

RELEVANCE OF META-NARRATIVES OF CHRISTIANITY AND BHAGATGITA IN TRAVERSING POST-MODERN CONDITION

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Abstract: The paper argues that ancient metanarratives (Adhikaṭha) are relevant in meeting out the crisis of values brought on by the post-modernistic ideology. The paper defines post modernism and examines it. It argues that postmodernism's rejection of a universal metanarrative (Adhikaṭha) is untenable. Secondly, the paper looks at how the ancient Adhikaṭha of Yishu in conversation with Indian classical philosophy (especially of Gītā) answers the crisis of postmodernism. The third section argues that rather than falling into the relativism of postmodernism, traditions of thought and values should identify their critical value. On the basis of their critical value respective traditions should then dialogue with one another persuasively.

I. The Position and Problem of Postmodernity

Postmodernism is fundamentally problematic because it is self-referentially untenable to its fundamental assertion that there is no universal metanarrative. Postmodernity is notoriously difficult to define.¹ However, Jean-François Lyotard argues that the basic definition of postmodernism is that it calls into question “metanarratives.”² The previous mood, intellectually and culturally in much of the world during the 20th century had been of modernism. Modernism was characterized by optimistic progress based on reason, science, and industry. However, the later third of the 20th century saw the largely reactionary rise of the postmodernism in philosophy and society. Postmodernism despaired of the pursuit of a metanarrative and rather focused on localized narratives. Bern Magnus writes that postmodernism is a “rejection of principles, distinctions, and descriptions that are thought to be unconditionally binding for all times, persons, and places; and a suspicion of grand narratives, metanarratives of the sort perhaps best illustrated by dialectical materialism.”³ However, this position of postmodernism leads to two problems. The first problem is the jettison of a metanarrative and the second is the lack of a unified ethic. First, the problem with getting rid of a universal metanarrative is that postmodernism leaves its adherents with fragmentation. If one adopts the postmodern perspective they have no unified narrative for reality. However, this problem leads to a deeper problem.

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¹“The term ‘postmodern’ is less clear in philosophy, its application more uncertain and divided than in some other fields, e.g., postmodern architecture.” Bern Magnus, “Postmodernism” in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, 2nd ed. Edited by Robert Audi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 726.

²“Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.” Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennigton and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2002), xxiv.

³Ibid., 725.

Postmodernism cannot sustain its objection that there is no metanarrative. Metanarrative can be defined as an overarching explanation or story that explains reality that provides a framework for an individual or community to operate. Another way to define metanarrative is that it is a story of a worldview that gets at a person's, or a community's, or a society's or even the world's "ultimate concern" in the words of Paul Tillich.⁴ Postmodernism's metanarrative is given the limitations of human person's and communities no one can lay claim to a metanarrative. Nevertheless, this objection is postmodernism's metanarrative. Postmodernism is therefore self-referentially untenable because it too has a metanarrative. Furthermore, the second problem is that since postmodernism has no metanarrative it is difficult to establish a unified ethic. Christopher Butler writes, "Although we may believe in the *logic* of promise-keeping, can we any longer truly believe in it, in the light of modern realpolitik, in anything like the sense in which Kant and Hume did?"⁵ Butler continues, "These traditional principles, and the alternatives to them, now seem to lack a firm grounding."⁶ Disagreements in ethics, Butler frankly admits, "But still, as a matter of fact often leads to bitter conflicts, which need to be resolved by something better than postmodernist principles."⁷ The problem of the basis for making ethical decisions is a real problem for postmodernism.

In Sanskrit, the term Adhikaṭha will be coined as an orienting concept. Adhikaṭha in this context means the great narrative.⁸ Postmodernism denies any Adhikaṭha or metanarrative. However, postmodernism cannot get away from the idea of Adhikaṭha. Should one jettison the quest for an Adhikaṭha and focus on local and personal narratives? Rather, the challenge of postmodernism can help one look more closely at one's own Adhikaṭha and enters into dialogue with other Adhikaṭhas. However in contrast to postmodernism one does not need to apologize for the universality of those Adhikaṭhas. The next section will show the ancient Christian Adhikaṭha of Yishu in dialogue with the ancient values of Indian philosophy found in the Bhagavad Gītā answer the challenges of postmodernism.

II. Ancient Value of the Adhikaṭha of Yishu in conversation with the Ancient Values of Indian Philosophy

This section shows how the Adhikaṭha of Yishu addresses fundamental concerns in Indian philosophy. The concerns of Indian philosophy also similar to concerns found with other worldviews including first century Christianity. This section first looks at concerns found within the Bhagavad Gītā. Then it argues that the Adhikaṭha of Yishu addresses concerns in common with values in Indian philosophy and first century

⁴Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology vol. 1*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 211.

⁵Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 120.

⁶Ibid., 120.

⁷Ibid., 120.

⁸*Adhi* here means superior and *kaṭha* should be understood as didactic narrative. An alternative to Adhikaṭha would be Mahāvṛtānta.

Christianity. At the same time the Adhikaṭha of Yishu is shown to answer the crisis of postmodernism. The Bhagavad Gītā addresses three areas of fundamental concern to human experience. These areas include knowledge, action and love. However, the Gītā seeks to relate these areas to the goal of human existence and address the concerns pertinent to Indian philosophy. The Gītā seeks to address the concerns in its worldview of dharma, karma and saṁsāra. The three ways that the Bhagavad Gita describes to mokṣa are jñāna yoga, bhakti yoga and karma yoga.⁹ According to the Gītā if one achieves perfection in each of these three ways that one will attain mokṣa. The Gītā states, “Hear from me, in brief, O Son of Kuntī, how, having attained perfection, he attains to the Brahman, that supreme consummation of wisdom.”¹⁰

So in the Gītā’s terms, how is through each of these three ways one to attain mokṣa? This section on the Gītā will follow Bina Gupta’s interpretation in *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, who seeks to “examine the Gītā in its own terms.”¹¹ First, Gupta looks at karma yoga or the path of action. The gist of what Kṛṣṇa instructs Arjuna to do is to act in accordance with dharma and do this without attachment. Gupta writes, “In terms of action, Kṛṣṇa asks Arjuna to perform actions without any desire for the fruits of action for himself.”¹² The Gītā states, “Therefore, without attachment, perform always the work that has to be done, for man attains to the highest by doing work without attachment.”¹³ The expectation of the Gītā is that one will attain perfection in this work. The Gītā states, “Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, then get ready for battle. Thus thou shall not incur sin.”¹⁴ Secondly, Gītā describes jñāna yoga. In the context of the Gītā “(1) the knowledge of distinction between the lower or mortal self and the higher or the immortal self, and (2) the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa as the higher self, the lord of the universe.”¹⁵ With correct knowledge the seeker can find liberation. The Gītā states, “Therefore at all times remember Me and fight. When thy mind and understanding are set on Me, to Me alone shalt thou come without doubt.”¹⁶ The goal of jñāna yoga is perfection in knowledge. Thirdly, Bhakti “signifies an intense relationship with which one approaches the divine.”¹⁷ It goes on to explain, “Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that a *jīva* is saved by keeping in mind the highest lord, *paramesvara*, “that human beings who are focused on my cosmic form, whose hearts are devoted to me and spend days and

⁹Prabhavananda argues for a fourth implicit way of raja yoga found within the Gita. See Swami Prabhavananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India: A Clear Summary of Indian Philosophy and Religion*, (Hollywood: Vedanta Press, 1979), 98. For the sake of simplicity I am following Gupta’s reading of the Gita’s own horizon which argues for 3 ways.

¹⁰XVIII:50, S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2006), 369.

¹¹Bina Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy: Perspectives on Reality, Knowledge and Freedom*, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 277.

¹²Ibid., 282.

¹³III.19. S. Radhakrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita* 138.

¹⁴II.38. Ibid., 114.

¹⁵Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 285.

¹⁶VIII.7 S. RadhaKrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, 229. See also the Gītā V.17.

¹⁷Gupta, *And Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 285.

nights in this state, in my opinion, are the best *yogis*. Such persons offer all their actions to me, think of me as worth worshipping as the highest, their minds are entirely preoccupied with me, and these *bhaktas* are saved by me from the ocean of *samsāra*.¹⁸ Bhakti yoga expects perfect devotion of the devotee. Lastly, we should note that the Gītā sees these three paths as interrelated. “These three paths are not mutually exclusive alternatives; rather they complement each other.”¹⁹ In fact, even from the statements above the unity of the paths should be evident.²⁰ If the seeker starts on one path the other two are necessary though the emphasis may differ. The goal of the 3 paths is mokṣa in other words salvation or liberation.

From what has been observed the Gītā calls those following the path to perfection in the three ways that it instructs. Even in the case of IX. 30, “Even if a man of the most vile conduct worships me with undistracted devotion, he must be reckoned as righteous for he has rightly resolved.”²¹ The idea here is that the devotee perfects themselves in their devotion, “undistracted devotion.” This way of perfection is rooted in following dharma. Dharma calls one to certain duties in accordance with the nature given to the person, that person’s place in society and that person’s relationships.²² This is known as svadharmā.²³ Nevertheless, even with the one seeking dharma as svadharmā, perfection is demanded by dharma. The perfection of human nature in experience is frankly difficult if not impossible. The difficulty of following dharma is clearly seen in the ancient Sanskrit prayer which states, “I know what is *dharma*, but cannot will to do it, I know what is *adharmā* but cannot will to desist from it.”²⁴ The prayer goes on to ask for divine assistance in performing the necessary duty. The first century ancient Christian values address the concerns of dharma, and this is rooted in the ancient traditions of the Hebrews. The difficulty of following dharma as it relates to the Hebrew concept of torah is central to the Adhikāṭha of Yishu. However, first the concept of torah needs some explanation, including the perfection demanded of torah.²⁵ Torah as a concept is the law of God. According to the the narrative of Yishu, Torah would need to be followed perfectly.

¹⁸Ibid., 285.

¹⁹Ibid., 286. Note also his statement, “Thus the three paths come together irrespective of here one chooses to begin, consistently with his own nature.” 288.

²⁰Gupta cites VII.14; IX.15; IV.23 from the Gītā as support for this conclusion. For example II.30 combines the ways of action and knowledge, “Surrendering all actions to me, Fixing your mind on your higher self Having no desires and selfishness; Fight, surrendering this fever” Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 287.

²¹S. RadhaKrishnan, *The Bhagavadgita*, 250.

²²See Pravananda, *The Spiritual Heritage of India*, 103.

²³Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 284.

²⁴“Jaanaamidharmānā me pravṛtijaanaamiadharmānā me nivṛtti,” Bina Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 98.

²⁵Paul will show a humanistic understanding of keeping the law that contrasts with the perfection demanded with the law as clearly demanded from what follows. He at one point says that he is blameless according the law (Philippians 3:6). However this is from a human perspective and not actual or divine perspective.

The Torah states, “For I am Yhwh your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and *be holy, for I am holy.*”²⁶ Torah expects holiness. In this tradition Yishu taught his followers, “You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”²⁷ In the Adhikāṭha of Yishu the expectation is nothing less than perfection, and does not lessen this requirement. The requirement is rooted in the perfection or holiness of God. Now the breaking of the law at one point would be one was imperfect and guilty of breaking it all. The brother of Yishu, James wrote, “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”²⁸ James’ basic point is that any imperfection destroys perfection.²⁹ The difficulty of following torah was well known in the Hebrew tradition and Paul of Tarsus, representative of Jewish and Christian perspectives of the first century provides a good example of this difficulty. Similar to the Sanskrit prayer above, Paul writes,

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.³⁰

Paul here is writing about the struggle internally about following the torah against indwelling sin. The law calls one to perfect obedience and yet that seems impossible.

In summary, the ancient values of Indian philosophy and first century Christianity call for a perfection in relationship to dharma or law. In contrast, postmodernism has jettisoned the idea of standard and perfection. Sabina Lovibond writes, “Postmodernism does not condemn the pursuit of truth or virtue within *local, self-contained* discursive communities—the quest for ‘truth’ as distinct from ‘Truth,’ as Rorty might put it, or of ‘virtue’ as distinct from ‘Virtue’ (the latter meaning the excellence of a human being simply *qua* human and without reference to any particular social role).”³¹ So postmodernism would applaud the pursuit of excellence within a tradition, but not in a way that would be true for all. Lovibond continues, “It

²⁶Leviticus 11:44. All verses based on the ESV. *Torah* or law was so central to Jews that the first five books of the Hebrew Bible were called the Torah. The Torah has been and remains the most revered part of the Bible for Jews.

²⁷Matthew 5:48.

²⁸James 2:10

²⁹First century Christianity did not expect perfection from creatures in the same sense of perfection of the Creator. The Creator is the archetype and the creature the ectype. An ectype level of perfection is expected.

³⁰Rom. 7:15-19. Law is translated from the Greek “*nomos*” which should be understood as a translation of the Hebrew concept of torah into Greek. Flesh here is not a mere body as in Greek soul/body dualism where the body as matter is evil. Rather, we should understand flesh in the sense of the present evil age, verse the new creation which is also physical.

³¹Sabina Lovibond, “Feminism and Postmodernism,” in *Postmodernism: A Reader*. Thomas Docherty ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 401.

reserves its criticism for the idea that we should evaluate the activity of each of these communities by a universal standard...³² And yet this criticism is applied universally by postmodernism. In contrast, the ancients were no strangers to a standard of excellence and perfection or the difficulties therein. In the Adhikaṭha of Yishu, the depth of difficulty of following the law and achieving perfection stems from the nature of transgression of that law. A human being has both the pollution of sin, and the guilt of it. Paul in the passage above is wrestling with the pollution of sin. However, when Paul writes, “both Jews and Greeks, are alike *under sin*” he is speaking about the guilt of sin.³³ Another way of looking at this is that the ancient Christian perspective is that sin creates debt. According to Indian philosophy it might clarify by using and defining the following terms in relationship to one another: dharma, Rta and ṛṇa. Dharma could be defined more narrowly as law.³⁴ Dharma is rooted in Rta, or the cosmic order. For the ancient Christian values in the Adhikaṭha of Yishu this would be the created order. Dharma which is rooted in ṛta is ultimately rooted in the nature of God. According to the Adhikatha of Yishu, humanity violated and is violating dharma or law. This violation or transgression created debt or ṛṇa. Now, according to Indian philosophy the idea of ṛṇa is that the person owes debts in three ways: to the ṛṣis; to the devas; and to the pitṛ.³⁵ However, according to the Adhikaṭha of Yishu there is now a debt or ṛṇa that the person cannot work out themselves. It is ṛṇa to God in an ultimate sense which makes one unholy, imperfect and unclean. However, in the Adhikaṭha of Yishu, Yishu actually achieved perfection and brought resolution to the problem of ṛṇa as defined above. According to the Adhikaṭha of Yishu he fulfills perfection in the three areas of the human condition that the Gītā identifies. In each of these areas, according to the values of ancient Christianity, humanity has failed.³⁶ In each of these three areas humanity has incurred ṛṇa to God. Yishu received their ṛṇa and gave them his perfection.

First, according to the Adhikaṭha of Yishu, he achieves perfection in jñāna yoga or the path of knowledge. Yishu is understood to grow in wisdom and knowledge in a way that amazed the scholars of his day.³⁷ In the Hebrew wisdom tradition Solomon achieved the heights of wisdom. However Yishu speaks about himself, “The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, *something greater than Solomon is here.*”³⁸ He is claiming a greater person than Solomon has come in himself. Furthermore, Paul of Tarsus writes that Yishu is the

³²Ibid., 401.

³³Romans 3:9.

³⁴Dharma is a term with many meanings. Dharma can have a similar or synonymous meaning with *Rta*. See Gurcharan Das’ discussion of the word Dharma in *The Difficulty of Being Good: On The Subtle Art of Dharma*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) Loc. 5556. Also see John Grimes, *A Concise Dictionary of Indian Philosophy*, (Varanasi: Indica, 2009), 143-146.

³⁵Ibid., 304.

³⁶For these areas see Romans 1:18-23; 3:9-20.

³⁷See Luke 2:41-52.

³⁸Matthew 12:42.

wisdom or jñāna of God.³⁹ Secondly, according to the Adhikāṭha of Yishu he achieves perfection in bhakti yoga through the way of devotion or love. Yishu instructs what the greatest act of love is to his disciples stating, “Greater love has no one than this that someone lay down his life for his friends.”⁴⁰ Yishu teaches that the best one can give is one’s own life for another. There is nothing more precious. He also is indirectly referring to his own purpose. This act of love for his people which is giving up his life for them is where his life culminates. Reflecting on the life of Yishu, Paul of Tarsus writes, “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Abhishikt died for us.”⁴¹ Furthermore the perfect love of Yishu is seen in the result and power of that love. Paul writes, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels no rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Abhishikt Yishu our Lord.”⁴² He achieves perfect love especially as he lays down his life for his people once and for all. The final way in the Adhikāṭha Yishu follows perfectly is the way of karma yoga. He perfectly and selflessly submits his will to God in obedience to torah, and the svadharmā that God had given him.⁴³ During his baptism, his cousin John, tries to prevent him from being baptized. Yishu responds, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”⁴⁴ Yishu again describes his own obedience, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.”⁴⁵ This is Yishu’s model of obedience. Yishu tells of the ‘spirit’ of his obedience, “...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”⁴⁶ Yishu’s obedience to the law is selfless. Reflecting on the life and teaching of Yishu, Paul writes in the first century, “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”⁴⁷ Yishu selflessly follows the law for the benefit of his people. His action is not selfishly motivated.

Yishu through the three ways achieves yoga with God, not for himself which he already had from eternity.⁴⁸ In his human nature he achieves perfection in the areas of

³⁹I Corinthians 1:24. See also verse 30.

⁴⁰John 15:13.

⁴¹Romans 5:7-8.

⁴²Romans 8:38-39.

⁴³Yishu’s svadharmā is his mission to free his people from the curse of sin. As the incarnation of God he has a unique *svadharmā*.

⁴⁴Matthew 3:15.

⁴⁵John 5:19.

⁴⁶Matthew 20:28.

⁴⁷Philippians 2:6-8.

⁴⁸John 17:5.

knowledge, love and action for the benefit of his people. These three areas are seen in the commandment that summarizes torah or dharma according to the Adhikaṭha of Yishu. The law states, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”⁴⁹ The basic point of the verse is that the person should love God with all they are, internally and externally. This is where humanity failed. This is where in the Adhikaṭha of Yishu, Yishu succeeds in following dharma or Torah.⁵⁰ Yishu in his sacrifice bears the curse of the law which is the consequence of ṛṇa and becomes sin for their sake.⁵¹ This releases them from the ṛṇa owed to God because of the violation of dharma.⁵² In this way Yishu then opens the way for mokṣa for his people. Yishu’s people according to the values of ancient Christianity participate in this Adhikaṭha through visṅvas. His people, through visṅvas, trust that he has perfectly obeyed the requirement of God and at the same time received the debt, ṛṇa or guilt of the violation of the torah or dharma of God.⁵³ Through visṅvas, his people achieve yoga or union with Yishu, and by him with God. The transformation that occurs at this point is very dramatic. It is described by Yishu as rebirth in the present life.⁵⁴ This rebirth provides renovation and renewal for the mind, heart and will.⁵⁵ In addition, visṅvas is not a self-perfection, but a gracious perfection that comes from receiving Yishu’s perfection through visṅvas. This grace is rooted in the nature of God. According to ancient Christian values, God defines love. “God is love” according to the author John.⁵⁶ Looking at it in Indian philosophical values, the Adhikaṭha of Yishu is rooted in the karuna of saguna Brahman. However, this finds deeper underpinnings in the ananda of nirguna Brahman.⁵⁷

Through yoga with Yishu, his people are given the sākti for an ethic of love.⁵⁸ The ethic of love as he has loved is the mark of his people.⁵⁹ Yishu follows this up with the statement that love is the defining mark for his disciples. He says, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one

⁴⁹Deuteronomy 6:5.

⁵⁰I Corinthians 1:30.

⁵¹Galatians 3:13, quoting Deuteronomy 21:23. Paul in this verse is citing Torah of Moses, the law of God. Also 2 Corinthians 2:5.

⁵²Matthew 20:28.

⁵³See Colossians 2:13

⁵⁴John 3:3

⁵⁵For knowledge Yishu’s people are given his mind (Philippians 2:5). For love, they are given the power to love like he loved (John 13:34). And for will, they are commanded to put to death the sinful nature and put on the virtues of the new life (Colossians 3).

⁵⁶I John 4:8.

⁵⁷See Julius Lipner and George Gispert-Sauch, *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 1991), 130f.

⁵⁸The use of sākti here is different than the traditional understanding in Indian philosophy. Sākti here means a power that is not inherent to the one wielding it. It is power from the outside, through the Spirit of Yishu. It is renovative and restorative.

⁵⁹John 13:34. The nature of the love he has loved them with includes the feet washing earlier in this passage but ultimately the giving of his life for his friends.

another.⁶⁰ This ethic of love is contrasted to the ethic of postmodernism which posits a mutual tolerance. Butler writes, “Tolerance is a principled willingness to put up with the expression and pursuit of beliefs that you know to be wrong, for the sake of some larger ideal, like freedom of inquiry or the autonomy of others in the construction of their own narrative or identity—provided, I would say, that they don’t harm others in the process.”⁶¹ There is a danger of having tolerance without much grounding. The danger is without that ‘larger ideal’ not provided by the postmodernist metanarrative because it lacks one, the tolerance can easily slip away. The ethic of love found in the Adhikatha of Yishu provides the grounding for tolerance for his people in society. However, it is not mere tolerance that the metanarrative calls for but love. Love goes beyond merely tolerating the existence of other perspectives but of wanting their good and taking a self-sacrificial stance in relationship toward others. Now, it is true that the contemporary followers of Yishu often have failed by falling prey to the ills of postmodernism, consumerism and materialism. Nevertheless, the ethic of love is at the heart of what Yishu’s people are supposed to be about. Another first century Christian perspective on this, John writes, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”⁶² When this love is operative it has a profound effect on others’ lives and often will impact society and the world progressively. The ancient Christian church was well known for its charity.⁶³ Martin Luther King Jr. and Mother Teresa would be recent examples of the *sákti* of this love. A contemporary example of this ethic would be Shane Claiborne and the Simple Way.⁶⁴ The Simple Way is a movement of people in the most dangerous part of inner-city Philadelphia in the United States of America. The Adhikatha of Yishu provides the grounding metaphysically and the *sákti* for a unified ethic of love. This ethic also has provides for the definition of this love based on the actions of Yishu.

III. Postmodernism and Critical Values

Metanarratives will have critical values and if those values are removed with cease to characterize that metanarrative as distinctive. For Islamic thought it is the Koran.⁶⁵ Perhaps for Hindu philosophy it is Brahman.⁶⁶ For the ancient Adhikatha or metanarrative of Yishu it is Yishu. Remove or replace Yishu and his central

⁶⁰John 13:35.

⁶¹Butler, *Postmodernism*, 122.

⁶²I John 4:7. The antithesis to this is verse brings out the ethical imperative rooted in the nature of God. Verse 8 has: “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

⁶³*The Shepherd of Hermas and the Apology of Aristides* both record and instruct the early Christians to hold fasts for the purpose of redistributing food for those in need.

⁶⁴See Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010)

⁶⁵See Farid Esack, *The Qu’ran: A User’s Guide*. (Oxford: One World, 2005). 16.

⁶⁶See Hervey DeWitt Griswold, *Brahman: A Study in the History of Indian Philosophy*, (New York, Macmillan Company, 1900)

importance to this metanarrative and the whole narrative falls apart. This is seen in Yishu's relationship to his people in his provision for their mokṣa and yoga with God. Returning to the question of postmodernism, how does one distinguish between worldviews? One could adopt a major worldview, for example, naturalism, agnosticism, monism, Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, or Marxism.⁶⁷ Now the problem is if one does not have a way to distinguish between metanarratives one sinks back into the relativism of post modernity. The Adhikaṭha of Yishu answers this with public testimony of a historical event, the resurrection of Yishu.⁶⁸ The Indian philosophical traditions of the Nyaya and the Mīmāṃsā have understood the importance of testimony as valid under the right conditions.⁶⁹ The testimony of the resurrection for the Adhikaṭha of Yishu is of central importance. Paul of Tarsus states it this way,

And if Abhishikt (Yishu) has not been raised then our presentation is in vain and your viśvas is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Abhishikt from the dead...And if Abhishikt has not been raised your viśvas is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep (died) in yoga to Abhishikt have perished. If in Abhishikt we have hoped in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.⁷⁰

The criterion that Paul is using here is public testimony in a Jewish court that is rooted in torah.⁷¹ This testimony is what makes the compelling case for the Adhikaṭha of Yishu. Other metanarratives will have their respective critical value or values. The task then is for metanarratives to make a compelling case for their universal vision with their arguments based on their critical values. In pluralistic societies, there needs to be a tolerance of many metanarratives. This is a helpful contribution of postmodernism. However the negative side to this is the loss of truth capital T.

Conclusion

In the current climate of Postmodernism, it is necessary to reestablish metanarratives or an Adhikaṭha. Even Postmodernism cannot ultimately get away from some kind of

⁶⁷There are many more than these worldviews with meta-narratives. Agnosticism has a narrative that frankly admits ignorance to ultimate things. Nevertheless it still asserts that ultimate reality is unknowable at least at this point in time.

⁶⁸Testimony is basic to an ancient Christian understanding.

⁶⁹Gupta, *An Introduction to Indian Philosophy*, 117. Pandit Rajmani Tigunait, *Seven Systems of Indian Philosophy*, (Honesdale; Himalayan Institute Press), 91ff. The concept of *śabda* encompasses reliable testimony. The testimony is valid unless good reasons can be shown to disallow the testimony.

⁷⁰I Corinthians 15:14-15, 17-19.

⁷¹This is clear from the way he lays out the crowd of witnesses in I Corinthian 15.

back story that answers the fundamental questions of existence. The first century Christian critical value of the Adhikaṭha of Yishu provides a way forward through postmodernism by addressing the fundamental questions of existence. The questions are raised in the values seen in Indian philosophy. The Adhikaṭha of Yishu provides a way forward in the person of Yishu. He perfectly follows the dharma of God in his Adhikaṭha and removes the ṛṇa owed to God. He fulfills the three basic areas of the human condition where humans have failed. He opens up mokṣa to his people and provides for yoga with God for his people. They through visṡas can participate in his reality and find the sākti for an ethic of love.

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