasing of atrocities on women, Dalits, Tribals, Muslims and Christians. Minorities have paid with their lives for perceived “offences”, such as carrying non-vegetarian food on a train, transporting their own cattle, wearing a skull-cap, and conducting a Christian prayer service. Several times, they were forced to chant “Jai Shri Ram”.

The power game played in the name of “culture” is dividing the Indian society. This is obvious from the growing split and division among the divided parliamentarians and the

apprehensions of the working of the Indian democracy. News such as *“Delhi Police's investigation against students and activists in connection with the Delhi riots is pushing the Indian state into a long dark night of tyranny”* (Indian Express, September 25); *“Over 200 eminent citizens from India and abroad ... have written to the Indian government, demanding immediately release of former JNU scholar ... Umar Khalid”* (Times of India, 25<sup>th</sup> September); *“Grassroots organizations led by Voluntary Action Network India (VANI), an apex body of around 10,000 NGOs on Thursday issued a press statement appealing to President Ram Nath Kovind not to give his assent to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill 2020, which was passed by Parliament this week”* (Times of India, 25<sup>th</sup> September); *“NIA Arrests 83-Year-Old Tribal Rights Activist Stan Swamy in Elgar Parishad Case”* (Wire, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020) are just at the dip of the iceberg of the simmering answer of a large population of Indian society.

Could the increasing majoritarianism solve our problems? That is what many believe. It is myopic and shortsighted. If India has to march ahead to face the immense challenges, it has to do it unitedly. It is because the sinew of Indian society is made up of many different races, linguistic and ethnic groups, cultures and religions. Just a glance at the Indian history will tell the story. Anthropological knowledge of the people of India shows that all known racial groups have migrated to India at different times with their own language, religion and culture. The population of India is thus very heterogeneous and this diversity penetrates the whole sub-continent, every state and district, every town and village.

Denying this reality, an increasing number of politically

motivated pseudo researchers from different streams trying to build a monolithic cultural India leading to discord and enmity among the people of India. They appeal more to emotion than reason in the prevailing post-truth environment. Our strength comes in our unity in diversity.

The conflicts and violence in the name of religion, language, ethnicity and culture, inflict pain on the people of this civilization who are God fearing, hospitable and pluralistic by their nature. To meet these challenges, we, the people of India must unite together as citizens with love and concern for each other. We need to strengthen our democracy and the vision of the Founding Fathers of our Constitution in letter and spirit. Our scientific research on Indian history and culture should follow the well-established scientific tenor to provide authentic data rather than influenced by post-truth considerations (*The Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year in 2016 was 'post-truth', an adjective defined in which objective facts are less influential as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'*).

A true researcher must be open to truth wherever it leads.

**S. M. Michael**

## **The Institute of Indian Culture and its research agenda**

**Bernd Pflug**

There comes a time when institutions want to reflect on their purpose and practice. For the Institute of Indian Culture, twenty-five years after Stephen Fuchs, this seems to be an apt time to do so. The conceptions of sociology and anthropology have changed considerably since the time of Fuchs when ethnographic studies of Indian small-scale communities and culture-historical studies in line with “Vienna ethnology” were conducted by Institute members.

The challenges of modern Indian societies are so vast that any agenda of their social and cultural investigation has to be carefully tailored according to aims and available resources.

The need for a revised research agenda for the IIC is obvious because the Institute has not found, after the departure of its founder and long-term director, a major new voice which has broken decisively with the past - not to sweep it aside but to use it as a platform for developing new ideas of research and practice. To cast the past aside, would be counter-productive; it would eliminate the richness of historical memory and the wealth of empirical data collected in many studies, not only by Fuchs but also by other members of the Institute. Perhaps an analytical look at the oeuvre of Fuchs will be a helpful beginning in laying the foundation for a revised agenda of research.

Studying Fuchs's work will have to be done in the light of today's position of the IIC in our world of crisis, conflict and violence, but also of great communitarian and humanitarian actions. That's why I open my observations on Fuchs's oeuvre with the premise that a sociology of humanity could be the framework of the research work of the IIC. This would entail, first and foremost, the

willingness to do critical research in the “composite culture” of India and her extraordinary 'syncretistic civilisational legacy of India.' To study, and with this to defend implicitly, this legacy, would be worth to be the centre of a research agenda. It would be the search for humanity in plurality. Consequently, this would then give the practice of dialogue with other religious and cultural traditions of India a strong and stable research foundation.

In the following, I will give first the meaning of multi-communitarianism, a concept elucidated some time ago by, amongst others, A. R. Momin, and in which I would like to anchor a sociology of humanity. Then I will look at some of Fuchs's works with this sociology in mind, assuming that Fuchs did in fact document enough evidence for “humanity in plurality” in and through his own oeuvre. I will finally try to connect his legacy to a possible research agenda for the IIC of today.

### **Humanity and multi-communitarianism**

Momin is of the opinion that communitarianism needs to be reconceptualised because of the changing contexts of globalisation and cultural diversity. Both the parameters are relevant for the India of today. Global contacts have become part of the private and professional life of many Indians, whether through travel, studying and working abroad, buying international brands of goods and commodities, global investment, or having access to more and more news from outside India. New technologies have pushed the agenda of global capitalism into the realms of even remote areas of the country. Different structures of manipulation and exploitation have been super-imposed on the existing ones of caste and class.

Underneath this layer of living with, looking for, and craving after “the global,” there is in place a multitude of different cultures in Indian societies with the structure of a highly hierarchical and patriarchal “Indian society” on top. Very often this structure is being softened by anthropologists who argue that a “composite

culture” binds all societies in India together, that cultural diversity is one of the hallmarks of Indian society. S.C. Dube explained this with a complex framework of traditions based on 'historical antecedents and regional variations, on ritual and secular trends, on divergent and convergent forces, and on multiple reference models,' and saw it reflected in six traditions: the Classical, the Regional, the Local, the Western, the National, and the Sub-cultural of special groups (like the bureaucracy or landed aristocracy).

According to Momin, communitarianism has not been able to resolve 'the dilemma of the interface between the individual and the social order, between freedom and social responsibility. As an alternative, he suggests, multi-communitarianism which rests on the following premises: (1) That exaggerated individualism leans on a 'fallacious view of the relationship between the individual and society;' (2) That the recovery of community should take place not in the traditional but in the present context; (3) That a community is not necessarily located in a given territory but may be found dispersed across different territories, from villages to even continents; and that (4) cultures should not be considered fixed and insular but 'open-ended, processual, fluid, and subject to constant reinterpretation and reconstruction. In sum, multi-communitarianism would be based on the presumptions of 'equality, justice, and shared humanity,' and would stand up for minority rights, and be committed to the public good and social responsibility; it would further seek 'to strike a balance between cultural diversity and social integration.' Importantly, multi-communitarianism would lead to living together as equals. This living together in different sub-national and sub-cultural settings would be the space where humanity is shared – or not. Humanity is a concept which evidently has empirical references to humanitarianism, altruism, and charity – references which are related to the social world; however, this social world is continually formed and reciprocated, and transformed by consciousness, in India very often by religiously determined



consciousness which is the formative structure of subjective consciousness.

### **Fuchs's oeuvre**

Fuchs's oeuvre is rich in quantity and quality, yet it is also uneven in depth and suffers from a dichotomy of “the academic” and “the missionary.” In order not to be caught in this dichotomy, I henceforth ignore the latter. This is possible because the ‘ugly missionary,’ about whom Fuchs wrote a clarifying article in the 1960s, has never fortunately played a substantial role in the academic work of the IIC. Fuchs's ethnographic studies do not offer us much of analytical socio-political insight; instead they impress through comprehensive data collection, of which quite a few, however, are too descriptive without even a touch of theoretical-critical thought. His several books on “origin” are textbooks and dated. His dissertation on the Vedic horse sacrifice is an Indological study of some erudition but remains safely in the culture-historical domain. However, there are two works in Fuchs's oeuvre which shed a clear light on how he approached the issues of humanity and inhumanity; these are *Rebellious Prophets* and *At the Bottom of Indian Society*. In these works, I would like to identify in the following, humanity in plurality, i.e. a humanity fostering ‘common bonds and linkages among people belonging to different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.’

### **Fuchs on humanity**

These two survey-studies send two clear messages to the reader. First, the conglomerate of Indian societies is very much hierarchical with a large “bottom” of marginalised, “untouchable” people. Second, probably through much of the history of India, but more so in the past 200 years or so, “rebellious” movements mostly against this hierarchy can be recorded. To combine the two, we can speak of a tradition of a (mildly) “rebellious bottom,” which makes us question the image of India as a non-violent and tolerant civilisation. The creation of the “bottom” and its

perpetuation well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century came about through many violent and intolerant practices regardless of whatever explanations and justifications were given for the introduction of the caste system and the emergence of “untouchability” as means of social segregation. This violence becomes even more pronounced through the marginalisation of the large tribal population of India; Fuchs never considered them as “backward,” but as close to nature, with a self-sufficient and sparing use of natural resources and a strong sense of community and mutual sharing. Though Fuchs appreciated the various Government welfare schemes for those at the bottom or in the margins of society, he was also sceptical about their efficiency and honest intentions.

Where do we find in these two surveys of Fuchs elements of humanity in plurality? My answer is simple. We find them in his approach to research. Fuchs was never satisfied with empirical micro-studies of one small-scale society alone; consequently, he attempted in large-scale survey-studies to show where these small-scale societies and communities had to be placed, historically and socially. The selected two studies are excellent examples of this approach. They survey large segments of the Indian plurality, low castes, tribes, “untouchables,” messianic rebels; they comment on their positions in Indian society at large, and sympathise with their underlying conditions of being of “low” status, and economically deprived, in the eyes of the “higher” strata of Indian society. Fuchs definitely sided with these “weaker” sections of society both in the two selected studies as well as in many other of his other writings, and argued vigorously for their share in humanity.

In contrast to many modern theory-laden texts with often only tiny fragments of empirical knowledge, Fuchs's brutal empiricism was his major weapon in documenting inhumanity, and with this also showing where humanity was missing. Here some examples of either, both inhumanity and humanity.

### *On admission and belonging*

Sweepers readily admit outsiders of whatever caste into their community for some serious offence, with no chance of reconciliation. Usually some ceremony is performed to seal their admission...A woman is admitted simply by marrying a sweeper.

### *On destroying sources of livelihood*

The professional fishing castes in the interior of India are almost everywhere in economic distress. With the destruction of large parts of the forests, the increase of population, including the number of fishermen, the increasing industrial contamination of rivers and ponds, fishing begins largely to fail to be the exclusive source of livelihood for the many traditional fishing castes. They are more and more forced to look out for other occupations for which they are often mentally and physically unfitted. Thus they simply add their numbers to the already immense host of unskilled labourers with often long periods of unemployment.

### *On being kept low and down*

The Mahars are, as a rule, labourers of all kinds and accept any work offered to them, except that of sweepers and leather-workers. Some have become soldiers and in the time of British rule there was even a Mahar Regiment. But the bulk of them still do field work. In recent times, through the inspiration of Dr. Ambedkar, there was an awakening in the caste and they now aspire to an improvement of their economic and social position. Here and there they have become rebellious against the caste Hindus who often try to suppress and hold them down with brutal force.

### *On overcoming segregation*

The Swami [Narayan, born as Sahajanand Swami in 1780] was a revolutionary too. Though a Brahmin by birth and upbringing, he concentrated his religious and social activities principally on the Kolis, Kathis and Dhers, who were outcasts and despised serfs and menials of the higher Hindu castes. In his time it required considerable courage in a Brahmin to go against the caste prejudices of his contemporaries and face ostracism. It required also rare broad-mindedness and a true

religious spirit to care for these people who by tradition and general opinion were considered outside the Hindu fold and unworthy of sharing the higher ideals of Hinduism.

*On true religious spirit*

With the help of the king [of Assam], Shankara Deva [born in 1449] was able to convert many thousands of the population to Vaishnavism. Practically all the lower-caste people joined this religion of love and devotion in God. Under kings Suhungmung and Suklemung the disciples of Shankara Deva were able to return to the Ahom country and to make many converts. They also founded many monasteries (sattras). Many common people, and even some of the highest officials, openly joined the ranks of the Vaishnavites or Mahapurushias, as they were also called.

*On oppressive religious spirit*

Around 1929 a certain Bhausingh Rajnigi of Balaghat District [in today's Madhya Pradesh] started...a reform of his caste fellows, the Gonds. His main intention was to convert them to Hinduism. (...) He maintained that the Gonds had at one time in the hoary past been Kshatriyas by birth and great warrior. (...) They could retain their pristine greatness only by a radical reform of their present ways of life. Bhausingh preached accordingly the orthodox Hindu rules of a ritually pure life. He tabooed the eating of beef, forbade the sacrifice of pigs and fowls, and the drinking of liquor. Moreover the Gonds should follow in all things the customs of the high-caste Hindus and not eat, drink or smoke with members of any other caste, not even with Brahmins; for no Gond could risk eating from the hands of a Hindu who pretended to be a brahmin without being it actually. Gond widows should be barred from re-marrying, and Gond girls should be married off before reaching maturity.

Fuchs in his descriptions and judgements is always straightforward. There is hardly any “ought,” or “might,” or “should” as in so many contemporary studies where authors are sometimes seeming to be too cautious taking a definitive stand. In Fuchs it is as it is, or as Fuchs sees it. At many places one wants to

question him or, at least, expect a further explanation. There is not much of a chance because Fuchs marches on, relentlessly from fact and event to fact and event, from observation to observation. He has no time to pause because he is already called to next item. Whether we like this style or not, is not the point here. The point is that Fuchs through his style does not only cover a lot of ground but, more importantly, gives message after message without saying that this is a message. But the underlying intention is clear: This is the life of the people, and it is either human or inhuman.

Whether Fuchs recognised his life-work in ethnographic research in the same way as I do, viz. as a strong message on humanity or inhumanity, may be doubted. His language doesn't help in seeing him do so. It doesn't change in tone and timbre; whatever he records and reports sounds mechanical – but also “neutral.” Fuchs was also driven by the task of recording cultures of small-scale societies who were under threat of vanishing, which may explain his pace of work. Be that as it may, in the end it is important how the readers of his works react to their underlying message. The reception of any text, even a dry academic one, is out of the hands of the author once it is published. And whatever criticism one may heap on Fuchs's ethnographic methodology, one must not doubt his sincerity in seeing and reporting humanity shared or inhumanity unshared.

Fuchs never used the term “shared humanity” – but his two studies are a clarion call for precisely this. Let low castes, tribes, untouchables, and rebels be recognised as part of one humanity in India's plurality. This means, to let them be part of multi-communitarian ways of life, to let them be equal. To let them not be separated by religious tradition, not as an act of benevolence and condescension of the better off, not as the result of almsgiving and charity, but as a result of recognition and acceptance of the equal worth of any human being. Fuchs never liked using great, over-arching concepts; the empiricist he was, he preferred down-to-earth language and believed that enough facts would

speak for themselves. He never really considered that facts would not make sense at all to die-hard segregationists in Indian society. He thought the power of sociological and anthropological informational knowledge would be enough to convince everyone of the predicament of many segments of Indian society.

Fuchs's strength of empirical display comes to fruition in these two studies (similarly but less “wide” it does so on micro-level in his three large ethnographic studies), yet his hope that his results would have a direct impact on social thought in India was clearly mistaken; for this to happen Fuchs was not fashionable enough. In his “empirical modesty” he was no match for other high-flying Indian sociologists and anthropologists of his generation who used elegantly or rather crudely grand theories promoting themselves and fostering their personal causes, very often attaching themselves to powerful foreign lobbies or “schools” in anthropology or sociology. Fuchs's alignment with the “Vienna School” was of a different nature because he was convinced that their conception of ethnology was best suited for the benefit of the work of the svd-congregation; and their work was not tailored to make individual “stars” of their members.

Fuchs's two studies received much criticism, much of which I share. One major criticism by quite a few reviewers is directed at Fuchs's 'over-simplification' in classifying groups. Another is, expectedly, the deficit in dealing critically and theoretically with his findings. For example, a reviewer of *Rebellious Prophets*, after admiring Fuchs's meticulous and clear descriptions of 'often fascinating accounts,' says though Fuchs was aware of much of the work on politico-religious movements, he preferred 'a single, limited, and eclectic conceptualization, emphasizing a messianic component,' and did not offer any analyses of single movements. She continues that the book is 'more in style of the historian and encyclopedist, rather than of the modern social scientist.' Surajit Sinha from the Anthropological Survey of India echoes some of these criticisms, but he also admits that Fuchs 'presents the full

range of the empirical spectrum of the [rebellious] phenomenon,' and concludes that Fuchs's work is an 'important contribution to Indian sociology.' He also cautions (against other reviewers) and asserts that it was wise of Fuchs not to impose 'premature systematization on the wide range of suggestive anecdotal cases.'

Fuchs's significance for possible research work at today's IIC, is stronger than I would have expected it to be some time ago. The reading and re-reading of his works, has this effect. Individually his works are open to much criticism; however, collectively they offer a persistent agenda of solidarity with humanity. They invite this humanity to be explored further against the background of an extra-ordinarily large multitude of cultures and societies in India. How did Fuchs do this? The answer is simple. He did so with a single-minded devotion to ethnographic research, which often over-shadowed his anthropological comparisons and speculations, but which in the end, literally in its "full empirical existence," tells us, this it is – leaving the rest to us.

### **Sociology of humanity**

Leaving the rest to us, means building upon Fuchs, but not eulogising him in simplistic fashion. In the past decade and more, the research work conducted at the IIC has been bereft of major contributions to sociological and anthropological research under the umbrella of a reasoned research programme. What has been done was eclectic research, with some merit in individual cases. Fuchs would have never used the following vocabulary, but what he did was within the parameters of an "ideology" of research. This "ideology" was his "mission," – in the double meaning as "dedication" and "religious mission." It appears that the academic work of the IIC in the recent past has been dissipating in a number of "individual missions," i.e. interests which are only vaguely connected to the potential of a research institute. Research within the spectrum of a sociology of humanity would centre around the search for multi-communitarian cases, structures, and phenomena

in Indian societies; it would mean building up a repertoire of knowledge which could add to the explanation of why Indian societies and cultures are what they are and where their potentialities for change may be located. It is without saying that a social theory of a sociology of humanity would have to be worked out, in accordance, amongst other things, with the problems of personal and social identity in traditional and modern Indian societies, the boundaries of the individual and social world, and, most certainly, with problems of religious traditions and social change.

Momin in his well-constructed paper, narrates at the end some snapshots of multi-communitarianism. One and a half decades later, some of these snapshots appear somewhat dated and could be replaced with many others. However, I would like to quote one of these snapshots for it shows clearly what a shared humanity is about.

In Bharuch (in...Gujarat), Abdul Majid Patel, a pious Muslim, adopted an 8-year old Hindu boy, Jagdish, and brought him up according to Hindu tenets and cultural traditions. While Patel's five children went to the mosque for prayers, Jagdish went to the temple. When Jagdish came of age, he joined his adopted father's business. After a few years, Patel got Jagdish married to a Hindu girl. Both Jagdish and his wife are vegetarian. Now they have a son and a daughter. It is 30 years since Patel and his adopted son have been living together in the same household.

We do not know more about this “case;” we do not know which constraints within and without the family had to be faced and overcome; we do not know any social or psychological variable which we would have to know putting this snapshot into perspective, whether it was a one-off or a model of replication. We do not even know the time in which this story is unfolding. Here sociological research could do wonders – not only in examining



individual cases but widening inquiries to more and more collectives with finding more and more answers why humanity in Indian societies is functioning – or why it is not.

This research will invariably come up against structures in Indian societies which do actively preclude humanity to be shared and instead provoke violence and preach hatred. Reasons into why humanity is withheld maybe found in political-administrative, gender-specific, power-related, tradition-laden, or race and class dominated motivations and practices. The day-to-day structural and practical violence in Indian societies would have to be called out in order to get under the veneer of the image of Indian societies as seemingly non-violent and inclusive by nature. Research in this direction, conducted under the auspices of the IIC, could then join in the many efforts already in place in other institutions debating the conditions of humanity in a fragile but also at times robust multi-communitarian Indian life-world.

After Fuchs, some interesting studies were conducted at the IIC, mainly in cultural ecology and the sociology of religion and culture, but they were not followed up with further work, rigorous and comprehensive in nature, empirical, theoretical or historical. The colossal work of Fuchs still stands out, and no number of edited volumes, published by the Institute on topics fashionable for the day will ever reach Fuchs's empirical comprehensiveness, nor his ability to see larger pictures of Indian societies and communities. Fuchs was interested in finding and publishing knowledge, knowing that it was not the last word but recording it nevertheless for our times. Today we are part of an academic culture which is obsessed with publishing rather flimsy contributions, mainly for the sake of reputation. A proper lineage in the IIC could be established by taking a leaf out of Fuchs's ethics of research, which was never directed by self-interest but by the conviction of contributing to our knowledge of the life-world of men, women, and children in Indian societies.

**Endnotes :**

1. A. R. Momin: Multicommunitarianism in a fragmented world. *Asia Europe Journal*, 2004, 2: 445-459, here: 456.
2. Fuchs had already mentioned 'dialogue' as one of the aims of the Institute which he proposed in his contribution 'Anthropology in the Service of the Indian Missions' (113-122) in Joachim G. Piepke (ed.), *Anthropology and Mission. SVD International Consultation on Anthropology for Mission, Pune / India, Dec. 29, 1986 to Jan. 04, 1987*, Nettetal: Steyler Verlag, 1988, 120. The present Director of the IIC, S. M. Michael, is very much involved in organising and conducting inter-faith dialogue programmes; yet there has hardly been any substantial research carried out on interfaith dialogue by the IIC, neither in its designated academic disciplines of sociology and anthropology, nor in other disciplines like comparative religion or intercultural hermeneutics.
3. Momin, op. cit., 454.
4. As paraphrased in John V. Ferreira: India's Composite Culture. *The Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay*, Vol. xii, No. 3, 1967, 66-72: here: 72.
5. Momin, op. cit., 454.
6. Ibid., 454-455.
7. Ibid. 455.
8. Stephen Fuchs: The Ugly Missionary, *Verbum*, Vol. 19, 1968, Fasciculus 3, 303-306. In our numerous discussions over the years, the late Fr. Augustine Kanjamala svd, a former director of the IIC, was always keen to press the point that Fuchs's oeuvre had to be seen as two completely different ones, the "ethnographic" and the "missionary." In my opinion, Fuchs was able to separate the two admirably. Only with his single-minded focus on ethnographic research was it possible for him to build up the Institute in the way he did. If he had mixed the two sides of his oeuvre or even allowed "the missionary" to take over "the ethnographic," the Institute would not be what it, potentially, is today. This does also mean that the interests of the congregation and some of her representatives within and without the Institute are not supposed to interfere with the IIC's strong focus on anthropological and sociological *research*. This research should be on a level where theory constantly interrogates practice, and vice versa, where practice opens avenues for the development of new theoretical insights.
9. Notably *The Children of Hari. A Study of the Nimar Balahis in the Central Provinces of India*, Wien: Verlag Herold, 1950; *The Gond and Bhumia of Eastern Mandla*, London: Asia Publishing House, 1960; and *The Korkus of the Vindhya Hills*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1988.
10. *Social Origins*, Bombay: Gyanayatan Publications, 1957; *The Origin of Man and his Culture*, London: Asia Publishing House, 1963; and *Origin of Religion of Religion: Introduction into History of Religion*, Alwaye: Pontifical Institute

- of Theology and Philosophy, 1975.
11. *The Vedic Horse Sacrifice: In Its Culture-Historical Relations*, New Delhi: Inter-India Publications, 1996.
  12. *Rebellious Prophets: A Study of Messianic Movements in Indian Religions*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965 (revised and republished as *Godmen on the Warpath: A Study of Messianic Movements in India*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1992); *At the Bottom of Indian Society: The Harijan and other Low Castes*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1981.
  13. Momin, op. cit., 456.
  14. See Fuchs's overview in *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, Delhi: Macmillan, 1974.
  15. Fuchs, *At the Bottom of Indian Society*, op. cit., 230.
  16. Ibid., 103.
  17. Ibid., 258
  18. Fuchs, *Rebellious Prophets*, o. cit., 212-213.
  19. Ibid., 133.
  20. Ibid., 79-80.
  21. For example, Sugimoto Yoshio: [Review of *At the Bottom of Society*]. *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 1983, 314-316: here: 315.
  22. Pauline Kolenda [Review of *Rebellious Prophets*]. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1969, 358-359; here: 359.
  23. Ibid., 359.
  24. Surajit Sinha: Tribal Solidarity and Messianic Movements. *Contributions to Indian Sociology. New Series*, No. II, December 1968, 112-118, here: 115.
  25. Ibid., 118.
  26. To a similar conclusion, with regard to *Rebellious Prophets*, comes Pauline Kolenda in her review, op. cit., 358.
  27. An example of this is the error-strewn volume *Remembering the Rebellious Prophet...Professor Stephen Fuchs SVD Memorial Volume*, edited by K. Jose and Gautam Kumar Bera (New Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, 2013). Especially its Fuchs-related 'Messages' and articles are nothing but perfunctory contributions which do not do critical justice to Fuchs and his work.
  28. Momin, op. cit., 456.

## **IIC News**

### **I. Ph.D. Degree Obtained from Academic Staff at IIC**

#### **A. Under the guidance of Dr. A. Bopegamage**

1. Elfreeda Momin

*A Sociological Study of Adoption* (2003).

#### **B. Under the guidance of Dr. Myrtle Barse**

1. Maria Goretti Amaladass

*The Empowerment of Women Through Education: A Comparative Study of High School Educated women and women Dropouts at Kancheepuram in Tamil Nadu* (2007)

2. M/s. John Joyce Georgina Thomas

*Working in Information communication Technology: A Sociological Study of Call Centres in Mumbai* (2008).

#### **C. Under the guidance of Dr. Augustine Kanjamala**

1. Anandi Dantas

*Social and epidemiological Implications of Migration in the Spread of HIV/AIDS in Mumbai.* (2010)

2. Kuriakose A. K.

*Sociological Study of HIV/AIDS: A Case Study on the role of Teachers in Prevention* (2010)

3. Dattaram Dhondu Naik

***Reproductive and Sexual Health of Street Adolescents: A Sociological Study of Street Adolescents in Mumbai (2016)***

**D. Under the guidance of Dr. S. M. Michael**

1. Ms. Leela A. D'Souza

***The Return of Religion – A Reversal of the Secularization Process: A Case Study of the Charismatic Movement in Mumbai. (June 1999).***

2. Ms. Perpetua Miranda

***The Contribution of Dr Stephen Fuchs to Anthropology. (2002)***

3. Fr. Frazer, Mascarenhas

***Persistence of Tribal Identity in the Context of Change in Indian Society: A Case Study of the Pavra Tribe (2003)***

4. Ms. Nandita Saldanha

***Cultural Adjustment of Female Tribal Workers in Mumbai (2005)***

5. Ms. Sarala Vasant Bijapurkar

***Tradition, Change and Identity. (A Case Study of the Basel Mission Mangalorean Christian Community in Mumbai. (2006)***

6. Ms. Leena Walter Pinto

***Psycho-Socio-Cultural Impact of Childrearing Practices among Christian Adolescent in Mumbai (2006)***

7. Fr. Tomy Joseph  
***The Musahars: Cultural Life of a Dalit Community in Bihar (2007)***
8. Fr. Rui Domingos Pereira  
***Kashi Religion (2008)***
9. Sr. Menona Preciosa Vallery Soddar (RSCJ)  
***Culture as Celebration of an Experience: An Anthropological Study of the Religious Practices of the Christians in Mumbai. (2009)***
10. Ms. M.K. Shanta  
***Housemaids & their Struggle in Mumbai. (A Case Study from Pestom Sagar Slums) (2010)***
11. Fr. Joseph M. K.  
***Ganjhus in Jharkhand. A Sociological Study of a Dalit Community. (2010)***
12. Ms. Sonali Mandar Hajare  
***A Sociological Study of the Rag Pickers in Mumbai. (2013) SNDT University.***
13. Nandini Agrawal  
***A Sociological Study of the Impact of Globalization on the Agrawal Community in Mumbai (2014) (Shri Jagdish Prasad Jhabarmal Tibrewala University.)***
14. Ms. Merlin Joseph  
***A Sociological Study on the Impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the Youth of Mumbai. (2016)***

15. Laxmi Periyaswamy Vadivoo  
*An Anthropological Study of Sudalai Madan: A Village Deity in Southern Districts of Tamil Nadu. (2018)*
  16. Ms. Sonakshi Udayaraj Vichare  
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  17. Ms. Countinho Jennifer, Xavier  
*Displacement and Resistance in the Era of Globalization: A Study of Dharavi Bet Anti-Sez Struggle. (2018)*
  18. Ms. Karen A. Miranda  
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  19. Mr. Gautam Sadashiv Nikam  
*Sociology of Conversion: A Comparative Study of Mahar Christians and Mahar Buddhists (2020)*
- E. Under the guidance of Dr. M.T. Joseph**
1. Kalpana Ajit Mudaliar  
*Changing notions of subjectivity, family and work among women in Mumbai: A study of married women who work outside home (2019)*
  2. Rajula Nanji Shah  
*Ethnicity and religion: A sociological study of the Christians in Nagpur (2020)*

## **II. M.A (by Thesis) Degree Obtained from Academic Staff at IIC**

### **F. Under the guidance of Dr. Leela D'Souza**

1. Sunita F. De Sa

*The Concept of Modernity in Indian Anthropology (2000)*

2. S. Selaiyathu (Salate Nathan SVD)

*Caste, Power and People: Caste and Politics in Tamil Nadu (2003)*

3. Alexius Dung Dung

*Tribes in Transition: a Study of Changing Kharia Culture (2005)*



## Research Article

# IMPROVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

**Vasundhara Mohan Rallapalli**

*“To truly innovate, we cannot leave behind half of our population,”  
(Reshma Saujani, New York Lawyer, Politician and  
Founder/CEO, Girls Who Code)*

Over the years, technology has revolutionized the world by creating amazing tools and resources and putting useful information at our fingertips. Modern technology has made it possible for the invention of many functional and utility devices like the television, mobile phones, smartphones and many more, making lives easier, faster, and better. Modern technology has created an impressive influence on the way people communicate. One no longer needs a dictionary to know the meaning, origin and alternatives of words. Digital technology has also changed the term 'media'. A media company is not a mere source of news anymore, but one that helps pass information across the globe. Technology has become so pervasive that in January 2018 globally there were nearly 3.7 billion internet users. There has also been a phenomenal increase in the number of people in India using mobile phones. A simple mobile phone is no longer preferred as compared to a smart phone!

Modern technology has simplified withdrawal/deposit of money in a bank or transferring money by one person to the other or paying utility bills. Shopping is made cash-less due to credit cards, debit cards and banking apps. Technology has opened up opportunities for better employment and increased earnings the world over.

### **Women and technology**

Modern technology has the power to transform the lives of even women both as users and employees in the industry. Mobile

phones, for example, can empower women by making them feel safer and more connected, and provide access to information, services and life-enhancing opportunities like health care, financial services and employment opportunities. But, restricted access to resources, information and opportunities has not only limited a woman's chances for economic equality, but also has deprived the marketplace of much-needed talent, pathways for innovation, and financial returns. In spite of the growing technology, women still lag behind in the technology field. Limited access to finance, low connectivity, and cultural limitations are some of the barriers that prevent women and girls around the world from taking their rightful place in the economy. The global average of a woman's annual earnings stands at 11,000 USD as compared to 20,000 USD for a man. (1)

The gender pay gap is particularly pronounced for women of color, women of lower economic status, and women in non-OECD countries. (2) It is estimated that closing the gender gap in economic participation would add an additional 10 to 17 trillion USD to the global economy. Fortune 500 companies with more women among their boards of directors significantly outperform those without women. As for women-led startups, they yield a 35% higher return than those led by men—despite receiving only 10 percent of global investor money. (3)

As the global economy continues to digitize and transform, these inequalities persist and even threaten to deepen. Women disproportionately hold jobs susceptible to automation, while fields with employment growth are characterized by low female representation. For example, it is estimated that while STEM-related (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) industries will add over 1.7 million jobs in the coming years in the US alone, while less than 12% of the country's engineering students are girls. (4)

Women also face greater challenges in being connected and getting online. Women in South Asia, Latin America and Africa have lower mobile phone ownership. Apart from the cost, barriers

to mobile ownership by these women are related to the local context, low literacy and lack of perceived relevance.

### **Women in the technology field in developed countries**

Reports show that the neglect of women's recruitment in the tech industry is more pronounced in the developed countries than in developing countries. Reports show that in the US companies the representation of women in technology is dismally low at 23% compared to India, where women constitute 34 % of the IT workforce. In a number of tech companies, the general makeup of the staff across all roles shows an overwhelming male majority as is evident from the following Table.

Company	Percentage of male employees	Percentage of female employees
Amazon.com	63	37
Apple	70	30
Dell (US)	70	30
Ebay	58	42
Facebook	69	31
Flickr	63	37
Google	70	30
Instagram	69	31
Intel (US)	75	25
Linked in	61	39
Pinterest	60	40
Tumblr	63	37
Twitter	70	30
Yahoo	63	37
You Tube	70	30

(Source: Next Generation. Available at <https://www.nextgeneration.ie/blog/2018/08/why-arent-there-more-women-in-tech>)

Similar is the case with the UK. Although there are less than 1% women at leadership level in the Indian IT-BPM industry, a study conducted by the Open University, Milton Keynes UK in partnership with NASSCOM, India, of the IT professionals and middle management from companies in the UK and India, has found that 35% of people with specialist technology roles in India are women, compared to 17% in the UK.

Clem Herman, Director of eSTEEeM at the Open University attributes the higher percentage of women in the technology industry in India to their passion for a career in technology, and to the industry's outlook, which sees women as a key asset. Also, in India, the technology firms visit campuses to recruit, “whereas in the UK students are more likely to attend job fairs without making a connection with employers, and are often required to have experience or additional training before joining firms which they have no way of getting.” According to the Open University-NASSCOM study cited above, “in India 85% of women said they chose to pursue a Stem career because of a family influence, whereas in the UK parents are not keen on encouraging their children into technology, and both parents and teachers have admitted to gender stereotyping Stem subjects.”

According to a 2017 UNESCO report, “in India, the substantial increase in women undergraduates in engineering may be indicative of a change in the 'masculine' perception of engineering in the country. It is also a product of interest on the part of parents, since their daughters will be assured of employment as the field expands, as well as an advantageous marriage. Other factors include the 'friendly' image of engineering in India and the easy access to engineering education resulting from the increase in the number of women's engineering colleges over the last two decades.”

NASSCOM's Women and IT Scorecard India 2018 suggests that the Indian IT sector is on the path towards recruiting and retaining

more women in leadership roles. Its forecast states that half the firms will have over 20% women in the C-suite level (high-ranking executives), which is set to increase to nearly 60% at the senior level. This trend was fueled by HR policies on conveyance, flexi-hours, work-from-home, parental leave, anti-harassment policies and healthcare, which have had a substantial impact. Experts agree that more needs to be done to train and retain female technologists. The “more” includes encouraging young girls to take up STEM subjects, implementing gender-sensitive policies and creating an inclusive culture. Sangeeta Gupta, senior vice president, NASSCOM, explains: “It has become conventional wisdom that firms that prioritize gender parity outperform others. It is our collective responsibility to develop women's careers to executive roles.”

### **What hampers women's rise in the IT field?**

India's high attrition rate in the field of technology is similar to the issues that women face across the world — unconscious bias, stereotyping and the difficulty to find work-life balance. But other deeply ingrained cultural factors make it particularly difficult for Indian women to stay and thrive in the technology field. Indian women have to perfectly balance career, family and social responsibilities. The unique cultural challenges Indian women face, whether in the technology industry or otherwise, include the societal pressure on them that they should function as the sole family caretakers. Women feel it difficult to single handedly manage home and job. This prevents many Indian women from continuing and thriving in technical roles. Though it is true that women are underrepresented in technology all over the world, the hurdles Indian women face are deeply tied to the social structure and expectations that are intrinsic to Indian culture. The pressure to conform to societal norms is hard to ignore in India. Despite support from their husbands, women face pressure from their extended family which holds that an ideal woman should be a doting wife and mother. She must also represent the family outside

the home, especially at the religious and cultural functions. These responsibilities leave little time for women to develop and hone an ambitious career in technology. While women around the world juggle responsibilities at work and at home, Indian women must meet the expectations of an entire society.

Further, when women earn a living through their career, such income is often discounted as non-essential or secondary. Many households have an unspoken rule that women cannot earn more than their husbands, a disparity reinforced by the fact that Indian women make nearly 29% less than their male counterparts in tech. When seen through the lens of these deep cultural challenges, the landscape for Indian women technologists can seem tough. But there are plenty of hopeful opportunities for women as well.

A 2017 NASSCOM study called "Women and IT - Scorecard," revealed that technology companies face the significant problem of retaining women after maternity leave. The study found after surveying 55 companies that between men and women starting their careers at the same age, women progress slower and men in senior positions are often younger than women at a similar level. Debjani Ghosh who took over as president of the National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom) in April 2018 three decades after its formation said: "Things have to change. We have to check talented, capable women dropping out."

Employed women in India encounter very different conditions than women in most Western countries. There is no system of universal state welfare benefits for periods of unemployment or for old age. Women without the financial support of a man must rely on the wider family structure if they are unemployed or underemployed, and this reliance is exacerbated when they have dependents. At the same time, there are strong cultural prohibitions in some parts of India against women undertaking paid work outside the home, both for the purpose of demonstrating men's status as providers, and to protect women's

sexuality (and thereby men's honour) from other men. (5)

However, technology holds the potential to increase girls' and women's opportunities in employment in India. With the right tools, the internet can provide women with new and innovative pathways to connect and to meaningfully participate in the economy. Mobile phones and networks can improve a woman's safety and her access to financial services. Beyond access, designing products with gender differences in mind carries real impact, whether in the fin-tech industry by offering adapted financial products or in human resources departments by de-biasing hiring, retention, and promotion. Rightly leveraged, technology can play a role in setting girls up for success—whether by taking up studies in a STEM field or aspiring for leadership positions. For women and girls to fully reap the benefits of the 'digital dividend,' we need to find ways to weaken and break down the barriers that hold them back, and we need to find ways to amplify what works.

To support and ensure women and girls full participation and prosper in the workforce and the economy, it is necessary to: (6)

- Improve connectivity and technology access for women, particularly in underserved areas
- Increase women's financial inclusion through access to digital payments, savings, investment, and insurance
- Increase opportunities for dignified income generation in non-traditional sectors and through access to new supply chains and new markets
- Correct for bias and heuristics, whether in the workplace or within communities

According to McKinsey report 2018, women's contribution to India's GDP is 18%, one of the lowest in the world, reflecting the fact that only 25% of India's labor force is female. More than 70%

of the potential GDP opportunity comes from increasing women's participation in the labor force by 10 percentage points. (7) The report further states that “India is somewhat ahead of close neighbors Bangladesh and Pakistan on the path to gender parity, but behind the Asia-Pacific average on gender equality in both work and society. ... India should be further ahead given its stage of economic development. However, the positive news is that it has already progressed faster than any other Asia-Pacific country over the past ten years, largely due to advances in education and a reduction in maternal mortality (although from a lower base than many other countries in the region). India can now build on this achievement.” (8)

McKinsey's 2018 report focuses on two specific opportunities to address women's lack of access to the fundamental enablers of economic opportunity. The first is increasing women's access to digital technologies and financial products; as they are strongly linked to mobile phones and internet, which play a major role in banking, payments, credit, access to markets, and entrepreneurship. Secondly, India has to reduce the time women spend on unpaid work by filling gaps in essential infrastructure, including childcare, and promoting labor-saving technologies at home. Such steps are valuable because women do roughly ten times more household and care work than men. Building such momentum and sharpening focus on how women can achieve greater economic empowerment should be prioritised. (9)

According to McKinsey Report, 2013, in India 57% of high-performing women study STEM fields in college while in the U.S it is only 4 percent. But, according to Geetha Kannan, “once these high-performing Indian women graduate and enter the workforce, nearly 50% of women in technology leave the employment pipeline at the junior to mid-level. This sharp drop off is unique across Asia, where 29% of junior to mid-level women leave.” (10)



Married Indian women have several responsibilities like domestic work, child-care etc. She has to perfectly balance career, family and social responsibilities. The unique cultural challenges that the Indian women face and the societal pressures prevents many Indian women from staying and thriving in the technical field and even non-technical jobs. Though women are under represented in technology all over the world, the hurdles that the Indian women face are deeply tied to the social structure and expectations that are intrinsic to India's culture. For many in India, the ideal woman is, first and foremost, a doting wife and mother. She must also represent the family outside the home, especially at the countless religious and cultural functions. These responsibilities leave little time to women to develop and hone ambitious careers in technology. While women around the world juggle responsibilities at work and at home, Indian women must meet the expectations of an entire society.

Further, when women earn a living through their career, such income is often considered non-essential. Many households have an unspoken rule that women cannot earn more than their husbands, a disparity reinforced by the fact that Indian women make nearly 29 percent less than their male counterparts in technology.

In the above background, one has to first treat women as equal partners of men in this age of technology. In Bulgaria, for instance, women make up 54 per cent of the workforce in the country's technology sector; the second-highest proportion in the EU after Lithuania. (11) Keeping in view their intelligence and enthusiasm to learn new things through education and their ambition to work in fields that call for applying their minds, women should be encouraged to work in the field of technology.

- Girls should be encouraged to take courses of study in technology by offering scholarships, if necessary,

- Seats should be reserved in institutions that offer technological courses
- Employers should set aside a quota for women proficient in technology and ensure that there is no disparity in the salaries between men and women; and
- Every employer should ensure that a certain percentage of women are promoted to higher levels in the hierarchy.
- Employers have to offer benefits that allow for a better work-life balance — flexible working hours, being able to work from home, more days of paid leave and additional healthcare covering families.
- Adolescent girls from low-income families, who are unable to pursue higher education, should be trained in the use of computers so that they could earn a decent living even working from home.

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## **Academic Activities of IIC**

Due to Covid-19 and Lockdown, most of our Academic activities such as lectures, seminars and animation programmes were held online and through Webinar.

## Research Article

### German SVD Scholars' Contribution to the Anthropology of India

S. M. Michael

#### 1. Introduction

The Society of the Divine Word, its nomenclature in Latin, SOCIETATIS VERBI DIVINI, i.e. (SVD) is a religious congregation founded by a German priest Arnold Janssen in 1875 in the Catholic Church. From its very inception, the members of the Society of the Divine Word were interested in the study of cultures of humanity. The prime mover behind this interest was a young talented German seminary professor, Father Wilhem Schmidt SVD, a linguist turned ethnologist.

With data provided by missionaries, especially by his former students of ethnology and linguistics, Schmidt began to publish articles on the languages of New Guinea, Oceania, and Southeast Asia. He discovered the relationship between the languages of Oceania and Southeast Asia; this won for him wide recognition, including an award from the prestigious French Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres and membership in the Austrian Academy of Sciences, two distinctions that began a long series of honours (see Lessa and Vogt 1965:637; Luzbetak, 1988:61; Brandewie, 1990:47). He also established the Anthrpos Institute in Germany. The Anthrpos journal which he established in 1906 is still being published from Sankt Augustin, near Bonn.

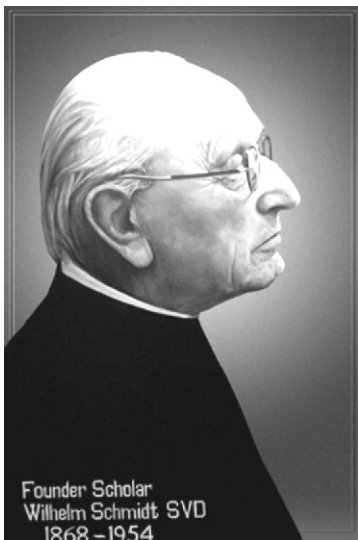
Raymond Firth, the outstanding British anthropologist, rightly expressed anthropology's indebtedness to Schmidt when he said that it was difficult to measure Schmidt's impact on anthropology "because of its pervasiveness." In Robert H. Lowie's classic **History of Ethnology**, we find the following evaluation of

Schmidt's work. "Ethnology owes much to Schmidt for the establishment of *Anthropos*, a journal second to none in the field. With unsurpassed energy Schmidt enlisted the services of missionaries scattered over the globe and thereby secured priceless descriptive reports (1937:192).

The amount of useful anthropological research and publication of which Schmidt, his colleagues, and collaborators are responsible is too vast for us even to attempt a summary here.

Fr. Schmidt inspired innumerable young scholars both SVD members and others. Among them Frs. Stephen Fuchs SVD, Mathias Hermann SVD, Kloster Mayer SVD, Stanislaus Wald SVD, George Praksch SVD and Jungblot SVD and several other Germans came to India to work. They have contributed their scholarly work in linguistics, Indian music and dance, Indian Philosophy and Indian Anthropology. Here, I give a brief account of the contribution of German SVDs who came to India and contributed their share in the growth and development of anthropology in India.

## **2. Wilhelm Schmidt SVD and His Heritage**



Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt is the Founder of SVD anthropological tradition. As such anthropology is a modern discipline. The rise of anthropology is linked with the philosophical speculations of the Enlightenment about the origins of human society and the sources of myth. It was the Renaissance, which inaugurated modern science and humanism in Europe. Many European travelers, by land and sea, became acquainted with people with customs and traditions

in Asia, Africa and America. By the eighteenth century a vast amount of material about non-European peoples, their customs and traditions had been collected. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scientific societies along with museums and scientific publications have been founded in Europe and America and a systematic study of anthropology has been made possible. Right from the early twentieth century have professional anthropologists been working at universities, like Oxford, Cambridge and Harvard where also museums have been founded to support teaching and research.

Thus, anthropology as a new disciple was just evolving with its newly discovered theories of cultural evolution when Fr. Schmidt was growing as a young boy. One of the first theoretical perspectives to develop in anthropology was the 'Cultural Evolutionary' orientation. The evolutionary school of thought arose when anthropologists borrowed ideas from Charles Darwin's 'Origin of Species' (1859). These anthropologists and scholars applied analogically the same pattern of evolutionary thought that Darwin used for their explanation of culture and society. The evolutionists were led by Edward B. Tylor and Herbert Spencer from Great Britain and Lewis Henry Morgan from the U.S.A.

The evolutionists studied the origin and growth of different social institutions. Morgan, studying the marriage institution was of the view that marriage institution evolved from primitive promiscuity to monogamy. With regard to religion, evolutionists were of the view that if the phenomena of monotheism did exist today, the belief in the existence of many spirits must have existed prior to this belief. Edward Tylor, in his book 'Primitive Culture Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Customs' (1871), explained the evolutionary development of religion from animism, i.e. a belief in spirits to monotheism.

Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt realized that the above position of the evolutionist contradicted the field information of his fellow priests in the most simple cultures of the world. Hence, he began to counteract such an intellectual position by his scholarly pursuit. Thus, he became one of the first and most vociferous critiques of evolutionism. He selectively made use of the intellectuals of his time for his project. For example, Fr. Schmidt took his inspiration from German geographer Fritz Graebner. Graebner attacked the evolutionary school in 1911 and pointed out the weakness of this theory. Inspired by Graebner, Wilhelm Schmidt became the most ardent critique of evolutionism. Due to his criticism, the whole idea of a unilinear evolution was shaken. Schmidt and Graebner critiqued the evolutionists Tylor and Spencer for seeing culture as a single entity. They came up with a different theoretical orientation, which is popularly known as 'diffusionism' in anthropological literature. It set out to combat unilinear evolution.

The school of evolution looks for laws of development, which makes prediction of events possible. Evolutionism thus implies a low view of man and his ability to modify the course of history. In this school the individual does not possess free will. He is totally in the grip of natural laws. Schmidt believed that if one places the subject of ethnology under history then one takes man's freedom into consideration and the social phenomena which exist in society is mainly a product of free construction. So, Schmidt and his SVD companions like Koppers, Gusinde and Schebesta were pioneers in arguing that ethnology does not belong to **Naturwissenschaften**, but to the **Geisteswissenschaften** (Ferreira, 1991; Ferreira, 1984).

It was around the year 1892 that Schmidt developed a strong interest in the origin of the idea of God. This is to counter scientifically the position of E. B. Tylor. Tylor had put forward the theory of evolutionism regarding the origin of religion, in which he advocated an origin of religion from animism. According to Tylor, monotheism is a much later development in the process of

evolution of religion. But Schmidt was of the opinion that even the most primitive people have the idea of a High God. Hence, Schmidt postulated that 'monotheism' could not be explained as the development at a late stage of cultural evolution (Brandewie, 1983:94-95).

Schmidt set out to prove this by studying the most simple people. Through his study he provided evidence to the intellectual community that even the most backward people worshipped 'a primitive High God' or a 'Supreme Being' right from the beginning and only at a late stage did this practice disintegrate into polytheism.

Schmidt put forward a theory of the development of religion, which was exactly opposite to that of Tylor's. By the year 1929 Schmidt had written eleven volumes of his famous 'The Origin of the Idea of God' (**Ursprung der Gottesidee**), that contained data, which time and again called in question Tylor's approach.

### **3. Schmidt's Influence on Young German SVDs**

To develop his ideas of diffusion and the historical method in ethnology, Schmidt chalked out plans for field research with his associates, missionaries and professional ethnologists. He guided the missionaries in the study of local languages and cultures. Schmidt founded the 'Anthropos Journal' in 1906. The number of associates and professional personnel expanded and he felt the need for an organization, so in the year 1931 he founded the 'Anthropos Institute' in Moedling, Vienna now located at St. Augustine a suburb of Bonn (Brandewie, 1983:122; Luzbetak, 1988).

One of the ways to substantiate the theory of diffusion was through tracing the spread of different languages in various parts of the globe. Therefore, he urged his students and researchers to study linguistics. Schmidt himself took great interest in studying different language groups. He published many articles on the



languages of New Guinea, Oceania and Southeast Asia. He was able to do this because of the vast amount of data that his research students and missionaries collected. He discovered the relation between the languages of Oceania and Southeast Asia and his work of comparative linguistics earned for him wide recognition and many awards.

Slowly Schmidt started to drift away from linguistics. His interests changed to greater involvement in research in ethnology and religion. However, Schmidt did have tremendous effect on his own times, directly and indirectly. The direct impact can be observed right from linguistics and ethnology to religion and politics. The indirect impact of Schmidt on anthropology can be felt in the *Anthropos Journal*.

Schmidt's life ambition of demonstrating the early existence of monotheism has not been finally proved ethnologically but neither has it been convincingly refuted by the method of ethnology. His main premise that primitive culture is constant remains largely untested and for all ends and purposes will remain unproven (Luzbetak, 1988; Ferreira, 1984). At the time when Schmidt strode into the ethnological arena, the earliest primitive man was portrayed in very poor light. Schmidt opposed this and replaced it by another picture of primeval man. The picture he conjured up was of primeval man being both a morally good person, and one who was deeply religious. He substantiated this picture of primitive man with vast amounts of ethnographic data and no one was able to refute his arguments in a conclusive way (Luzbetak, 1988).

Schmidt has indeed broken new grounds. He argued that ethnology should be classified as culture-history, which is a branch of history. The core of his life's ambition found expression in combating the theory of evolution, and this he fought tooth and nail right up to the day that he died in 1954. It pre-dominated all his writings. He possessed an acid pen and very dexterously used

irony and sarcasm to attack his ideological opponents. He was in his element when he was engaged in intellectual debates and arguments with his colleagues. Challenge excited him and he was brilliant at tearing the arguments of his opponents apart. He had the knack of using statements within their own works to point out inconsistencies in their argument. He was personally satisfied with his attempt at defeating the evolutionist view. Schmidt, ultimately, rephrased and repeated the point that man was responsible for his own history and this he did in a way that scientists had not ventured to do at that time (Brandewie, 1990: 343).

#### 4. German SVDs in India



From 1932, a number of young German SVDs came to India. Most of them had their initial training from Prof. Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt SVD. They have contributed their share in the academic and cultural life of India. Fr. George Proksch SVD learned Sanskrit and Hindi and mastered Indian music and

dance. He established Gyan Ashram in 1959 at Andheri in Mumbai. Gyan Ashram is a centre for dialogue with religions and cultures. He choreographed the life of Christ in Indian music and dance. Among his innumerable public performances, the



# DAS EVANGELIUM in indischem Gewand



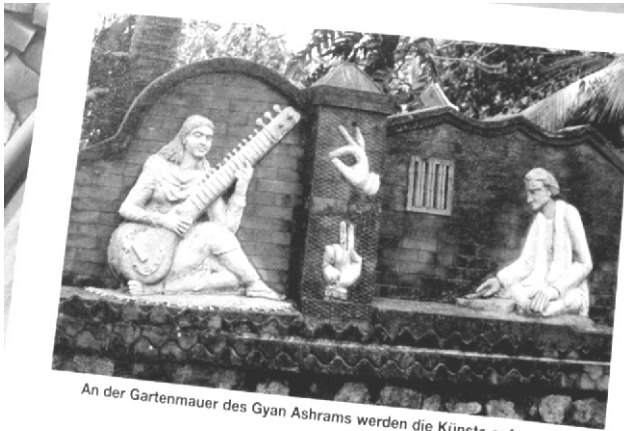
Rebecca Nirman  
tanzt die Schöpfungsgeschichte im Gyan Ashram in Bombay.



Kopf, Augen, Hände,  
Finger – jede Bewe-  
gung und Haltung  
hat Bedeutung.



Kopf, Augen, Hände,  
Finger – jede Bewe-  
gung und Haltung  
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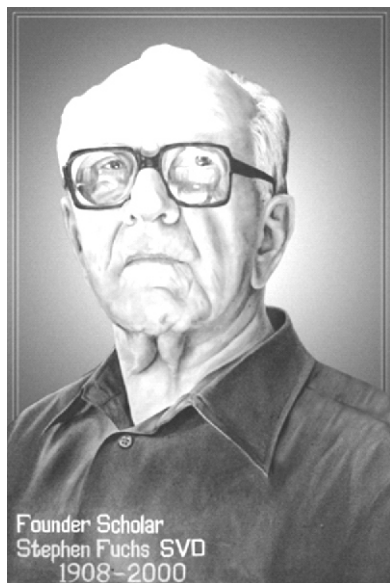


An der Gartenmauer des Gyan Ashrams werden die Künste aufgezählt.

performance at Oval Maidan in Mumbai in 1964 was very special. This performance was with one thousand artists completely in the Indian style. The programme was watched by valued dignitaries like Pope Paul VI, President of India Dr. Radhakrishnan, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Mr. Vasantrao Naik and other important dignitaries. The Ashram continues the work started by Fr. George Praksch by Indian SVDs.

Another young German SVD who came to India in 1932 Fr. Stanislaus Wald SVD mastered the Hindi language and translated the Old Testament of the Bible in Hindi. Similarly Fr. Valentine Zimmerman SVD, Fr. Joachim Mocha SVD, Fr. Clement Beck SVD and Fr. Hermann Westermann SVD and others have contributed their share to Hindi literature.

## **5. Anthropological Contribution by SVD German Scholars in India**



The anthropological tradition of Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt SVD has been perpetuated in India by his German SVD scholar like Frs. Stephen Fuchs, Matthias Hermann, Kolster Mayer, Wilhelm Koppers and Leon Jungblut who came to India from 1934. Frs. Wilhelm Koppers and Leon Jungblut studied the Bhils. Their works, "Bhagawan, the Supreme Deity of the Bhils" and Magic Songs of the Bhils of Jhabua State of Central India" were acclaimed by anthropologists as classics.

Among the above SVD scholars Dr. Fuchs' contribution is something very special. He devoted sixty years of his life to the understanding of the tribals and the dalits in India. He came to

India in 1934. Within short time, he started his anthropological research and did a detailed and exhaustive study of the way of life of the Nimar Balahis. They are an ex untouchable weaving caste. He observed and took notes on their various customs and beliefs and compiled all the source material into a monograph, **“The children of Hari”**. It was published in 1950, It was one of the first ethnographic account of the Harijan caste in India. He also did field work among tribes – the Gonds, and the Baigas who occupied the Mandla district and Madhya Pradesh. His work on **“The Vedic Horse Sacrifice in its Culture-Historical Relations”** is a unique one. By this research he showed the connection between the sacrifices and rituals of the Bhumias and the ASHVA MEDHA horse sacrifice of the Aryans. He also explained in details of other sacrifices which were similar. His other monumental works which are very much referred even today are **“Rebellious Prophets”** and **“Godmen on War Path”**. Fr. Fuchs published several other ethnographic works on the tribal and Dalit communities of India, like the Balahis, Gonds and Bhumias and the Bhils and the Bhilalas of Madhya Pradesh. He did fieldwork among Korkus in the Nimar District and also studied the sweeper caste in Malghat and Maharashtra. Fr. Fuchs has also intensely studied the Chamars of Varanasi and the Ballia districts in Uttar Pradesh. For more than half a century he had kept up his research. His studies on the various tribes of India have been published in books and articles. In all, he wrote 15 books and a few hundred articles and papers (see Bornemann; 1981: 107; Michael 1988: 269).

He also delivered several series of lectures at various academic instructions also attended numerous seminars and anthropological meetings. He taught anthropology at St.Xavier's College, Mumbai. He was also a special Professor of Ancient Indian Culture at the University of Mumbai.

It was the dream of Fr. Fuchs to build a complete research centre in Cultural Anthropology with a well equipped library. He did it at



the Institute of Indian Culture, in Andheri, a northern suburb in Mumbai. Dr. Fuchs has contributed extensively to anthropological literature. In 1998 he was honoured with a medal by the Austrian State for his scientific merits and in 1999 he was awarded an honorary document by the University of Vienna to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his Ph.D. degree. This document is given only to a person who has produced an outstanding work in his/her field of science. In the case of Fuchs it was said “qui de ethnologia Indiae optime meritis est” (...'who gained the highest merits for the ethnology of India).



After a long period of committed scholarly work spanning more than 60 years in India Fr. Fuchs had to go back reluctantly to Vienna for medical care and rest. He passed on the responsibility of continuing his life's work to the present staff of the Institute of Indian Culture. Fr. Fuchs was happy to know before his death in January 17, 2000, that the Institute of Indian Culture has not only endured but has blossomed. The Institute of Indian Culture has been granted recognition by the University of Mumbai as a Post graduate research centre in M.A. (by thesis) and Ph.D. in Anthropology and Sociology.

Among the other German SVD anthropologists the following personalities are of importance. Fr. Wilhelm Koppers, who was Schmidt's right-hand man and an ethnologist of distinction, came to India on account of adverse pressures from the Nazis; and, aided by Fr. Leonard Jungblut, did field-work among the Bhils, the results of which were embodied in a monograph – **Di Bhil in Zentralindien** (Horn-Wien, 1948). Some of this material was also incorporated in his instructive book, **Primitive Man and his World Picture**. Fr. Matthias Hermanns, the co-companion of Fr. Fuchs, applied himself assiduously to anthropological research and wrote and published **The Indo-Tibetans** (Bombay, 1954) and the three volumes of his **Die religioese-magische Weltanschauung der Primitivstaemme Indiens** (Wiesbaden, 1964-73).



## 6. Conclusion

The German SVD scholars who worked in India were a source of inspiration to a large number of SVD Indian scholars and lay intellectuals. Prof. Dr. J.V. Ferreira, one of the previous Heads of the Department of Sociology, University of Mumbai was Fr. Fuchs' very close lay associate.

Fuchs' pioneering work on Dalit and Tribal communities in India is source of inspiration to a large number of scholars who have undertaken research on the marginalized people of India.

The anthropological tradition initiated by German SVD scholars in India, especially by Fr. Stephen Fuchs continues till date through the works of the Institute of Indian Culture, Mumbai and through the young Indian SVD anthropologists in India.

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