

Sachindranath and Suresh Chandra on Wittgenstein: Mysticism, Transcendentalism and God

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1. Introduction

The Tractatourian metaphysics is; the world is the sum totality of facts, all that is the case. “All” means a closure, a boundedness. It also means; – all that is to be said is said or all that can be said is said. Saying about the world is language. Or what is said about the world is language. As a counterpart to the Tractatourian metaphysics of facts, the Tractatourian language is mirror of reality or the sum totality of facts. Saying something about the world is mirroring the world. A mirroring picture has a logical fidelity; as perfect as the Platonic form. Almost all the commentaries on the Tractatus converge on one crucial point that the Tractatourian Wittgenstein affirms a formal symmetry between human nature, language and reality – as a condition of adequate description. This formal symmetry, it is claimed, ensures the fixity of meaning as the essence of sentences or propositions. The Tractatourian model is logically elegant, the sum totality of facts and the sum totality of propositions holding on to each other in isomorphic relation. But it is such a closed model. No wonder Wittgenstein finds it a cage not unlike the Platonic cave. A point repeatedly emphasised by Suresh Chandra. No wonder that the desire to be free from the cage or prison house or cave is universal in man. A desire for which Wittgenstein had the profoundest respect.

There is the crucial issue of whether Tractatus is the logical formalisation of an ideal language that gives us conditions of adequate

description. But we need not dwell on the issue. A minimalist interpretation of the Tractatourian view of language will serve our purpose. And the minimalist interpretation is, language is a system of propositions mirroring facts and these propositions are either true or false.

Look at the sentence or proposition “I love you” through the Tractatourian prism. What do we see? A fact or state of affairs, an emotion, an act, a disposition, a promise, a proposal or a what? How do we interpret the meaning of the verb “love” sandwiched by two personal pronouns? Formalising the sentence or proposition as relational *Liy* is of no help either. Even admitting that formalisation gives the logical form which I doubt, it does not give us the substance of what love is. Proceeding further, take up a Bollywood example. After tensions and counter-tensions in the Bollywood love game of hide and seek, the heroine falls in the arms of the hero; beating his breast with her two hands as drumsticks to declare “I hate you”. The audience rapturing into tearful applause, understands “I hate you” means “I love you” and vice-versa. Don’t deny that they have understood. The Bollywood love-industry and violence-industry would have collapsed long back if they have not understood. So, love and hate are commensurable in use and in their commensurability points to what is intriguing if not wholly mysterious. We, therefore, see that the many uses of a word, a sentence or a proposition do not have the same logical form or essential meaning. Our language is a maze of meandering streets and squares of old and new houses. It can be seen, according to Wittgenstein, as an ancient city with additions from various periods.¹ Now, then, Wittgenstein argues that our city called language, with newer and newer additions, has too many surprises to be accommodated within the neat logical formalisation of the Tractatus. The Tractatourian engagement with the logical form or meaning of propositions (the sum totality of which is language) has to give way to looking for the uses of languages. We find our ways with the world or in the world using words and sentences. And our ways of using language have criss-cross similarities. What Wittgenstein calls family resemblance.² It is never the case that there is something to be called a meaning running like a common thread in all of them.³ Finding our ways with the world, of course, still implies that our language and world hold on to each other constituting a boundedness or a cage. What lies

beyond this boundedness is not sayable. But it is not unimportant. Rather it is a perennial problem of philosophy. The present paper is to highlight the thoughts of two eminent philosophers, Sachindranath and Suresh Chandra, on Wittgenstein. Views on mysticism, transcendentalism and religion to be precise. On what Wittgenstein calls the unsayable.

2. Sachindranath on Wittgenstein's Mysticism

Wittgenstein's picture theory of meaning as well as his views on logic highlighting the distinction between the sayable and showable, points out that what is showable cannot be said in language again. The showable, therefore, is the unsayable. Philosophy, saying the unsayable is in Wittgenstein's view, absolutely senseless. Philosophy making lofty claims of discoursing on a transcendent reality is equally senseless. A tremendous consequence of this doctrine, according to Sachindranath is, "in a perfect Wittgensteinian republic it is the philosophers who will be banished".⁴ In this regard, Wittgenstein is not even making an exception of himself. He himself frankly admits that the Tractatus should be thrown away once we have the book as a ladder to climb up. Sachindranath quotes;

6.54 My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognises them as nonsensical, when he has used them – as steps – to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it).

He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.⁵

Sachindranath opines that the last sentence betrays the 'mystical' in Wittgenstein. He points out that when the world is seen properly and in its totality, there is always a sense of rightness. When I describe, I describe only a part of the world. But I can see that this part is only a part of the totality. Thus, any part of the world that I can describe equally manifest the totality. In Sachindranath's interpretation of Wittgenstein, I can see the totality in any description and thus am aware of the limit of how much can be said. He then concludes that this constant sense of limit of the 'expressible' is sure to impart a mystic awareness. Mystic silence here should not merely be construed as a 'failure of expression' but as a zone

where the self enjoys his security and freedom. Perhaps, where the self is unburdened from the bounds of communication; where seeing is all that need be. It is also difficult to relate what Wittgenstein calls the non-speakable (mystic) with the ordinary trend of mysticism that we find in India or elsewhere.⁶ That is to say, mysticism based on a certain kind of experience. Do we confine ourselves to what Wittgenstein explicitly states in the last section of the Tractatus? Do we relate what is said in the Tractatus with the three famous personal experiences of Wittgenstein namely; (i) the sense of wonder at there being anything at all (Wittgenstein believes it to be what people were referring to when they said that God had created the world) (ii) the feeling of absolutely safe which some people would say is the same as feeling safe in the hands of God, and (iii) the experience of feeling guilty which one might say is the same as feeling that God disapproves of our conduct?⁷ Or do we agree with Otto Neurath whose comment on Wittgenstein's conclusion 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent' was "One must indeed be silent, but not *about* anything"?⁸

A.J. Ayer's sympathies lie with Neurath. Here Ayer does not deny the occurrence of mystical experience or that those who enjoy them are entitled to set a great value on them. Ayer says he is only rejecting the suggestion that mystic experiences reveal the existence of anything higher, or that they supply an answer to the 'the problems of life'. He does not like to bury ethics and aesthetics together in the mystical, also. He admits that his emotive theory of Ethics is developed under the spell of the Tractatus. But he is not in agreement with Wittgenstein's views on Ethics.⁹

Further more, Ayer makes the interesting point that the experiences (mystic?) to which Wittgenstein turns to throw light on his sense of absolute values do not provide the basis for any set of moral principles. They offer no guidance for the conduct of life. At the same time, Ayer gives his testament, on the basis of abundant evidence that Wittgenstein maintained very strong moral attitudes. That his judgements of people's conduct including his own, were frequently harsh. Ayer also testifies that Wittgenstein never bothered to bring his "very strong moral attitudes" into accord with any philosophical theory.¹⁰

Now, here is a fruitful paradox exploration of which will reveal

Wittgenstein's views on the nature of philosophy as an activity, as well as his views on the mystic and the religious. Wittgenstein himself reminds us always that things mystical make themselves manifest through forms of life. Surely, what is to be explored is; this manifestation through forms of life. Ayer's verification principle (drawing inspiration from Tractatus itself) forbids him to follow where the paradox leads.

Considering these points and counterpoints in the discussions on Wittgenstein's mysticism, Sachindranath observes that the mystic assumes a relatively self-sufficient status perhaps because the rest of the Tractatus hardly needs to be interpreted in terms of Wittgenstein's remarks on the mystical. This part, in his opinion, is a free-for-all zone where one may develop *one's own ideas which are only occasioned by the Text of the Tractatus*. He concentrates on what he calls the 'being mysticism' of the Tractatus as expressed in the off-quoted line: "It is not how things are in the world that is mystical, but that it exists" (6.44). His exposition is as follows:

The Upanishadic texts of India discourse on 'Sat' which is of the same root as satya or truth. The self, Sat, the universe, are identical. They are also considered under the concept of existence or the more general term 'being' which is an eternal source of mysticism in the Indian spiritual thought. The identification of the Self or Brahma with 'Sat' or 'the universe' led the Upanishadic seers to conclude that one cannot describe the true nature of the 'self'. They declare; "one who says he knows Brahman does not truly know him". This identity, Sat = Satya = Universe = Self = Brahma throws up the concept of 'existence' or the more general concept of being which is the eternal source of the mystic. This is precisely what Sachindranath calls 'being-mysticism' which leads one to silence. A true meditation on the self which is silence is a zone where one feels free and secure as selves. Sachindranath points out that Wittgenstein's approach to silence is intensely familiar to the Indian mind. Silence in the Upanishadic texts as well as the Tractatus is constructive, unlike Otto Neurath's silence which is not about anything. It is not a dumb man's silence but silence born out of an inevitability of expression. Sachindranath's strategy to unlock the mystic in Wittgenstein's thought is, to look at the nature of the signs and the inevitable status that we have to give to them in order to express

reality. It means looking at the signs in abstraction but as a part of the concept of being. And for this way of looking, Sachindranath coins a term, namely, 'sign mysticism'.¹¹

How do we explain sign mysticism? The essential feature or 'logical form' so to say, of a symbol-type is that it acts as a medium and a transparent world at that through which a world is or can be described with a T-F pole. The sign character of a symbol or the propositional sign itself is a fact. According to Sachindranath, this implies that language as a medium often behaves as an opaque phenomenon through which I do not see the world but see another world in the language. We are then led to believe that language itself is a fact which may not describe anything else. That our opaque language cannot describe that we see another world in the language. Our signs are too bad to do the job. They are passive, opaque repositories of 'logical form' mirroring – but unable to reach reality. Once this is admitted we push ourselves into sign mysticism. How do we transcend both language and the world to say again that one mirrors the other? Impossible. Hence, silence! In Sachindranath's own words;

Where language behaves opaquely we lose a sense of reality and feel trapped into a situation where all that we have are facts, and no model to describe them; because the model itself is a fact. To be surrounded by facts without being able to organise them into a scheme makes us aware of a sort of existential limitation. I live with facts and cannot talk about them except creating another hierarchy of facts. Thus an easy communication appears to be impossible and we feel compelled to be silent. We strike against language-opaque and the feeling of a very formidable fate creeps into our life and expressive behaviour. We often then cry out, 'Silence'!¹²

Interestingly, he links this to the enjoyment of aesthetic experience – a point I am going to return again.

3. Suresh Chandra on Wittgenstein's Mysticism and Transcendentalism

The mystical is the inexpressible. The relation of facts and propositions, as noted above, is showable but not sayable. Therefore, inexpressible, that is, mystical. We have noted why and how Sachindra

Nath calls it sign mysticism. Russell interprets Wittgenstein as maintaining that the inexpressible contains the whole of logic and philosophy.¹³

Suresh Chandra points out that not only logic and philosophy, but Ethics, Aesthetics and Religion are also mystical for yet a different reason. They are engagements with mystery, transcendence, valuation, time and eternity, God, continuity of life after death, resurrection, the promise of second coming, immortality, righteousness, the Good and the Beautiful. These engagements cannot be expressed in language, which is too small a teacup to hold them. Wittgenstein's classic metaphor of this inexpressible, taking the example of Ethics is;

It seems to me obvious... That we cannot write a scientific book, the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime and above all other subject matters. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all the other books in the world.¹⁴

If Ethics, Aesthetics and Religion are inexpressible, and hence mystical, then, what is the nature of our engagement with these? Here Suresh Chandra draws our attention to the following remarks of Wittgenstein:

There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves *manifest*. They are what is mystical.¹⁵

According to Suresh Chandra, Wittgenstein's point is that, it is not showing through language that ethics, aesthetics and religion are manifested. Here Max Black's view, "any effort to express the mystical, whether by saying or by showing must result in absurdity" is not true. Suresh Chandra argues that Black's view may be true of logic and philosophy, but not of the forms of life. The forms of life cannot be absurd, because they are not linguistic expressions, and cannot be reduced to them. The argument is further reinforced by emphasizing the point that the source for Wittgenstein's mystical attitude towards the human values arises out of the fact that he finds the world limited and bounded. According to Suresh Chandra, when Wittgenstein writes "Feeling the world as a limited

whole – it is this that is mystical", the feeling he is discoursing on is certainly unique, not reducible to any other feeling. This mystical feeling is not what led Wittgenstein to say that logic cannot be expressed in language. Logic cannot be expressed in language, not because it is bounded and limited, but because it expresses the essence of language. The conclusion, therefore, is, Wittgenstein has two senses of the mystical. One, a sense in which logic is mystical. Two, a sense in which engagements with human values, such as Ethics, Aesthetics and Religion are mystical.

In the Preface to his book Wittgenstein: New Perspectives, Suresh Chandra gives us the following testament:

A question may be asked: what is new about the perspective from which I have written on Wittgenstein? At least one thing is new, that I am an Indian, born and brought up in the Vedantic tradition, not the tradition that gave birth to Wittgenstein.¹⁶

He also takes note of the fact that Professor R. Balasubramanian has been interpreting Wittgenstein in terms of Vedantic transcendentalism, in his lectures. Also, of Professor S. Panneerselvam's comparing Wittgenstein with Shankara maintaining that Wittgenstein's transcendentalism is closer to Indian tradition, particularly the Vedantic tradition, than to the orthodox Judaeo-Christian tradition of the West. Despite his testament and reference showing that transcendentalism is not something new to the Indian tradition, Suresh Chandra opts neither Vedantic transcendentalism nor Vienna-Circle logical empiricism in his interpretation of Wittgenstein. In unfolding Wittgensteinian transcendentalism in the light of philosophical paradox sandwiched and sustained by the early and later Wittgenstein, Suresh Chandra is at his creative best. The point that emerges in the course of unfoldment is, Tractaturian transcendentalism flowering into the thought-landscapes Wittgenstein could sketch in the Philosophical Investigations; so much so that the Tractatus remains to be revisited again and again. Suresh Chandra compares the growth of Wittgenstein's thought to that of a Banyan tree of which the root is the Tractatus, the logico-analytic techniques of Frege and Russell the trunk transmitting nourishment to the fruits, flowers and leaves, the Philosophical Investigations the fruits and the Philosophical Remarks branches spread out in all directions to

take roots again to support the old trunk and the tree in its totality.¹⁷ To me the tree metaphor is deep and insightful, holding out promises for future researches on Wittgenstein.

With these remarks, let me dwell on Suresh Chandra's thoughts on Wittgenstein's views on religion.

4. Suresh Chandra on Wittgenstein's view on Religion

According to Suresh Chandra, Wittgenstein does not wish God's divinity to be questioned. Therefore, he restricts God to the transcendental realm. God's revelation in the world implies His physical presence also. But God's own physical presence or the physical presence of His messenger give a chance to the people to question His divinity. This questioning will injure His divinity. If God's transcendental character is to be preserved; revelation is to be ruled out. Here Suresh Chandra's interpretation is; if God is allowed to be physically present even once, His repeated physical presence cannot be prohibited. God's incarnation and therefore, reincarnation, must be stopped.

In support of his interpretation, Suresh Chandra points out the similarities between Wittgenstein's views and Tagore's portrayal of God in the play *Raja or The King of the Dark Chamber*. Tagore's portrayal expresses Wittgenstein's own religious ideal. Like Surangma, Wittgenstein did not wish to see God or to find reasons for his existence. Surangma, a maid-servant in the play, feels the presence of King (who symbolises God in the play) though she never saw him. She is so very different from Sudarshna (married to the King) who wishes to see the King. Surangma does not require any reasons to believe in the existence of the King (God), so also she does not require a visual glimpse of him. She has faith in His existence and feels His presence. Sudarshna is superficially so close to the King but is far away from Him. It's a play of hide and seek. Far is near; near is far.

Tagore and Wittgenstein had their inspiration in Kierkegaard. According to Kierkegaard, there is an infinite gulf between man and God. Which has to be bridged if man is to reach God. But the gulf is Infinite. So, the bridge has to be one capable of overarching the Infinite gulf. Will Reason serve the purpose? Not at all. Kierkegaard says, only and only

when man takes a leap of faith can this gulf be bridged, and God be reached. Kierkegaard is emphatic that faith, that is leap of faith is the essence of Christianity. And the phenomenal history of the Church's institutional success is never a substitute for this Christian faith. It is not even an iota of evidence. Remember Nietzsche's aphorism; in the history of mankind there had been only one Christian – the one crucified.

Suresh Chandra in his exposition points out that Kierkegaard rejected reasons and visual glimpses of God, which inspired both Tagore and Wittgenstein. He also refers to Wittgenstein's view; "Kierkegaard was by far the most profound thinker of the last century. Kierkegaard was a saint".¹⁸ He then poses the question; is it possible that Wittgenstein carved out his own position on religion from the positions of Tagore and Kierkegaard? The prompt reply is; no matter from which direction the seeds come, they grow differently in Wittgenstein's soil. To this effect Suresh Chandra quotes:

I believe that my originality (if that is the right word) is an originality belonging to the soil rather than to the seed. (Perhaps I have no seed of my own.) Sow a seed in my soil and it will grow differently than it would in any other soil.¹⁹

No matter wherefrom the inspiration is, the originality of the thought is Wittgensteinian. Suresh Chandra therefore concludes that it would be wrong to call Wittgenstein a Tagorean or a Kierkegaardian. And in his writings Wittgenstein exhibited a profound transcendentalism – from the early writings till his last piece of writing. Suresh Chandra considers it his aim to exhibit Wittgenstein's transcendentalism in order to remove those misunderstandings about his philosophy generated by the empiricist philosophers of the West and the non-empiricist philosophers of India. In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein says;

6.432 How things are in the world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the world.²⁰

How to interpret this aphorism in relation to the concepts of prayer and grace? If God does not reveal Himself in the world and if He is far far away indifferent to what is happening in the world, then how He will listen to our prayer? How will he intervene in the world? Surely intervention

implies active involvement.

Suresh Chandra's response to the problematics of interpretation is to affirm the autonomy of religious life from the worldly life, the transcendental from the mundane, the religious attitude from the scientific attitude. While the 'business' of the world moves in its own momentum, God's intervention is not what is prayed for. For example, for water to boil at 100 degrees centigrade, or for hens to lay eggs, intervention may not be needed. We do not pray for such things. For problems to which the ways of physical nature and the ways of the world provide no answers, we certainly do pray. In such prayers, we transcend the world where water boils at 100 degrees centigrade, hens lay eggs and big fishes eat up the smaller ones or might is right. Suresh Chandra understands Wittgenstein as meaning that prayer to God is possible only when we give up our scientific personality and become religious persons. It simply means that prayer is not a request for scientific manipulation of the world using true/false descriptions of the world, to suit our fancies or purposes. If prayer to God transcending the world is possible and if God listens to prayer, then God's grace is the only way available to man. Of course, it is obvious that God's grace is not identical with showering utilitarian end. After all, we do not seek God's grace for having eggs for breakfast. Nor has God created hens for enriching our breakfast. Suresh Chandra gives his interpretation succinctly;

Looking the world religiously is very different from, not only looking it scientifically but also looking it in an utilitarian fashion. A religious person for Wittgenstein looks at the world from outside, unlike a scientist who looks at it from inside. A religious person wonders that the hens lay eggs and water boils at 100 degrees centigrade. A scientist simply describes these facts without any element of wonder. Both religion and art, in their own ways, according to Wittgenstein, awaken us to wonder, but science is a way of killing this awakening. It sends us 'to sleep again'.²¹

Suresh Chandra also points out that Wittgenstein's later lectures and writings are devoted to two issues. One is showing that a religious belief is qualitatively unlike a scientific belief. The other shows that the language of religion is autonomous, that there is an independent language

game of religion which belongs to the family of language games. Let us dwell on his interpretation of Wittgenstein's thoughts on these two points.

According to Wittgenstein, Sir James Frazer and Father O' Hara are both guilty of totally demolishing the distinction between science and religion. He points out that Father O' Hara is one of those people who make it (religious belief) a question of science. Here, O' Hara's fault is not just that he gives a scientific interpretation to religious beliefs. His fault precisely is; he gives reasons. *Scientific or otherwise*.

Wittgenstein says; "What seems to me ludicrous about O' Hara is his making it appear *reasonable*".²² It is simply pointless to give reasons, including the scientific ones, in support of a religious belief.

Frazer's fate fares no better in Wittgenstein's views. In the *Golden Bough* he treats the story of the King of the Wood at Nemi as a rite of spring. The King of the Wood is slain by his successor. The successor, in his turn, is also destined to be slain by his successor and so on. Frazer interprets this way of succession of kings as a practice designed to secure the succession of crops. He treats them as exercises of magic and considered magic as simple-minded science. Now, did not primitive men lose faith in their practice when they discovered that it did not work? The answer is; it did work or it was not found to fail. As Frazer puts it;

A ceremony intended to make the wind blow or the rain fall, or to work the death of an enemy, will always be followed, sooner or later, by the occurrence it is meant to bring to pass; and primitive men may be excused for regarding the occurrence as the direct result of the ceremony, and the best possible proof of its efficacy.²³

Wittgenstein finds Frazer's account of the magical and religious views of mankind unsatisfactory; it makes them look like errors. It makes religious beliefs look like as if they are descriptions of our habits of mind which can be considered true for which counter examples have not been found so far. Here, Suresh Chandra interprets Wittgenstein as saying that no kind of reasons, including the scientific ones, should be given in support of a religious belief. The priest speaking in the language of the scientist and the scientist speaking in the language of the priest seems to converge on one point, that is, God after all is a hypothesis although an expensive one at that. And Wittgenstein firmly rejects explanation of religious belief,

because "every explanation is a hypothesis". In his opinion, a religious belief is not any kind of hypothesis, nor is grounded in any kind of hypothesis. Religious beliefs and practices speak for themselves. They do not require any external support.

Suresh Chandra draws our attention to an important argument Wittgenstein gives from the presence of different language games. The argument points to the absolute and transcendental character of religious beliefs. A poem, for example. Even though it is composed in the language of information, it is not used in the language game of giving information. A poem is not a move in the language game of information giving. Likewise, statements expressing religious beliefs are expressed in the narrative form, the form which is usually used for expressing scientific forecasts. But religious statement and scientific forecasts are poles apart.

Wittgenstein points out;

Suppose for instance, we know people who foresaw the future; make forecasts for years and years ahead; and they described some sort of a Judgement Day. Queerly enough, even if there were such a thing, and even if it were more convincing than I have described, belief in this happening would not be at all a religious belief.²⁴

The simple reason is that the evidence adduced for such a forecast suits only a scientific prediction. Now, if the Day of Judgement is only a scientific prediction, no one would have bothered at all. For, a scientific prediction can always be otherwise. It has no absolute transcendental character. As Wittgenstein further says:

Suppose that I would have to forego all pleasures because of such a forecast. If I do so and so, someone will put me in fire in a thousand years, etc., I wouldn't budge. The best scientific evidence is just nothing.²⁵

In his interpretation of the above quotation, Suresh Chandra points out that statutory medical warnings based on scientific studies, which are written on tobacco and cigarette packets have not stopped devoted addicts from smoking or chewing tobacco. He even cites his own case as a classic example. This is so because medical warnings in the form of scientific propositions always allow exceptions on which one can peck a hole for inclusion or security. In his own words:

If the Day of Judgement is only a scientific prediction, then one may possibly escape hell-fire in spite of all the crimes one has committed in his life. One's attitude towards a scientific truth is very different from one's attitude towards a religious truth. It is not science but religion that makes sure that there is no escape from the Day of Judgement. Only with God's grace and his intervention that one could be saved.²⁶

The all-important point is; Wittgenstein introduces a rigid distinction between a religious belief and a scientific belief. On this very point, Suresh Chandra also cites Wittgenstein's views on Christianity:

Christianity is not based on a historical truth; rather, it offers us a (historical) narrative and says: now believe! But not, believe this narrative with the belief appropriate to a historical narrative, rather: believe, through thick and thin, which you can do only as the result of a life. Here you have a narrative, don't take the same altitude to it as you take to other historical narratives! Make a quite different place in your life for it. –There is nothing paradoxical about that!²⁷

The point is, a religious narrative though a narrative, demands a unique kind of attitude. Wittgenstein further says;

Queer as it sounds: The historical accounts in the Gospels might, historically speaking, be demonstrably false and yet belief would lose nothing by this: not, however, because it concerns 'universal truths of reason'! Rather, because historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief. This message (the Gospels) is seized on by men believingly (i.e. lovingly). *That* is the certainty characterizing this particular acceptance-as-true, not something else.

A believer's relation to these narratives is *neither* the relation to historical truth (probability), nor yet that to a theory consisting of 'truths of reason'.²⁸

In his interpretation of Wittgenstein's thought Suresh Chandra points out that religion does not express empirical truths, therefore; it does not express probable truths also. Again, it does not express non-empirical necessary truths which could not be otherwise. The point simply is, looking at religion, as transcending the contingent/necessary dichotomy.

Like Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein looks at religious beliefs as a

passionate commitment to a system of reference. Although a belief, it's a way of living. It is transformation consequent upon passionately taking hold of a system of reference following freely one's own conscience.

Suresh Chandra points out that the same point is reinforced in Wittgenstein's views on proof of God's existence. He quotes:

A proof of God's existence ought really to be something by means of which one could convince oneself that God exists. But I think that what believers who have furnished such proofs have wanted to do is give their 'belief' an intellectual analysis and foundation, although they themselves would never have come to believe as a result of such proofs. Perhaps one could 'convince someone that God exists' by means of a certain kind of upbringing, by shaping his life in such and such a way.²⁹

Wittgenstein also remarks that life can educate one to a belief in God. And our experiences too can bring this about. But by experiences Wittgenstein does not mean visions and other forms of sense experience which show 'the existence of this being'. The experiences that can educate us to a belief in God are, for example, sufferings of various sorts. But these experiences of suffering does not show us God in the way a sense impression shows us an object. Wittgenstein consistently prohibits God from coming down to the world of senses. Our experiences (suffering of various sorts etc.) also do not give rise to conjectures about Him. Again, Wittgenstein consistently prohibits God from manifesting to man's intellection. Experiences and thoughts of suffering – the way of life one prays to be destined for, force awareness of God on us. In a return to the thought-architecture of the Tractatus, Wittgenstein suggests that the Tractaturian 'object' answering to the logically proper name may be of help in reminding ourselves the transcendental nature of God. If 'object' is the logical condition of adequate description, God is the transcendental condition of the way of life which is religious. Suresh Chandra's interpretation of Wittgenstein's views is; Religious beliefs including belief in the existence of God can be justified, only by one's conduct. One's form of life is the best evidence for religious beliefs. Such words as 'proof', 'evidence', 'justification', explanation etc. do not have the same meaning in religion as they have in science.

We next proceed to Suresh Chandra's interpretation of Wittgenstein's view that the language of religion is autonomous, that there is an independent language-game of religion which belongs to the family of language-games. Suresh Chandra points out that Wittgenstein in his Remarks on Colour finds theology 'fumbling around with words'. In Philosophical Investigations he declares that we should consider "theology as grammar". Grammar of what? Answer is; grammar of religious language. A theologian is grammarian, but not of language as a whole, only of the religious language. Art and religion may be quite close to each other in that their grammars are different from the grammar of science. Suresh Chandra interprets Wittgenstein's view as meaning that the theological objects such as God, destiny etc., depend for their existence on the grammar of religious language. This is corroborated, according to Suresh Chandra by Wittgenstein's remarks on grammar in general, "grammar tells what kind of object anything is". In his opinion, this is inversion of the Tractaturian metaphysics. In the Tractatus the essence that is expressed by grammar used to mirror the essence of reality. The configured simples (objects) of reality were mirrored by the configured simples (names) of language. So much so that language mirrors reality with an amazing logical fidelity. Here language is reflective, not constructive. But in the later Wittgenstein of the Philosophical Investigations "Essence is expressed by grammar". The essence is what is spoken about. That is say, the use of language actively constructs reality in the way of finding newer and newer aspects of reality which is our ways of expressing also. What it comes to is, in the later Wittgenstein we have to search objects in reality by studying the grammar of our language. The reality of objects in the world, or outside it, depends on grammar. I am sure, this is pivotal paradigm shift needing an in-depth exploration.

According to Suresh Chandra, Wittgenstein's grammatical turn (which I would like to call a paradigm shift) is corroborated by the following remark from *Culture and Value*:

The way you use the word 'God' does not show you *whom* you mean – but, rather, what you mean.³⁰

Here Wittgenstein's meaning is, using the word 'God' is not *naming* an entity to which one may be referring. The argument is, the

meaning of the word 'God' does not depend on the existence of an entity (in the world or outside it) but on the use of it. In support of this argument Wittgenstein points out; to say "God's essence guarantees his existence really means that what is here at issue is not the existence of something. On being asked why existence is not at issue, the answer is there is no telling what it would be like if there were such a thing as God. Take, for example, colour. Suppose one says; the essence of colour guarantees its existence. What does that really mean? It simply means one cannot explain what 'colour' is, what the word colour means, except with the help of a colour sample. But here in this, there is no such thing as explaining 'what it would be like if colours were to exist'.

According to Suresh Chandra, Wittgenstein's argument is drawing our attention from the question as to the existence of God to the question concerning the use of the word 'God'. The use of capital letter does not mean that it is a proper name, it simply means that it is an important word, more important than, say, such a word as 'table'. The important question is then, "How are we taught the word 'God' (its use, that is)?" On this important question, Suresh Chandra quotes Wittgenstein as saying;

I cannot give a full grammatical description of it. But I can, as it were, make some contributions to such a description; I can say a good deal about it and perhaps in time assemble a sort of collection of examples.³¹

The point, however, is, no matter what sort of collection of examples we would like to assemble, what we in fact do or can do is to give a few examples and explanations. And Wittgenstein reminds us that no more than this is necessary. "What use could we make of an enormously long description?" Why involve a long description? The longer the description, the more difficult it is to understand the meaning of the word in question.

Here Suresh Chandra points out that Wittgenstein's later God talk is very different from the early God talk. To be sure, the Tractatuarian God was not an entity found in the world. But it was an entity of some sort – a transcendental entity, a transcendental presupposition of world's existence. The Tractatuarian transcendental God has been replaced by a God spoken about in our everyday use of words. From the transcendental

heights, we land in the everyday uses of words. Wittgenstein's paradigm shift is not restricted to religion only. He begins looking at the world through the grammar of language. The theologian must not struggle with words now to point to a transcendental God in his way. Because this will be trying to say something without knowing how to do it. He is simply to realise that "Practice gives the words their sense" in the new Wittgensteinian God-talk.

5. My Response: In Lieu of a Conclusion

The present paper is not intended to be a critique of Wittgenstein's views. Nor a critique of Sachindra Nath and Suresh Chandra's views on Wittgenstein. My aim is to present how Wittgenstein grows in the Indian soil. In the works of the above two original thinkers to be precise. Both Sachindranath and Suresh are my revered and beloved teachers who introduced me to the Wittgensteinian texts. This paper is a presentation in memoriam, fond and sacred to me. So, in lieu of a conclusion which normally follows a critique, I will give my response.

Let me interface Wittgenstein's God (Judeo-Christian?) with my God (God of Manipuri Vaishnavism), if at all such a thing is possible. Wittgenstein's God is a transcendental God, not to be manifested in the world as that would injure His divinity. My God of Manipuri Vaishnavism is transcendental, yet He manifests in the yearning and love flowering in the heart. This flowering however is not crystallised in facticity – just as one fact in the sum totality of facts which Wittgenstein calls the world. Although the frail vessel (to quote Tagore) is a finite repository, the yearning and love in itself is in continuum with the transcendental we call God. So much so that the beginning of one is to converge in the other and vice versa. Our language may fail to describe the continuum. Hence silence – a zone where according to Sachindranath, we as selves feel free and secure. In Manipuri Vaishnavism, silence does not imply failure of communication. It simply means a form of life, a mystic life has taken over. Manipuri Vaishnavism presents a life-world woven with rarified aesthetic forms becoming yearning and love of God. I don't know when and where Heaven and earth meet. But I have been taught by my birth and upbringing that yearning for love and beauty is what makes living a continuous flow of the

transcendental.

When it comes to prayer and grace, one point is clear. A Manipuri Vaishnav mystic lacks nothing of this world. Hence, a prayer for God's intervention for things in the world does not arise. Scientific or otherwise, He prays for a yearning heart. No blessing is greater than a yearning heart passionately flowering towards love and beauty which is His and His only. And where from can blessing be save His and His grace only. Here I agree with Suresh Chandra's interpretation of Wittgenstein's concept of Christian prayer – that a man is a changed person while praying. The hour of prayer belongs to the religious person, not to the scientific person. Prayer is never a scientific transaction. Science moves within the discourse of facticity, probability, hypothesis, deduction and generalisation. Prayer cries out in the language of yearning and transcendence.

In Wittgenstein's discourse on the Last Judgement the terror of eternal torment in hell is a punishment in store for man's forgetfulness of God. A Manipuri Vaishnav mystic never looks at human destiny from the bipolarity of heaven and hell. Eternal yearning of infinite love and beauty or the loss of it – that is what makes the fateful difference. Hell's torment after all, is not that frightful compared to a dry heart bereft of passion for yearning.

This brings us to the God-talk of the later Wittgenstein, the pivotal paradigm shift of landing in everydayness of use of words. It is that practice gives the words their sense in the new Wittgenstein God talk. I have a feeling that this Wittgensteinian turn if followed closely may be leading us to opposite directions; Marx's views on religion on one hand and the aesthetic mysticism of Manipuri Vaishnavism on the other. Marx's Kingdom of freedom may pave way to what Sachindranath calls silence zone where we as selves feel free and secure. The ritual performances of Manipuri Vaishnavism may help us in understanding deeper Wittgenstein's God talk. And conversely, Wittgenstein's God talk may help in looking at Manipuri Vaishnavism from a new perspective. Maybe, a new surprise is in store for us.

Notes and References

1. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, Trans. Anscombe, G.E.M., Eds. Anscombe, G.E.M. & Rhees R (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972) p 8 Section 18
2. Ibid., p 32 Section 67
3. Loc. cit.,
4. Ganguly, Sachindranath, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Preliminary (Santiniketan: Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, Visva Bharati, 1968)* p 115
5. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Trans. Pears, D.F. & McGuinness, B.F. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p 74
Quoted by Sachindranath Ganguly in his book, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Preliminary* p 115
6. Sachindranath Ganguly, Ibid., p 116
7. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, "A Lecture on Ethics" in Johnson, Oliver A edited, *Ethics: Selections from Classical and Contemporary Writers* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Wiston, INC 1974) pp 412-415
Wittgenstein delivered this lecture at Cambridge University in November, 1929. The manuscript was preserved and published in *The Philosophical Review*, Vol LXXIV No. 1 (January 1965). A.J. Ayer in his book on Wittgenstein refers to the later source.
8. Ayer, A.J., *Wittgenstein* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1985) p 32
9. Ibid., pp 32-33
10. Loc. cit.,
11. Sachindranath Ganguly, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: A Preliminary*, pp 116-117
12. Ibid., p 118
13. Russell's Introduction to *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, p XXI
14. Ludwig, Wittgenstein, A Lecture on Ethics p 411
15. *Tractatus*, Section 6.522 Quoted by Suresh Chandra in his book, *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 2002) p 136

16. Suresh Chandra, *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives*, p VII
17. *Ibid.*, pp 28-29
18. M.O’C. Drury, ‘*Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein*’ in *Rush Rees (Ed.) Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981 p 102.
Quoted by Suresh Chandra in his book, *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives*, p 24
19. Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Culture and Value* (Trans.) Peter Winch (Ed.) G.H. Von Wright in collaboration with Heikki Nyman (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980) p 36
Quoted by Suresh Chandra in *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives* p 24
20. Quoted by Suresh Chandra in *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives* p 137
21. Suresh Chandra, *Ibid.*, p 138
22. C. Barret (Ed.) *Wittgenstein’s Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, Oxford, 1966, p 58
Quoted by Suresh Chandra in *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives*, p 143
23. Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, p 59.
Quoted by A.J. Ayer in his book, *Wittgenstein*, p 88. The quotation is from Ayer’s book.
24. C. Barret (Ed.) *Wittgenstein’s Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Beliefs*, p 54.
Quoted by Suresh Chandra in *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives*, p 143
25. *Ibid.*, Suresh Chandra, p 144
26. Suresh Chandra, p 144
Wittgenstein also points out that one may have a scientific attitude or a religious attitude to the Last Judgement. Suppose the Last Judgement is presented as the result of induction. It is then not a religious belief, but only a superstition. The substance of belief in the Last Judgement, according to Wittgenstein is; “No induction. Terror. That is, as it were, part of the substance of belief.” (Suresh Chandra, p146) Understanding Last Judgement scientifically leads to superstition.

Whereas belief in the Last Judgement religiously overwhelms one with terror, fear and torment so as to cry out for infinite help. Says Wittgenstein:

The Christian religion is only for the man who needs infinite help, solely, that is, for the man who experiences infinite torment. The whole planet can suffer no greater than a *single* soul. The Christian faith – as I see it – is a man’s refuge in this *ultimate* torment. (*Culture and Value*, p 46)

This Christian faith, according to Wittgenstein is the substance of religious belief. He makes his position clear in another remark again:

If a man said to me after a dream that he believed in the Last Judgement. I’d try to find what impression it gave him. One attitude: ‘It will be in about 2000 years. It will be bad for so and so, etc., Or it may be one of terror. (C. Barrett (Ed.) *Wittgenstein’s Lectures & Conversations*, p 56.

Quoted by Suresh Chandra, p 147

Here, Suresh Chandra interprets Wittgenstein as meaning that the latter characterises religious belief, whereas the former characterises only a scientific attitude, an attitude of making a future prediction. A scientific prediction fails to create terror and torment, because the believer in such predictions knows that they could possibly be false. One may also escape the hell-fire. Hence, one need not be terrified or tormented.

27. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p 32.

Quoted by Suresh Chandra in *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives*, p 145

28. *Ibid.*,

29. *Ibid.*, p 85

30. *Ibid.*, p 50

31. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, p 82.

Suresh Chandra, *Wittgenstein: New Perspectives*, p 140