

## **For pity's sake: comparative conceptions of inclusion in England and India.**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper offers a critique of transnational aspects of 'inclusion', one of those global education buzzwords that as Slee (2009) puts it, say everything but say nothing. It starts off by trying to compare Indian and English usages and attitudes at the level of teacher discourse, and notes the impossibility of any 'authentic' translation, given the very different cultural contexts and histories. In response to these divergences, the authors undertake a much more genealogical and 'forensic' examination of values associated with 'inclusion', focussing especially on a key notion of 'pity'. The Eurocentric tradition is traced from its Platonic origins through what is claimed to be the 'industrialization of pity' and its rejection as a virtue in favour of more apparently egalitarian measures of fairness. The Indian tradition relates rather to religious traditions across a number of different belief systems, most of which centre on some version of a karmic notion of pity. The authors both criticise and reject 'inclusion' as a colonisation of the global and call for a new understanding of notions like 'pity' as affective commitment rather than 'fair' dispensation of equality.*

## **Introduction: dead ends**

This article begins with a dead end. Recently, whilst engaged in research in India and England, we gathered data from a series of semi-structured interviews of teachers involved in Special Needs education. Our aim was to compare how inclusion was defined and operationalised by teachers. The definitions offered and experiences recounted within the interviews became problematic. We searched for commonality but found only glaring differences. We struggled to comprehend these differences and so initial coding of the data became virtually impossible. The initial methodology employed was a comparative 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By grounding analysis researchers seek to empower participants' voices enabling them to 'speak' within academic papers. But the harder we tried to represent, define, analyse and compare, the more slippery the words became. The dilemma was that such an analysis involves codifying words based upon agency and action. This process relies upon personal interpretation and inherited context. Yet contexts dominated common meaning. Our aim, of course, was to 'find' [never an innocent intention] concepts that would work across contexts but the harder we tried to go *across* the data, the more we were forced *down* in both cultures<sup>1</sup> not in order to 'discover' (at last) commonalities but to unearth (not 'ground') differences in meaning, value, history, philosophy and religion that the discourse of 'inclusion' disregarded, or even suppressed. The method fell apart along with its root metaphors. That was our first dead end.

The more we considered the data the greater became the issue of interpretation-in-context rather than any search for 'rubies in the porridge'. Dialogue between the two national contexts suggested that each word had a heritage grounded within years or even centuries of interpretation, semantic shifts and sometimes cynical manipulations of meaning. We needed a more forensic approach, both to the surfaces of the rhetorics of inclusion, and the cultural 'depths' of each word and context. Words had histories much more importantly than they had definitions. In a quite different sense, such words had 'dead ends' that had become neglected or obscured, yet which were culturally significant – offering hidden ontologies and values that the surface rhetorics of the interview data obscured. This issue became the root of our initial dismay. The words that took us furthest into this underworld were those of 'pity' and 'compassion'. Pity, in western culture is locked into a negative discourse. It is a clarion call to those who are bound up with political correctness. It is a word "thou shalt" not mention in relation to disability. The transcripts, however, revealed that the India teachers did

conceptualise pity in this manner, in fact they seem to celebrate it. So began our journey or discovery and enlightenment.

Before entering that underworld, however, it is worth saying something about global discourses of inclusion. De Nova (2002) has written perceptively about EU discourses that in order to achieve a non-threatening universalism have to rise to a level of abstraction that make them anodyne or even largely meaningless. We would argue that the inclusion agenda of Salamanca has some of these problems (Armstrong, et al.; 2005; Dunne, 2009). From the Salamanca Statement onwards, the term inclusion has also become part of governmental rhetoric in India and has gained status not just within individual schools but also in the mass media and in government policies (Singal & Rouse, 2003; Singal, 2005). It is evident, however, that inclusion suffers from what Singal (2005) calls terminological ambiguity because 'inclusion' is not an indigenous concept but results from western influences upon special education. Hindi, for example, has no direct translation for the term 'inclusion' (Singal, 2006). Secondly, 'inclusion' itself – certainly in its UK manifestation - is not an uncomplicated ideological construct since it has been accompanied by policies that have exacerbated (especially but not only) socio-economic differences, and can be read as a 'cloak' rather than a promise (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007)<sup>ii</sup>. As they put it, in relation to another European context, "Exclusion ignores exploitation" (Boltanski & Chiapello, p.354). It is not a unitary construct to be read in political isolation. In England, the past thirty years have seen a change in special education in respect to the development of inclusive educational practice (Hodkinson, 2005; 2009). In 1997, a New Labour government swept to power on such rhetoric. However, whilst the literature leaves one in no doubt that inclusion has gained prominence, it also suggests a tension in how inclusion is defined and regarding the words that are acceptable in its associated discourse (Hodkinson, 2009). As Boltanski & Chiapello argue it, notions of 'class' stand in the same relation to 'exploitation' as 'network' does to 'exclusion'. Thirdly, acts of 'policy borrowing' are common in the global educational field and reflect a kind of implicit hierarchy of worth – the shadow of a cultural imperialism is never far away. The overall effect has recently been characterised by Rizvi & Lingard as follows:

These effects worked through what has been called a 'magistrature of influence' operating above these nations, and have ensured some policy convergence as a result of this form of global governance, which was also part of the move of government to government within these particular nations (2010, p.123)

This paper focuses on the genealogy of the words pity and compassion<sup>iii</sup> and their relationship to disability and inclusion. We are interested here in acts of translation that always somehow fail, and thus provoke a never ending 'reform' of the discourse rather than the practices or values it implies. Especially, we are interested in what Hughes called a "...linguistic Lourdes" (Hughes, 1993, cited in Cameron, 1994, p.24) where words are taken to be finally and perhaps magically cured. To facilitate this examination we begin by briefly exploring discourses of inclusion employed by teachers in England and India.

### **Definitions of inclusion: a singularly western tradition?**

Within the data the English teachers' definitions of inclusion were based upon a number of themes; these being that every child should have *same opportunity* to access the mainstream educational environment and be educated using the *same curriculum*. For example, one teacher informed us that 'inclusive education is ...including all students that are in a learning environment in the experience and making sure that they get the best out of that experience as is possible. Another teacher detailed inclusion as ensuring that all children 'should be taught in mainstream' and have 'access and participation'. Such teachers, in the main, believed that inclusive education referred to children who had Special Educational Needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. However, it was noticeable that the Indian teachers constructed their understandings of inclusion in wider terms using the words 'pity' or 'compassion'. For example, "Yes, basically as a teacher I feel the biggest asset should be compassion... so I'm very compassionate and I have that feature in me. I feel that I'm actually compassionate towards him and I like to think I have learnt that."

Several other references linked disability to pity for the child and his or her condition, requiring schools to respond to such emotions. A focus on pity is not unique to our research, as indeed other Indian researches commonly reference pity (Dalal, n.d; Tull 1989; Miles, 2002). Of interest to us then was why such disparity in the acceptability of pity? Initial discussion suggested this might be because pity in relation to these issues is observed to be 'politically incorrect'. Indeed, it is a word that causes resentment and anger within the Western disability fraternity. Western culture it seems has encouraged practitioners to view pity as negative. Indeed disability 'blogs' and academic papers within journals evidence this,

Pity in and of itself ..., is a negative, period. I don't even want to add a noun there... it blocks not only a dialogue ... but can become the reason for objectifying and pushing away a disabled person ... (Disability Blog)

Overall, many students ... related some negative feelings about people with disabilities ...[within their journals] Some students expressed feelings such as pity and sympathy.... One student was clearly struggling with what she was really feeling ... and what she thought she should be feeling I can't help but stare at her and feel ashamed to do this. I feel pity, I feel sorry for her and I am also ashamed of this attitude I maintain. (Carrington and Brownlee, 2001, p.349)

The message in Western disability literature then is that pity is a negative emotion, one we should avoid and reprimand when interacting with people with impairments.

We argued earlier that 'un-grounded theory' necessitates forensic examination of individual words, and mindful of this we now 'incise' the word that precipitated our crisis of confidence in the application of our analytical techniques. This analysis considers how and why the employment of the word pity is so distinct within western and Indian parlance. Our analysis sketches the earliest definitions, emotions, and usages of this word. If, as we promised earlier, we are to go all the way down, rather than across, then we need to start with the European tradition on 'pity' as first proposed by Plato and Aristotle.

## **Western Philosophical Discourses of Pity**

### Ancient Greco-Roman Traditions of Pity

Plato regards pity as a basic desire analogous to friendship, hunger and lechery (Pappas, 1994). Platonic belief is suspicious of immersing oneself in this emotion, lest it make us "...soft, passive and less likely to act well" (Felski, 2008, p.155). Steven (1942, p.11) argues that for Plato pity is apocryphal and pernicious, the "...stimulation of which is likely to fit a man for meeting his share of misfortune courageously". Nevertheless, Halliwell (2002, p. 278) notes that Plato believes pity is central to existence because it "...contribute[s] to the reshaping of one's own sense of moral identity". Rather than dismissing pity he calls for it to be bestowed upon himself. Rather like in the 'gentle rain' image in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*. Pity, in

such a reading, is desirable but if unrestrained by reason its effect on society is pernicious allowing desire, not reason, to control man's thoughts.

Aristotle also believes that pity is a basic response, one which addresses suffering. For Aristotle there are three motivations to pity; first, there is an awareness that a person's suffering is significant; second, that the suffering is undeserved and, third, that such suffering could happen to oneself. (Portman, 2000). Aristotle regards such pity as positive for without it we cannot experience catharsis, a "...purging of one's own natural orientation" (Campbell, 2004, p.275). Unlike the modern concept of pity, Aristotle would not depict pity as a "...condescending feeling of sorrow for someone who is radically inferior" (Kenston, 2001, p. 181).

Thus far, we can see that 'pity' stands at some distance from its contemporary disparagement in (or rather) out of 'Western' inclusion rhetorics<sup>iv</sup>. It is not condescension, and it is a necessary emotion that we might wish for ourselves as for others, though with the Platonic proviso that it be tempered both with reason and resolution.

### **Discourses of Pity: The Enlightenment**

Before the Enlightenment pity was subject to further analysis by western philosophers, notably Hobbes. For Hobbes, pity is indivisible from compassion (Ewin, 2001) and is, as for Plato and Aristotle, a basic desire (Halliwell, 2002). Hobbes comments, "...Men are apt to pity those whom they love, they think worthy of good, and therefore not worthy of calamity". For Hobbes, not to immerse oneself in these feelings showed a "...hardness of heart" which proceeded from a "...slowness of the imagination ...". (Leviathan, c9. s.10). In Leviathan (c6, s27-27) Hobbes notes that, "Griefe for the calamity of another, is PITY; and ariseth from the imagination that the calamity may befall him selfe and therefore is also called compassion and in the phrase of the present time FELLOW-FEELING." It would seem that whilst Hobbes and Aristotle equate pity with apprehension (of a similar fate), the premise of 'feeling with' is not privileged but is more driven by psychological egoism grounded within fear that such calamity might befall ourselves (Hampton, 1988).

With the Enlightenment, such a view of Man<sup>v</sup> needing to be saved from himself/herself is reversed: it is 'Society' that we have to fear. In *Discourses of Inequality*, Rousseau's argues that 'natural' man has only two desires; self-preservation and pity, and holds these to be two sides of the same coin, with self-preservation ensuring individual survival and pity the species (Manent &

Le Dain, 2001). Pity, he argues is therefore a catalyst for natural justice because by experiencing it one cannot wish harm to another (Manent & Dain, 2001). Rousseau comments (1984, p.101),

It is therefore very certain that pity is a natural sentiment which by moderating in each individual the activity of self-love, contributes to the mutual preservation of the whole species.

Pity from Rousseau's perspective is the root of an emotion without which mankind "...despite all their morality, would have been no better than monsters ..." (Rousseau, p. 101). For Rousseau, pity is positive, drawing fellow men together. Rousseau's thesis is that inequality stems from a dilution of pity and the elevation of self-preservation. He comments, "As society develops one would see the rights of the citizens and the freedoms of notions extinguished little by little, and the protest of the weak treated as seditious noise." (Rousseau, p.1 33)

For Rousseau, then, pity is a social value to be cultivated to overcome isolation, separation and the individualisation of its members (Boyd, 2004). Of interest to the development of our overall argument was the suggestion that to overcome inequality we should cultivate pity. One is left in no doubt that pity as articulated by Rousseau is radically different to that within modern western discourses of disability. Rousseau would certainly reject the contemporary 'inclusive' rhetorics that would disparage pity as condescension. Moreover, he would conclude that an equality unreliant on pity was improbably lacking in affect and commitment. Why, then, did 'Western' views move from such a positive outlook on pity to the negative conceptualisation of today? What was the nature of that displacement?

### **Pity: descent into negativity and the industrialisation of pity**

Pity becomes a negative emotion in industrializing Europe. As the Foucault of *Birth of the Clinic*, and *Madness and civilisation* illustrated, breaks in the *episteme* result in radical shifts in the medical and educational 'gaze' (Foucault, 2001). The perspective that had foregrounded 'pity' was, in the tradition of Rousseau, backward-looking and romantic. A new medical and scientific positivism was more inclined to a Hobbesian pessimism. Objectification of 'condition'(diagnosis, treatment, morality) and methodology (medical, statistical, normative) created social paradigms which correlated disability to helplessness and dependency. The new perspectives held an element of mimicry in that industrial innovation and associated changes

both enforced and modelled new ways of thinking about individuals and society – there is always something of a ‘cargo cult’ going on in circumstances of change (See Jones & Grant in this edition). The positive valency of notions like ‘pity’ and ‘charity’ declined, and a more negative assumption of inequality developed, whereby the superior felt ‘pity’ for the inferior. Pity as condescension was born.

That argument can be extended. Basically, equality is associated with 19<sup>th</sup> century developments in affect. It comes both to replace and deprecate ideas such as ‘pity’ and ‘charity’– neither of these words begin to carry their current class/status connotations until the notion of a quasi-measured ‘equality’ invests both ‘scientific socialism’ and its softer relations in social democracy. The word ‘equal’ belongs implicitly to an economy of ‘similar’ and ‘different’ that have to be ‘equated’. But such an equation is tantamount to an ‘industrialisation of pity’. It offers an implicit *quantification* that argues itself as necessarily in need of a continual ‘balancing’ and ‘equating’ in order to decide itself to be true to its principles of equal treatment and fairness. This is impossible, along the lines of Colebrook’s ‘bourgeois thermodynamics’ (Colebrook, 2008) that fairness and excision of prejudice can never be realized. It is always breaking down as a resolution; failure to ‘equate’ is thus built into the discourse and as a result discourses of racial, sexual and ethnic identity, disability etc and fairness are forever inventing new concepts as the old discourse fails to deliver (as the procession of ephemerally ‘correct’ terms for disability or race would indicate). Hence fads and fashions like ‘inclusion’ etc. We do not argue that such a semantic kind of problem is anything like all of the problem, but if you go over the ways in which arguments are finally worked out in terms of ‘equal dignity’, ‘equal respect’, ‘fine balancing point’ (Garratt, forthcoming), something of the implicitly calculative nature of the underlying concepts and metaphors can be seen. The bigger argument is that two of the Big Three of the French revolution have been worked over and over – liberty and equality<sup>vi</sup>. But we haven’t done nearly enough thinking about ‘fraternity’ (if it can be forgiven its previously male origin as a word). Such a term takes us back towards earlier notions of pity, compassion and ‘fellow-feeling’ because it emphasizes the affect and the relationship in terms of an affective commitment rather than a rational calculation. So perhaps we need different approaches to thinking notions of ‘association’ and ‘mitsein’ (Heidegger’s term, but he doesn’t develop it) – and Jean-Luc Nancy in the *Experience of Freedom* tries to do just that.

To support these lines of argument we pursue three distinct but overlapping genealogies, within the development of the medical profession, notions of charity and the image

of disability created by populist media. It is through what we would call these 'centres of osmosis,' that industrial capitalism created a social hegemony founded upon the "...normality of the able-bodied" (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p.26). We will trace how new discourses (economic, medical, philanthropic and media-based) emanating from these centres of osmosis created new societal practices which we will argue "industrialised pity". We will show how new "...yardstick[s] for judging people with impairments" (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p. 21), which mixed a cocktail of medical and scientific positivism, benevolent humanitarianism and a dose of Methodism and Evangelicalism (Pritchard, 1963) emerged. It is our belief that such yardsticks changed societal consciousness of impairment and thus transformed pity into "an urge begotten of a superfluity of power" (Nietzsche, 1990, p. 91).

### **Disability, pity and the medical model**

The discourses of Victorian medical empiricism and scientific positivism subverted conceptions of pity. Industrialisation, through its massification, led to new medical approaches as professionals became increasingly concerned with normality and the desires to diagnose, categorise and cure impairments. The adoption of what Priestly (1998) calls individual materialism enabled disability to be considered in terms of biological determinism, a personal tragedy located within the material condition of the patient. Foucault (1977, p. 134) argues that the object was "...docile bodies" that were "...used, transformed and improved" to serve the needs of industry. We believe this model is significant to conceptions of pity as it elevated medical and quasi-medical professionals to positions of superiority. Patients, then, who failed to measure up to social norms, who could not be transformed by medical 'science' were therefore relegated to inferior positions as part of a social technology rather than addressed by any discourse of pity or compassion. We are minded here of Ben-Ze'ev's contention (1993) that professionals through the medical model adopt a position of 'sympathetic sorrow' towards disability and this is transposed onto patients in the form of the new definitions of pity<sup>vii</sup>.

We suggest this new disability-pity relationship coupled with a changing professional power dynamic enables the 'science' of social Darwinism and eugenics to spread across western society. Pity, then, rather than acting as a counterbalance to self-preservation, becomes unbalanced and disability (etc) becomes a matter of 'science', as Darwin's (1874, p.157) eugenicist comments confirm,

We civilised men ...do our utmost to check the process of elimination: we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed and, the sick, we institute poor-laws, and our medical men exert their utmost to save the life of everyone to the last moment ... Thus the weak members of society propagate their kind. No-one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of men.

It was philanthropy as well as science that engendered new responses to abnormality and misfortune (Hodkinson, 2007). First, state education developed "...to provide skilled workers who could compete in an era of growing industrial productivity" (Wood, 2004, p. 11). For those ejected from mainstream schooling the issue became one of charitable<sup>viii</sup> accommodation. Philanthropy maintained the special segregated schooling and workhouses prevalent in Victorian Britain. This humanitarianism mixed with repression and control reinforces the pity-disability dynamic by offering an "...enduring cultural message that perpetuates an image of helplessness and dependency" (Barnes & Mercer, 2003, p. 26) and thus creates a "...morally asymmetrical relationship" (Bickenbach, 1993, p. 197), casting some as active agents and others as passive recipients (Williams, 1986). Charities fed this dynamic, constructing an image of disability as personal tragedy with the aim of stimulating emotional reactions (Shakespeare, 2006). Pity had been a 'gift' in the past. Now it was much more a commodity, an affect to be stimulated and marketed. It is in such contexts we suggest pity evolves towards Nietzsche's *mitleid* and so becomes based upon superiority and intense feelings that the subject of pity is worthless. As such it becomes a 'moral shudder' whose employment offers contempt as pity becomes contaminated with shame.<sup>ix</sup>

The third site of osmosis in generating the new pity-disability nexus was the media, and it was crucial to the dissemination of pity as a negative emotion. Over the last two centuries classic plays, story books and newspapers have presented people with impairments as pathetic, pitiable and passive victims (Hodkinson, 2007). For example, the very first melodrama performed in 1802 employed a mute character whose role was to "...evoke great pity" in the audience (Booth, 1965, p. 71). Dickens' novels purveyed the image of disability as grounded within the emotions of pity and bravery.<sup>x</sup> It is our contention, then, that the media also helped displace pity from a positive concept to a negative one. The media ensured that pity became an attitude stimulus (Shakespeare, 2006) which served to mediate our attitudes towards, assumptions about and expectations of people with impairments.

Thus elements of the economic, medical, philanthropic, literary and media discourses and practices generated what we want to call the 'industrialization of pity' and its re-location as a social technology rather than a moral or religious commitment. As such it was infected by the normative 'scientific'<sup>xi</sup> concerns of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in such a way that it became what it remains today, largely at least, an implicit quantification, based on notions of 'equality' rather than 'pity' or compassion.

### **Indian philosophy, tradition and ethics**

Earlier we detailed our analytic deadend. If we could not compare like with like then we would have to learn to contrast unlike with unlike, and take it from there. It became evident to both of us that to have any chance of making sense of this difference we had to understand not only the Indian teachers' 'cultural beliefs and coping mechanisms' (Dalal, n.d., p.4) but also to develop a better understanding of the Indian political and cultural beliefs and values that surrounded the reception of 'inclusion' rhetorics.

Again, we intend this analysis to centre on notions of pity and compassion. The first thing that had to be acknowledged was that 70% of the world's disability is located in countries where up until very recently western philosophical traditions and ethics had little influence (Miles, 2002). Inclusion, by definition, was related to such tradition. From that perspective 'inclusion' was a highly exclusionary cultural act. It was clear to us that to understand the lexicon, agency and actions of the teachers in our Indian data we had to acknowledge the Eurocentric neglect of Indian beliefs and attitudes that has characterised transnational discourses of inclusion (Miles, 2002). In our re-analysis of the data, we agreed with Miles (2002, p. 54) that "... in the pluralistic and post-modern age the existence of concepts and belief systems that differ radically from those contextualised in western debate cannot be ignored". We came to realise that to understand why pity and compassion were understood positively we had to make sense of the "...socio-cultural logic" (Miles, 2002, p. 68) that was operating in the Indian contexts. A further difficulty was, as Dalal (n.d., p. 4) recalled, "...Indian society has remained pluralistic with multiple traditions weaving multicultural patterns and therefore needs to be understood as embedded into multiple cultural discourses with subtle nuances" . Accordingly, we examined various aspects of Indian life, its religion, engrained traditions of 'charity in the form of deed,' and its strong sense of community. We believed that it is within these 'subtle nuances' of Indian society the reason for the positive orientation of pity might be found.

Although one may argue that India is constructed within uniquely conflicted and conflicting sub-cultures there is a commonality of attitudes in that for thousands of years India has projected a sense of community based upon practices of helping others. This community spirit has been based on strong religious traditions which have, and indeed still do, dominate much of Indian life (Jha, 2002). Overall, we found ourselves drawn to Jha's (2002, p. 43) contention that "...religious beliefs... seem to provide important explanations". We believed that this principle opened up a new ontology for locating the interview transcripts.

### **India and its religions**

Within India a number of religions exist, such as Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Hinduism is considered the world's oldest religion and accounts for some 80% of Indian devotees. As our understanding developed it became apparent that many assumptions, beliefs and attitudes that are rooted in present Indian cultures seem to be formulated with reference to Hindu mythology, classic Vedic epics and other religious texts. For thousands of years classic texts of Hinduism have referred to disability and employed disabled characters many of which are still familiar (Miles, 2002). For example, one of the ten Dasavataram (reincarnation of Lord Vishnu in various forms on Earth) refers to Vishnu's appearance as a dwarf and in the Jataka tales the Buddha appears as a gifted dwarf and as a 'deaf cripple' (Miles, 2002). These religious stories are repeatedly told through a variety of media; books, films, and cartoons to reinforce values related to charity, pity and compassion<sup>xii</sup>. There are some interesting contrasts here, not least in the incorporation of disability into the god himself, in perhaps telling contrast to a Christian ethic where the disabled are the Other that the perfect god (eg Jesus) must heal.

In classic Buddhist texts monks and lay disciples are urged to "Go ye now and wander for the gain of many, for the welfare of the gods and man" (Widgery, 2006, p.57) and never "...cease to preach and to practice universal pity and sympathy for sentient life". Traditional Muslim culture is more ambivalent about 'pity', believing that all needs are met not out of pity but as a gesture of seeking good will to God. There is no doubt, however, that a major 'attitudinal stimulus' in India is as Miles (2002, p. 57) states, that "...adherents of most religions are exhorted not to mock or obstruct disabled people but to be charitable to them." What was most revealing to us was that in the fourth Century BCE Chandragupta Maurya formulated a law that forbade the employment of discriminatory language towards people with disabilities. Therefore, it was in India that the notion of anti-discriminatory legislation began.

A prominent concept in Indian society is 'charity of deed'<sup>xiii</sup>. Indeed, all major Indian religions recommend charity; in Islam as Zakat, in Christianity as Tithe and in Hinduism as Daan. Moreover, 'charity of deed' is enshrined within the ancient Vedic principle of *Dharma*, which offers charity and service as a duty to all people including the destitute, disabled and the less fortunate members of society (Agarwall, 1994). Tradition, then, enjoins fortunate people to show pity and compassion to those who suffer. We concluded that various forms of 'inclusion' had been operating for many thousands of years and indeed that it may be considered as part of the social glue that held Indian society together<sup>xiv</sup>.

Given such cultural and religious contexts, why, despite all of the economic and technological changes that had influenced the global community, had these various conceptualisations of 'pity' and similar obligations not altered in India?

### **The Karmic tradition**

Karma, according to Birckenbach (1992, p. 189) is a theory of "...primitive retributivism". Winthrop (1963, p. 189) notes that karma involves a person in "...conscious act and volitional action" which produces either pleasure (*sukha*) or pain and suffering (*duhka*). For Winthrop (1963) karma is essentially a merit and demerit system that develops its potential within a person's *jiva*. The *jiva* in Hindu tradition is carried from one birth to the next. As such if one has committed misdeeds in a previous life one has to bear the consequences in present existence (Dalal, n.d.). To overcome these previous misdeeds one has to behave morally (Doniger & O Flaherty, 1983). In the development of our thinking the principle of karma became most important. We now want to argue that the philosophy of karma gives rise to the manifestation of pity, and it is this pity that leads to benevolent acts of charity.

But there is a conundrum here. How could such ancient traditions, mythologies and religious duties still provide such attitudinal stimulus in such a technologically innovative modern society? We earlier argued for the notion of the 'industrialisation of pity' in Europe, resulting in quasi-quantified notions of 'equality' and 'entitlement. In the Indian contexts, we found no equivalent except at the level of the somewhat 'gaseous' global discourses of disability. In stark distinction, we argue here that it may not be what the industrial revolution did, but what it failed to achieve in India that brings us closer to understanding the manifestations of pity and compassion observed in our study.

Our understanding of the importance of Indian industrialisation was developed by the work of Usha Bhatt (1963) who by employing analytical references from ancient scriptures examined how attitudes towards disability were changing within Indian society as a result of industrialisation. Earlier, we proposed that industrialisation enabled scientific positivism and biomedical ethics to ‘hitch-hike’ on the “...grand narrative of western civilization” and so insinuate themselves as “...illegal immigrants” in the project of a new colonial global modernity (Menon, 1997, p. 291). Bhatt argues that such incursions were very limited in impact because India’s strong sense of community coupled with the peripheral impact of the industrial revolution on its rural hinterlands meant that, unlike in Europe, there was much less destruction of the familial unit in India. Dalal (n.d.) adds to Bhatt’s thesis, suggesting that whilst industrialisation and two world wars deeply influenced societal attitudes in the West the same was simply not the case in India.

Thus we conclude that pity and compassion grounded in karmic principles served to limit the impact of scientific positivism and biomedical discourses. We suggest that Karma acting in line with Rousseau-like principles of pity and compassion acted as a counterbalance to the ‘vanity, cruelty and inequality’ inherent in these new industrialised societies. We believe therefore that the Indian teachers’ operationalisation of pity and compassion in our study was more plausibly a social construct based on karmic principles. As a result, the ‘inclusion’ agenda, with its notions of equality rather than compassion, of calculation rather than concern, is subverted rather than rejected.

## **Conclusions**

We began with a dead end. We end with a new beginning. By rejecting inherited cultural imperialism we began to entertain an anthropology of disability outside the dominant culture of western educated classes (Dalal, n.d.) so opening up new understanding. We suggest that if we are to avoid the pathological application of global educational discourses and policy the acceptance of globalised words such as inclusion must be questioned. The global discourse of ‘inclusion’ seeks to denigrate notions of ‘pity’ in the Indian context. They are posited as a kind of ‘backwardness’, a lack of discursive ‘political correctness’ which the new ideology will correct. In this account we have made two counter-suggestions. The first is that Indian discourses of pity, resting for example on karmic principles, may be in no need of such kinds of external instruction. The second is that western discourses on inclusion carry a very similar excision of past concern for ‘fellow-feeling’ expressed in terms of pity and compassion. We need to

reconsider our own histories of care and concern for the Other. It is essentially a question of dialogue with the Other, and we have tried to enact something of that kind of dialogue in this paper. On both sides, for both parties, neither surrender nor imposition. Beyond that, we need to deconstruct notions of 'equality' and to de-industrialise the anathema pronounced on 'pity' and other notions like 'charity'. In particular, notions associated with inclusion seem to imply a kind of hidden quantification – once again, we need 'more history and less Maths' (See Stronach & Clarke this edition). In Indian and in pre-industrial Europe these were not emotions of condescension, and it could be argued that they imply a kind of 'associationism', 'fraternity', and 'fellow-feeling' that concepts of equality lack, or downplay. By its very nature such fraternity is an affective engagement, in ways that 'equality' may often lack in its concern to quantify and commodify fairness. We find ourselves thinking of new expeditions against other universalised educational terms such as 'standards', 'quality' and 'effectiveness'. Within the global rubric of such 'gaseous transnational discourses' (de Nova, 2002) it ought to be obvious that forcing global 'reform' discourses upon indigenous cultures without first understanding the individual society's heritage serves only to confuse and mystify. Equally, the genealogy of these 'reform discourses' needs to be open to deconstruction and critique. Perhaps, then, what is required is much more of a form of "...critical traditionalism" (Menon, 1997, p. 88) where global discourses are interrogated through the lens of a society's heritage before being carried out to villages and towns as a grass roots movement.

A final point. The economic flows from 'The West' to India were mainly in one direction. That direction has now been reversed, for both India and China. It may be that other flows will also reverse, in a cultural and spiritual 'El Niño' effect. Such, at least, was the prediction of Schopenhauer (in Elman, 1983, p.671) in relation to India,

In India our religions will never take root. The ancient wisdom of the human race will not be displaced by what happened in Galilee. On the contrary, Indian philosophy streams back to Europe, and will produce a fundamental change in our knowledge and thought

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<sup>i</sup> A dreadful conflation of cultural pluralities, especially in relation to India, but we will make a more complex distinction later in this account.

<sup>ii</sup> This has more than one dimension. 'Inclusion' in the UK masks greater differentiation in other educational policies of New Labour, acting as a kind of Old Labour conscience to a more market-oriented and neoliberal agenda. It obscures the son-of-Thatcher nature of a Blairite agenda. It also masks disinvestments in specialized schooling for the disabled.

<sup>iii</sup> For some (Levine, 1986, p.186) pity and compassion are actually two ends of the same continuum. The etymology of the word suggests that compassion is about tapping into somebody else's feelings or feeling with' another person (Kimball, 2004) (*see further discussion below*). Others though argue that what most people call compassion is actually pity by another name (Blum, 1994). Indeed, one is minded of Nietzsche's writings where he employs only one word that of *Mitleid* to represent compassion and pity. Some have argued therefore that he does not distinguish between these two concepts (Fraser, 2006). Others, though, (Portman, 2000) suggest that *Mitleid* is a principally negative concept for Nietzsche but not wholly so as he distinguishes between pity and compassion in a somewhat ambiguous fashion.

<sup>iv</sup> 'Western', we recognize, has its own inclusionary/exclusionary issues. We use it as a shorthand for those eurocentric and anglo-american countries who traditionally have dominated global education.

<sup>v</sup> We use the terminology of the period, while noting the 'exclusive' nature of its functioning in relation to gender.

<sup>vi</sup> Indeed, English, British and American colonists were somewhat shameless in their invocations of liberty, which always applied to the Self and seldom to the Other. Anglo-Saxon nostalgia for ancient liberties, combined with reverence for English Common Law, and opposition to Hanoverian despotism found little problem in by-passing contradictions as colossal as slavery (Schama, 2009, p. 45), although these invocations also informed the anti-slavery movement in Britain.

<sup>vii</sup> Hulme (1924) also adds that pity in this form is also confused with compassion, empathy, commiseration and condolence.

<sup>viii</sup> We do not develop the argument here, but 'charity' and 'pity' suffered very similar genealogical fates.

<sup>ix</sup> Nietzsche's (1990) and the modern conceptualisation of pity are eminently demonstrated in this quote taken from this Victorian melodrama,

"...when I knelt, and held out my hand to ask for alms in the name of misfortune ..., shame choked my utterance and I was overcome with anger at my own humiliation. A passer-by looked at me in pity and put a ...coin in my hand. A great lump came into my throat and my eyes filled up with tears ."(Oxenford ,1874, p. 7).

<sup>x</sup> Note, for example, Stothers's (2008) critique of the character of Tiny Tim in a Christmas Carol.

"Tiny Tim is on the ropes in Charles Dickens' Christmas Carol. Sickly and dependent, Tiny Tim is getting shakier and shakier on that homemade little crutch. But he is saved from death by old Ebenezer Scrooge, who sees the light in the nick of time. Now, before you go apoplectic at my assault on wee Tim, think about

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how he helps shape some of society's most cherished attitudes -- charity, pity (for poor little Tiny Tim), for example. Tiny Tim, plucky, sweet and inspirational, tugs at the public heart...I hate it. I hate it because this Tiny Tim sentimentality stereotypes people with disabilities and contributes to our oppression.”

<sup>xi</sup> We do not at all want to disparage the workings of Science and Engineering in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. It was ‘Science’ as social technology that concerns us, as a simulacra.

<sup>xii</sup> Other ancient texts such as the Laws of Manu, purported to be the oldest legal code in the world and a basic text for all in the second century AD, established how families should maintain disabled relatives (www. Hinduism.com, Miles, 2002). The *Manu Smriti*, also impels people to spare part of their wealth for the hapless fellow being. In addition the *Padma Purana*, one of the major 18 Hindu religious texts, lists many disabilities and people are exhorted to care for such people (Miles, 2002). In addition, the *Dharmashastra* enjoins all households to look after the weak and the disabled, promising those who did so their place in heaven (Kuppuswamy, 1977).

<sup>xiii</sup> This is where people are responsible for providing money, or donations in kind such as free food, medicine and education, to the poor and needy.

<sup>xiv</sup> Of course it is true that great disparities in wealth and status also existed in Indian cultures, as in the caste system. Our concern here, however, is to trace a countervailing discourse on ‘pity’ and its origins.