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**Healthy Cultures:  
New Challenges for Interreligious Dialogue**

**Abstract**

*Health or disease embraces the whole person: body, psyche, and spirit. This study supports the position that these three human dimensions are deeply interconnected. Since religion is an important aspect of culture, it plays a critical role in endorsing either dialogue or violence toward oneself and the others. In today's era of globalization, and the "economy of inclusion", interreligious dialogue became the topic of great concern. It is only when we meet the people of other religion that we realize their religion is heavily entwined with a particular culture; two things which cannot be easily separated from each other. Following Charles Taylor, the starting point for the examination of interreligious and intercultural dialogue in this paper is: "All human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings." Obstacles towards healthy cultures, as well as towards effective interreligious dialogue – in both cases it is a path of non-violence (Patañjali) – are ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and inordinate clinging to life.*

**Keywords**

religion, culture, globalization, intercultural, interreligious, dialogue, transformation, health

**1. From globalization to an intercultural dialogue**

***Necessity of inclusion and integration***

The United Nations declared the year 2001 as the "Year of Dialogue among Civilizations". The purpose of this designation was to

"... emphasize that globalization not only is an economic, financial and technological process which could offer great benefit, but also constitutes a profoundly human challenge that invites us to embrace the interdependence of humankind and its rich cultural diversity."<sup>1</sup>

The Aristotelian principle of 'either or', which posits that every proposition as well as, in our context, every culture or every religion has to be either true or false, is not suitable. In this presentation the starting point for intercultural and interreligious dialogue is influenced by the thinking of C. Taylor:

"All human cultures that have animated whole societies over a considerable period of time have something important to say to all human beings."<sup>2</sup>

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General Assembly, "55/23. United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations", *UN Documents*. Available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/a55r23.htm> (accessed on December 19, 2015).

2  
Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, The Belknap Press, Cambridge (MA) 2007, p. 6.

The recent global recession confirmed the necessity for a deeper reflection about integration and inclusion of the others in order to move toward a healthy global society. The existing economy based on capitalism and the idea of a free market does not lead in the direction of society's stability and positive development. A healthy economy is established with the inclusion of various parts of society into a new whole, in which each part plays an important role. Within the opposition to the free market economy, which increases the gap between rich and poor, the theory of inclusion is gaining more and more attention. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development describes economic inclusion as

“... the opening up of opportunities to previously underserved social groups as an integral part of development. If people are given a chance to succeed, they are more likely to participate in the workforce, pursue education or engage in other activities that lead to economic growth.”<sup>3</sup>

This paper advocates the position that the Western liberal societies need to integrate the presence of others as well as their cultural heritage. If they don't accomplish this, the non-Western world, among other things, will continue to present a threat, leading to what Samuel Huntington called, 20 years ago, a “clash of civilizations”. This cultural controversy is primarily about inclusion and exclusion from the narratives and symbols of society. Such dissonance can either contribute to polarization and escalation or it can provide opportunities for conflict mitigation and improved relationships.

Thus, striving for greater inclusion, integration, and union is the guiding principle of the new globalized world. Plato's assertions about a just society seem to be true even today. An organism, an institution, a society, a religion or a culture is healthy when each part is harmoniously integrated into the whole. A healthy organism finds the accurate balance between its physical health, emotional health, mental health, financial means, educational achievements, employment, wholesome relationships and spiritual well-being. Plato supported his conviction regarding the harmony in a just society with the theory of three social classes. Chinese philosophy and medicine speak about the balance between positive (*yang*) and negative energy (*yin*). Healthy persons or institutions develop when such balance is attained. Similarly, disease is an expression of imbalance.

### ***Does Western thought allow for a dialogue amongst cultures and civilizations?***

Knowledge of dominant culture is usually a key to whether an individual or a particular group of people hold the dominant position in a society. J. Estermann claims that in such a situation anyone who enters that dominant culture from a non-prevailing one customarily suppresses their symbolic universe of origin, that, given today's “Western cosmivision”, an “Occidental circumcision” ensues. Furthermore, Estermann posits that the “opposite happens very rarely and is quite atypical”.<sup>4</sup>

In this context it is necessary to understand that while remembering one's past, achievements, and tradition we all

“... live in a fragmented world of broken ontologies, a world in which the concept of interconnectedness has been substituted for the old metaphysical foundations. This interconnectedness manifests itself at all levels of culture, knowledge and science: multiculturalism, plural identities, World Wide Web, holistic science. We live in a world of hybrid cultures where all levels of consciousness overlap.”<sup>5</sup>

According to Shayegan we experience two major movements traveling in opposite directions. In the first movement, the world is being transformed toward liberal ideas in the sense that people are all trying to live within the free market economy, which is considered to be the condition of economic success. In the second movement, the emergence of sensibility regarding the diversity of cultures come to us from other ages, other ways of being and living that cannot be combined with triumphant liberalism, its market logic and its rules of profit.

It is undoubtedly observed that losers of globalization are underdeveloped countries. These countries are forced to be involved into a process, which is out of their control.

“What from the Western perspective looks like a spread of techno-economic know-how from the ‘center’ to the rest of the world leading to a global triumph of this ‘model’, for the Third World countries results in an additional challenge complicating their economic and social-cultural situation even more.”<sup>6</sup>

Almost three fourths of the world population are suffering. This suffering, along with ecological crisis, can result in a “collective suicide”<sup>7</sup> of humanity.

### ***Healthy interculturality as an alternative to globalization***

Historically, *culture* has been an elusive concept with a wide range of shifting meanings, interpretations and usages,<sup>8</sup> often defined as a system of shared meanings and meaning-making through semiotic practices. Culture signifies the experience of people as a distinctive way of life characterized in the subjective *we-feelings* of the cultural group members, and to a certain degree by outsiders. Culture is expressed through specific behaviours – customs and rituals – both sacred and profane, which mark the daily, yearly, and life cycle rhythms of its members. We-feelings reveal how people view past, present and future events as well as how they understand the choices they face.

Our viewpoint is that culture should not be considered simply as an artistic heritage or an issue of the inner life of an individual, but as an extremely important public sphere of social creativity and organization, and as the centre of a life-world.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, culture must penetrate the areas in which people

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“Inclusion”, *European Bank for Construction and Development*. Available at: <http://www.ebrd.com/what-we-do/projects-and-sectors/economic-inclusion.html> (accessed on December 15, 2015).

4  
Josef Estermann, “‘Anatopism’ as cultural alienation. Dominant and dominant cultures in the Andean region of Latin America”, in: Raúl Fornet-Betancourt (ed.), *Interaction and Asymmetry between Cultures in the Context of Globalization*, IKO – Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, London 2002, pp. 137–163, p. 160.

5  
Daryush Shayegan, “Is Planetary Civilization Conceivable?”, in: Johanna Seibt, Jesper Garsdal (eds.), *How is Global Dialogue Possible?*, De Gruyter, Berlin 2014, pp. 19–36, p. 36.

6  
Edward Demenchonok, “Intercultural Dialogue and the Controversies of Globalization”, in: R. Fornet-Betancourt (ed.), *Interaction and Asymmetry between Cultures in the Context of Globalization*, pp. 181–204, p. 183.

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Enrique Dussel, *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión*, Trotta 1998, p. 11.

8  
Marc Howard Ross, “How cultural contestation frames escalation and mitigation in ethnic conflict”, in: J. Seibt, J. Garsdal (eds.), *How is Global Dialogue Possible?*, pp. 179–204, p. 187.

9  
E. Demenchonok, “Intercultural Dialogue and the Controversies of Globalization”, p. 200.

are practically forging the socio-economic, political, ecological, ethical, and spiritual future of humanity.

At this point we would like to introduce Raúl Fornet-Betancourt's idea of interculturality as an alternative to globalization. He argues that each culture has the right to the material necessities for its free development. Thus, intercultural dialogue becomes an instrument of the cultures in their struggle to create their own world with its specific values and goals. This fractures the world of homogeneity, and affirms the plurality of cultures with various visions of the world. Subsequently, the process of globalization is confronted with the plurality of many cultural worlds.<sup>10</sup>

Before proceeding further, we want to highlight the intrinsic difference between the terms *globalization* and *interculturality*. Whereas globalization is defined as one world, based on the equalization of differences, interculturality delineates universality as a dialogue of cultures. The plurality of cultures presupposes interrelations and dialogue. Additionally, it requires a reorganization of the world order, which will lead to the guarantee of fair conditions regarding communication between cultures as worldviews. Such an agreement will provide the mandatory basis for a movement, which will organize a union of nations and cultures economically, politically, socially and spiritually.

Understanding culture as a realm of freedom, creativity, and realization of each human being is the basis for the philosophy of interculturality. The goal of philosophy of interculturality is to better serve the world through intercultural transformation. Intercultural philosophical dialogue presupposes the existence of contextual philosophies. Contexts are understood not as islands or isolated geographical locations but rather as historical constellations, which are frontier worlds. Today, the need for adaptation amongst these frontier worlds is more than necessary; in fact, it is imperative. According to Fornet-Betancourt, interculturality demonstrates that history and future are not predetermined. It is his position that culture can assist people in liberating the world and history from the dictatorship of globalization while globalization standardizes the world and offers just one future. Interculturality opens the door to a plurality of alternatives.

Culture validates the importance of tradition; without tradition there is no culture. Every human being enters the world within a particular culture with a particular tradition, and each individual identity is conditioned by his/her culture/tradition. Tradition represents the struggle of people to attain the fundamental consensus that identifies it as such. Therefore, every tradition is imbued with a uniquely historical character. Culture presupposes a common memory as well as shared experiences, for instance: daily life, language, politics, religious tradition, etc. However, cultures cannot be relegated to museums where cultural traditions are imprisoned. By their nature cultures are in constant vibrant development. Interaction among cultures is not an interchange between "culture blocks" separated only by the differences of their fixed traditions. Rather, interaction occurs through individuals, groups, sectors or institutions which are the "life representatives" of a particular culture.

## 2. Toward interreligious dialogue

### *Understanding the terms: religion and dialogue*

When writing about religion and its meaning scholars often begin by stating that it is not possible to provide a clear definition of religion, acceptable to

all. By religion do we mean faith in God? If this is the case, for example, then some branches of Buddhism and Hinduism, which do not acknowledge such a faith, are not religions. Is religion that which only has commonality with the acknowledged five global religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism? Are we really able to define what it is they have in common? Are Confucianism as well as untraditional religions such as New Age, Scientology, etc. also religions? Additionally, we can question Nationalism and Marxism, which usually are not named among religions, but have nevertheless some religious features.

Although there is no perfect definition, American analytic philosopher of religion W. Alston describes *religion* as having the following nine essential elements: belief in supernatural being or beings; distinction between sacred and profane; ritual acts focused around the sacred; morality grounded in the sacred; characteristically religious feelings aroused by the sacred [e.g., in response to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*]; prayer and other forms of communication with sacred reality; a worldview; a relatively total organization of one's life based upon the worldview; and a social group bound together by the above.<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that every religion does not include all of these elements, all religions include most of them. Thus, we can conclude that a religion is a combination of a code of behaviour and ethics, cult, community structure, and transcendence. Unlike Marxism, other political ideologies, and secular nationalism, religions provide answers regarding the origins of existence, life after death, and other realities that transcend humanity.

*Dialogue* is another key word that needs to be defined. In this Age of Global Dialogue, the term is frequently used loosely. It is the intention of this paper to assign the word *dialogue* to a very specific meaning. According to L. Swidler, a real dialogue

“... is not just talking together, but is a whole new way of seeing oneself and the world, and then living accordingly. Dialogue must become a Virtue, a Way of Life, penetrating all of life and being expressed in Deep-Dialogue, Critical-Thinking, Emotional-Intelligence, and Competitive-Cooperation. In short: *Dia-Logos*.”<sup>12</sup>

In our interpretation, dialogue presupposes deep dialogue between either two people or groups of people, communities or cultures, each with different viewpoints or even worldviews, leading to a mutual conversion. The initial goal for each participant in a dialogue is to learn from each other in order to grow. Growth implies change. This is true both for the individual and for the group or community of people, religions, and cultures. Deep dialogue therefore constitutes a profound dialogue, and a life transforming sense. Therefore, deep dialogue means a profound dialogue in a life transforming mode.

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Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, *Interculturalidad y globalización. Ejercicios de la crítica filosófica intercultural en el contexto de la globalización neoliberal*, IKO – Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, San José 2000, p. 85.

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Francis Clooney, Joseph Lumbard, “First Boston College Symposium on Interreligious Dialogue, September 19–21, 2008”, in: *Cathe-*

rine Cornille (ed.), *Criteria of Discernment in Interreligious Dialogue*, Wipf & Stock, Eugene (OR) 2009, p. 479.

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Leonard Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding. Strategies for the Transformation of Culture-Shaping Institutions*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2012, p. 103. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137470690>.

### *Moving from religious conflict to interreligious dialogue*

Religious diversity has existed throughout history. Today, however, we are more keenly aware of the need for dialogue as well as the need to search for solutions to interreligious conflict. The global impact of local and regional disputes, if not caused by different religious beliefs, is then at least justified and supported by religious values. More than ever, this global impact has given rise to the issue of identity, the effects of religions, and their ability to represent either war or peace, separation or alliance.

On the one hand, globalization has brought us closer to each other. It has intertwined our lives both on national and international levels in a complex and complicated manner. On the other hand, a new tribalism, which is a regression toward old ways and toward rebellious loyalty, has resulted in further separating us. Undeniably, religion plays a vital role in such processes. Religion can lead us to peace, and it can just as vigorously lead us into war. A politician has power, but a religion has influence. A politician moves chess pieces, but religion changes lives. Peace may be decided at a conference table, but unless it takes root in daily feelings and thoughts, it will not last; it may never even begin.<sup>13</sup>

The expression *interreligious dialogue* denotes a dialogue among different religions in which no religion has a privileged status regarding the others. Today, interreligious dialogue has many forms. The following four are the ones most practiced. The first one is dialogue of life where religion is more of a way of life than a view of life. The second one is dialogue of common social action. People of different religions join together for a common concern for social needs. The third form is theological exchange where experts come together in an academic atmosphere to discuss specific theological questions. The fourth form of religious dialogue is an exchange of religious experiences among members of different religions.

As the fruit of a lifetime's reflection regarding strategies for transforming culture-shaping institutions, Swidler poses ten basic rules for good and successful interreligious dialogue.<sup>14</sup> The first rule, and the primary purpose of dialogue is learning. To learn means to be open, to change, and to grow in the perception and understanding of reality. However, perception is not sufficient; a learning person as well as a learning community is required to act accordingly. The second rule states that interreligious dialogue is a two-sided process, not only between different religious communities but also within each religious community. In accord with the third rule each participant needs to enter a dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity, and with the assumption that all other partners possess a similar attitude. The next rule stresses that in any interreligious dialogue comparison of our ideals with our partner's practice is not acceptable, instead comparison of our ideals with our partner's ideals, and our practice with our partner's practice is. The fifth rule says that each participant needs to define herself. Nevertheless, since dialogue is a dynamic process, then each participant learns and consequently needs to change, deepen and eventually modify her self-definition. The sixth rule highlights that each participant needs to dialogue without hard-and-fast assumptions, especially when arriving at points of disagreement. The following rule emphasizes that dialogue can occur only between equals who come together to learn. The eighth rule accentuates that a real dialogue takes place only where mutual trust is present. The ninth rule articulates that people entering into interreligious dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves, and their own religious or ideological traditions. The tenth rule states

that eventually each participant attempts to experience the partner's religion from within.

### *Interreligious dialogue and culture*

Religions are shaped by specific cultures, and cultures are marked by specific religions. Cultural changes challenge religions, and offer new opportunities for religions to open themselves to one another. On one hand, changes within a culture tend to destabilize the religions, which participate in that culture, encouraging them to enter into dialogue with each other. Furthermore, changes within religions and among religions create new cultural reality as well as new understanding of the spiritual and religious meaning. Consequently, interreligious dialogue appears to arrive from the dynamic which exists between religions and cultures.

At this point in our paper we would like to introduce the term *acculturation*, a term which was originally developed in a Christian environment, but it can be adequately applied to dialogue with other religions or cultures.<sup>15</sup> Acculturation implies that at the intersection of two cultures, individuals or groups there exist cultural traits and social patterns of another cultures at varying levels. This adaption includes both cultural and psychological changes. In terms of religion, acculturation means that a religion, which has developed within a particular culture, takes on characteristics of another culture. This process includes the integration of symbols, rituals, traditions, new religious language, and new understanding of religion as reflected in a particular time and culture. Complex process, which requires either accepting or rejecting certain characteristics, leads not only to some changes but also leads to a transformation of tradition and culture.

Acculturation also becomes relevant in the presence of new religions entering into already established culture. This means that the need for dialogue is indicated not only with traditional religion, but likewise with other religions – new within that culture. As cultures are never static, so too religions are similarly exposed to ongoing cultural changes and challenges. In Western world cultures, we observe that different religions maintain a more or less successful dialogue with secularized cultures. One religion's success in reaching a secularized audience often inspires other religions in their search for the appropriate way to address the same population. Simultaneously, inter-religious dialogue itself offers a great opportunity for different religions to unite as they confront the same external enemy. For example, in Western society, individualism, consumerism and destruction of the environment are a common enemy.

### **3. Obstacles which work against inclusion and/or integration of others**

In the first part of our paper we concentrated on the urgency of intercultural dialogue, which led us to the second part regarding the importance of interre-

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, Continuum, London 2002, p. 7.

<sup>14</sup> L. Swidler, *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding*, pp. 47–51.

<sup>15</sup> Catherine Cornille, "Introduction: On Hermeneutics in Dialogue", in: Catherine Cornille, Christopher Conway (eds.), *Interreligious Hermeneutics*, Cascade Books, Eugene (OR) 2012, pp. 3–13, p. 3.

ligious dialogue today. Furthermore, we showed how both forms of dialogue, intercultural and interreligious, are inextricably intertwined. We have now reached the point of discussing human obstacles according to Patañjali's *Yoga Sutras*. These obstacles mitigate against inclusion and/or integration of the other – both preconditions for an authentic dialogue leading toward healthy cultures.

Patañjali is presumed to have lived around the second century BC. He is recognized by his work entitled *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, 196 Indian sutras,<sup>16</sup> also known as *aphorisms*. Primarily Patañjali selected materials with reference to yoga from older traditions and provided his own explanatory passages. In this light he is regarded as the editor of these aphorisms, which brought clarity and unity to Indian philosophical systems during his lifetime. Today, Patañjali's formulations of the Yoga Sutras are one of the foundations of classical yoga philosophy. Within the content of Patañjali's book he discusses *kleshas*, a term that can be translated as “obstacles” or afflictions of the human mind as well as destructive and disturbing emotions (Sutra II.3).<sup>17</sup> These *kleshas* reveal themselves as: ignorance, ego, attachment, aversion, and an inordinate clinging to life. The first two *kleshas*, ignorance and ego, combined with pride and arrogance, condition our intellectual level of existence including our spiritual knowledge. The third and fourth *kleshas*, attachments and aversions, emanating from emotions and feelings, can create complex disharmony and psychosomatic disorders. The last *klesha*, clinging to life, affects our instinctive level of existence.

### *Ignorance*

The *klesha avidyā* is generally translated as *ignorance* or *nonwisdom*,<sup>18</sup> delusion and a lack of spiritual knowledge.<sup>19</sup> Patañjali sees *avidyā* as the main obstacle. He describes it as “the breeding ground of the other *kleshas*, whether or not they are in a dormant, weak, intermittent or fully activated state”.<sup>20</sup> Considered as such, *avidyā* is the bedrock for other *kleshas*. Once ignorance is dispelled, all other *kleshas* disappear.<sup>21</sup> Because of ignorance, a person is firmly attached to past experiences, certain ways of thinking, unpleasant emotions and hurt feelings. A strong belief forms that a person's reality cannot be different. In other words, the lack of seeing deeper and differently brings forth obstacles regarding perceiving oneself and the others in a different light. Due to such ignorance, a person lives in a deluded awareness, which is opposed to true knowledge.<sup>22</sup> However, according to Patañjali, a change is not just a matter of having the right knowledge or that desired change automatically follows understanding. On the contrary, it is Patañjali's view that knowledge, or perhaps a better, deeper comprehension of reality, is merely the starting point of a much longer process.

### *Attachment*

The *klesha Rāga* is translated as *attachment*, desire and emotional bondage or a tie associated with any source of pleasure.<sup>23</sup> It is the inability to let go of anything.<sup>24</sup> Every form of attachment limits person's freedom, and serves as a hindrance on one's journey to a deeper level of self-realization both in the present and in the future. Attachments are expressions of a person's desire for security. By removing attachments, a person breaks open to new healthy dimensions and simultaneously moves further toward increased freedom.



When considering dialogue, attachments to ideas, images, people, habits, rules, narratives, experiences, emotions, and feelings provide a crucial step in the process of integration. Obsessive remembering of certain events or selective narratives, in reality, may only be expressions of one's attachments to the "pleasure" of being right or better than the other. This right-ness, this better-ness creates a false sense of security, satisfaction, and self-realization even though it prevents growth in freedom and in self-confidence. From this perspective the cleansing process regarding our attachments becomes an inevitable step for creating open space around the ego.

### ***Egoism***

The klesha *Asmitā* is commonly translated as *ego*, *egoism*, *self-centeredness* or *self-admiration*.<sup>25</sup> Iyengar defines egoism as "the identification of the seer with the instrumental power of seeing".<sup>26</sup> Although clearly there is a distinction between the seer and the seen in the ego, due to *asmitā*, they merge into oneness. Consequently, this affliction prevents a person from being in touch with their true self. Instead of identifying with the true self, the subject of experience, a person identifies with the apparent self, the object of experience. A person, who is unable to integrate the presence of the other, experiences the presence of others as threatening. This mixture of emotions, feelings, thoughts, and actions alters one's experience in such a way that a person completely identifies with that experience. He or she becomes that experience. When this occurs, an ego prevents a person from having even a possibility of entering into a genuine dialogue.

### ***Aversion***

The klesha *Dvesah* is interpreted as *aversion*. Iyengar further describes *dvesah* as "an emotional repulsion and flight from pain. This klesha frequently manifests as prejudice and hatred thus making it impossible for a person to learn from life's hardships and one's own mistakes".<sup>27</sup> Attachment either to pleasure or unhappiness in the present triggers past experiences of pain, sorrow, aversion, a resistant feeling, anger, frustration and misery. In the extreme case, because of strong attachments, a person begins to hate herself, her fam-

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Sri Swami Satchidananda, *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali. 196 Indian Sutras*, Integral Yoga Publications, Buckingham (VA) 2012.

17

Ibid., Sutra II, 3.

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Edwin F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, North Point Press, New York 2009, p. 177.

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Bellur Krishnamachar Sundararaja Iyengar, *Light on Life*, Rodale Books 2005, p. 111.

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S. S. Satchidananda, *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, Sutra II, 4.

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E. F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, p. 177.

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S. S. Satchidananda, *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, Sutra II, 5.

23

Ibid., Sutra II, 7.

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E. F. Bryant, *The Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, p. 189.

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S. S. Satchidananda, *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, Sutra II, 6.

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B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Life*, p. 114.

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Ibid., p. 200.

ily, her religion, her culture, her surroundings, and others. As a consequence, a person or a group of people can begin to hate different religions or different cultures.

It is critically important that religions and cultures maintain both the ability and the desire to return to their early wounds with the intention to heal them. This can occur only when they are willing to acknowledge their own mistakes. By facing *dvesah* through the process of integration, people, institutions, and cultures learn how to face attachments to emotions, ideas and wounded memories, which in turn condition attitudes and ways of thinking, thus preventing genuine dialogue, and the development of healthy cultures.

### *Inordinate clinging to life*

The *klesha abhinivesha* is translated as *clinging to life* or *fear of death*. Carrera understands *abhinivesha* as a human desire to hold onto life and to seek security in the continuity and stability of that which must forever be in flux.<sup>28</sup> Mehta describes this *klesha* as the human desire to hold life in the framework created by the sense of ‘I-ness’. This is the network of one’s mind.<sup>29</sup> The clinging to life is so strong that even wise people cannot easily remain indifferent.<sup>30</sup> *Abhinivesha* can also be understood as fear of death. This fear is based on memories of losing something or someone, not being able to completely control one’s own life, and ultimately death. It is evident that religions and cultures cling to their known past and traditions as a source of security and pride. They seek not only not to die but also to remain forever relevant and powerful. However, once detachment from clinging to life, as known and experienced, is accepted, the quality of a person’s, religion’s or culture’s identity will pass from a static existence to an existence that is in a continuous process of evolution and growth.

Working toward the elimination of *kleshas* softens and opens the individual’s mind for a yet-unknown reality. Similarly, in keeping with the intention of this paper, working toward the elimination of *kleshas* in people’s minds prepares them for the process of an authentic dialogue: both intercultural and interreligious.

### **Conclusion**

An encounter among religions, which occurs within the process of religious acculturation, can lead to various changes and paths of growth. It is possible that religious identity and religious boundaries become sharper and clearer. This may lead to the emergence of a new religious self-understanding through the enriched meaning and values born in the process of sharing with other cultures and religions. Conversely, a religion in dialogue with other religions may become more aware of its own limitations regarding its ability to adapt to and to integrate change.

A sensitive interreligious dialogue does not include attempts to persuade other participants regarding one’s rightness. Furthermore, it does not imply syncretism, which is understood as blending elements of different religions into a new whole, where differences melt into something undefined and confusing. On the contrary, an authentic interreligious dialogue requires moving toward each other with openness and integrity and with a willingness to discover new dimensions of reality. An imperative to act and becoming transformed follows naturally upon this discovery.

This challenging transformation is a lifetime process. Dialogue – intercultural as well as interreligious – especially living a life with dialogical attitude is very demanding. Obstacles or afflictions of the human mind, or kleshas according to Patañjali, block individuals, religious communities and cultures from accepting the others as differentiated beings, and from envisioning a more extensive reality. Our position is that once a person learns how to cope with these obstacles, she will be able to create additional space within their minds. With the intention to contribute toward building and being part of a healthy culture this mind expansion will allow for a more satisfying dialogue and peaceful life.

**Erika Prijatelj**

**Zdrave kulture:  
novi izazovi za međureligijski dijalog**

**Sažetak**

*Zdravlje ili bolest zahvaća cijelu osobu: tijelo, psihu i duh. Ovo istraživanje podupire poziciju da su tri navedene ljudske dimenzije dubinski povezane. Budući da je religija važan aspekt kulture, onda igra ključnu ulogu u promicanju bilo dijaloga bilo nasilja prema sebi i drugima. U suvremeno doba globalizacije i »ekonomije inkluzije« međureligijski dijalog postao je važna tema. Tek kada upoznamo osobe drugih religija shvaćamo koliko su religija i kultura gusto isprepletene te koliko ih je teško rastaviti. Na tragu Charlesa Taylora, početna točka analize međureligijskog i međukulturalnog dijaloga u ovom istraživanju sljedeća je: »Sve ljudske kulture koje su oduhovile cjelovita društva imaju nešto važno za reći svim ljudskim bićima.« Prepreke prema zdravim kulturama i prema uspješnom međureligijskom dijalogu – u oba slučaja put je to nenasilja (Patañjali) – su ignorantnost, ego, privrženost, averzija i pretjerana vezanost za život.*

**Ključne riječi**

religija, kultura, globalizacija, međukulturalno, međureligijsko, dijalog, transformacija, zdravlje

**Erika Prijatelj**

**Gesunde Kulturen:  
neue Herausforderungen für den interreligiösen Dialog**

**Zusammenfassung**

*Gesundheit oder Krankheit betreffen die ganze Person: den Körper, die Psyche und den Geist. Diese Forschungsarbeit unterstützt die Position, dass die drei erwähnten menschlichen Dimensionen tiefgreifend verzahnt sind. Da die Religion ein wichtiger Aspekt der Kultur ist, spielt sie dann eine Schlüsselrolle bei der Förderung entweder des Dialogs oder der Gewalt gegen sich selbst und andere. In der modernen Globalisierungsära und in der „Wirtschaft der Inklusion“ ist der interreligiöse Dialog zu einem bedeutsamen Thema geworden. Erst wenn wir Personen anderer Religionen kennenlernen, erkennen wir, wie viel Religion und Kultur dicht miteinander verflochten sind und wie schwierig es ist, sie voneinander abzutrennen. Auf der Spur von Charles*

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Jaganath Carrera, *Inside the Yoga Sutras. A Comprehensive Sourcebook for the Study & Practice of Patañjali's Yoga Sutras*, Integral Yoga Publications, Buckingham (VA) 2006, p. 114.

29

Rohit Mehta, *Yoga: The Art of Integration. A Commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patañja-*

*li*, Theosophical Pub House, Wheaton (IL) 1975, p. 115.

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S. S. Satchidananda, *Yoga Sutras of Patañjali*, Sutra II, 9.

*Taylor ist der Ausgangspunkt für die Analyse des interreligiösen und interkulturellen Dialogs in dieser Forschung der folgende: „Alle menschlichen Kulturen, die gesamte Gesellschaften mit Leben erfüllt haben, haben allen Menschen etwas Wichtiges zu sagen“. Hindernisse für gesunde Kulturen und einen erfolgreichen interreligiösen Dialog – in beiden Fällen ist es der Weg der Gewaltlosigkeit (Patañjali) – sind Ignorantentum, Ego, Anhänglichkeit, Abneigung und eine übermäßige Bindung an das Leben.*

**Schlüsselwörter**

Religion, Kultur, Globalisierung, interkulturell, interreligiös, Dialog, Transformation, Gesundheit

**Erika Prijatelj**

**Les cultures saines :  
nouveaux défis pour un dialogue interreligieux**

**Résumé**

*La santé ou la maladie touche la personne dans sa totalité : le corps, la psyché et l'esprit. Cette recherche soutient la position selon laquelle les trois dimensions mentionnées sont profondément liées. Puisque la religion est un aspect important de la culture, elle joue un rôle clé dans l'encouragement, soit du dialogue, soit de la violence envers soi ou les autres. À notre époque contemporaine de globalisation et d'« économie d'inclusion », le dialogue interreligieux est devenu un thème important. C'est seulement lorsque l'on rencontre des personnes d'autres religions que l'on comprend combien la religion et la culture sont entremêlées de manière dense et combien il est difficile de les séparer. Sur la trace de Charles Taylor, le point de départ de notre analyse dans cette recherche sur le dialogue interreligieux et interculturel est le suivant : « toutes les cultures humaines qui ont spiritualisé l'ensemble de la société ont quelque chose d'important à dire à tous les êtres humains ». Les obstacles envers les cultures saines et envers un dialogue interreligieux efficace – dans les deux cas c'est le chemin de la non-violence (Patañjali) – se résument à de l'ignorance, de l'ego, de l'attachement, de l'aversion, un lien exagéré pour la vie.*

**Mots-clés**

religion, culture, globalisation, interculturel, interreligieux, dialogue, transformation, santé