IDENTITY: ETHICS OF DIGNITY

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Abstract: *In the modern world of globalization, cosmopolitanism, and information technology a rich diversity of life not only can be an asset but can also create dilemmas concerning identity, authenticity, and conflict. Today's scientists, humanists, physicians, and businessmen are seeking concrete solutions for peaceful coexistence. Each being's innate desire calls for recognition of their independent identity. They seek the answer to the question, 'Who am I?' The answer to that query differs from individual to individual. According to scientific research a human being can only detect and understand a small percentage of the surrounding Universe. Hence humans are unable to recognize or appreciate an unmanageable diversity of populations, phenomena, and problems. No one knows the true nature, purpose and function of diversity of existence. This may be a direct result of a mixture of the evolutionary nature of our existence, quickly changing societies we live in, and the value systems we hold. There are problems knowing or understanding not only others but ourselves. This paper analyzes the dignity of diverse identities with both philosophical and socio-cultural perspectives and suggests a pragmatic path of recognition and respect for dignity of existence for its proper functioning and healthy living in a global setting.*

Keywords: *dignity, diversity, ethics, identity, respect, religion, value*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world of globalization, modernity, and social media, nothing can remain private and personal. People around the world are pulled together by television, emails, cell phones, cameras, twitter, Skype, and other communication systems. Whether they wish to or not, everyone has become a global citizen and has access to diverse cultural practices and life styles. Capitalism and consumerism have run amok and along with them an increase in the competition for ever scarcer resources, for attaining name, fame and fortune. As a consequence these practices are destroying the structural unity of humanity and of an all-inclusive existence. As a result, the global community and the entire cosmos are in chaos. There is a pressing need to internationally define what constitutes a community, what are the factors or ways we can make it synergetic and synthetic or unified. What will be the glue to hold the globe's diversity together in peaceful-coexistence? How do we create a system of ethics that will apply to all peoples fairly and justly?

First the paper will discuss the major concepts that are considered as core or primary by a majority of people. The paper then will focus on the concept of respect and its relation to the value systems of human dignity and the dignity of every existence. Furthermore, the analysis will attempt to show that the concepts of value and respect are embedded in the systems of ethics and morality which are part of diverse cultural beliefs and worldviews. Finally, the paper will explain the importance of the concept of respect as the common ground principle for the survival of the multifaceted universal community. The paper will use a combined socio-linguistic and philosophical approach to the comparative analyses of diverse world-views in seeking solutions to the problems of modernity and globalization for the multifaceted global community.

2. DIGNITY, VALUE AND RESPECT

The terms dignity, value and respect have a diversity of meanings. These meanings usually have both individual and group meanings. How one views one's self or an internal meaning and how one is viewed by others or the external meaning of the words. The term 'dignity' is used in moral, ethical, legal and political discussions to signify that a being has an innate right to be valued and receive ethical treatment. The Merriam-Webster dictionary, defines the concept of dignity as a way of appearing or behaving that suggests seriousness and self-control in thought, word and action. This is the characteristic that separates humans from other creatures. Yet another definition of the word 'dignity' refers to the position of respect or honor. The Universal Declaration of the Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948 states that: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Dignity is an internal process that is reflected in an outward manner identifiable by others.

Similarly, the concept of *value* has several meanings. Value can be ethical/moral doctrinal/ideological, political, religious, social and aesthetic. Value is the apparent or evident worth determined by individuals or larger groups. Likewise *respect* has several meanings. Internally, it can be a positive feeling of esteem or deference for a person or other larger grouping. Respect is a feeling of admiration about that which is good, valuable, or important and hence it should be treated in an appropriate way. The larger group helps the individual determine the appropriate ways for demonstrating respect.

To conclude, there are no hard definitions of dignity, value and respect. They are all relative to the individual and groups to which one belongs. This leads to the question: Why is there such a diversity of meanings?

3. WHY DIVERSE MEANINGS?

There is no question that this world is evolving and changing at a rapid pace.

Evolving societies mean that cultures are also evolving. Change is inevitable. That is why we have concepts such as tradition and modernity. Every generation behaves and acts differently from the previous generations. It is inevitable that ideas as to dignity, value and respect also evolve over time. Hence basic value systems differ from generation to generation or even within a generation. In the case of rapid change there can be difficulties because a group cannot adapt itself to the new conditions. In which case either the group retains the "old ways" and tries to hold onto what it can; or a culture adopts a simpler modified system that only takes a few things from the old and a set of values from the new. Ethical systems are woven around the values.

A close examination of the diverse semantics of these concepts is related to the diverse modalities of self: self's being, self's seeing, feeling and experiencing and self's acting or behaving individually or collectively. Since the self is complex and evolutionary both in time and space, these concepts take upon different meanings depending on where he/she is on the evolutionary track and the individuals needs. This evolutionary self has diverse goals and hence differing value systems, for example: finding a mate, protection from danger, or attaining status. The value of things and people depend upon which goal is currently consciously or subconsciously being pursued. The changing self adapts to the biological as well as socio-cultural environment and uses it to his/her advantage. Sometimes, however, a person fails to see the truth from reality since life itself is an example of relative reality. The view of the world is dependent upon time and environment. Perception is dependent upon the existing mood of the observer. That perception sometimes fails to distinguish good from bad, a leader from a lecher, or a good person from a criminal mind. The values and the systems of respect change in order to fulfill evolutionary needs giving rise to problems (Oziewicz, 2008).

Given the complexity of changing self and changing systems of values and respect, how can we preserve and protect human dignity or the dignity of existence, i.e. the innate worth

of being? How can we sustain peaceful co-existence in the face of excessively need-driven cultures?

4. THE RELATIONSHIP OF DIGNITY, VALUE AND ETHICS: SOCIO-CULTURAL CONCEPTS

In a world orchestrated by seemingly inexplicable, yet utterly remarkable phenomena, religions serve as a means for people to interpret this world through works of divine nature. Religion also serves as an ethical guidepost and a source of spiritual illuminations for all earthly phenomena such as abuse conflict, death, disease, disasters, negative emotions, and war. Though the answers to these negative or unbalanced phenomena manifest themselves in unique ways within differing religions, it is evident that practices of compassion, kindness, reverence, and respect towards oneself and others are relatively ubiquitous across religions. These positive actions suggest the inherent existence of human dignity in all religions. In the following sections, we examine human value or the value of its existence and the comparable respect for it in diverse cultures.

Let us examine the inherent nature and practices of dignity of human existence in world's five major philosophies of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It is important to examine these as they are the historically socio-religious contexts upon which much of the world's cultures are based. If you live in the West, fifty years ago you could have gone for months without meeting anyone with a different socio-religious background then your own. Now that type of meeting is almost a daily occurrence. Now due to commerce and travel, the world, nay the entire cosmos has become one single community, which has to share the limited space and limited existing resources—the root causes for tension, conflicts and wars. Diverse cultures of the world are no longer separate islands. They have merged into becoming one global community with diverse faces. It is up to people to see the global community as a monster of billion faces or teach the newer generation to see it as the goddess of multiple faces: diversity, equity, ethics, dignity, value and respect. It has become necessary to understand 'other' people's socio-cultural and religious value systems in order to live as a global citizen.

We all can start with the basics that are common to most religions: a human attempt to make sense of life, growth, maturity and death. Also, it is necessary to understand that 'others' have the right to exist freely, fairly and justly because it is the nature's way; it is the cosmic law. Every being has the right to exist rightfully, i.e. with dignity and respect. The philosophies of the world's religions, whether established through written texts or oral transmissions, always promoted core noble ideologies of dignified existence. Unfortunately, history tells us that any violations of the noble ideologies of the core value systems have been transgressions in the context of sexual desires, social hierarchy and power and political gains and these are not consequences of the religions themselves.

4.1 Judaism. Judaism has been one of the more influential religions in all of history as it laid the foundation for the Christian and Muslim faiths (Super & Jacobson, 2010). The Jewish tradition started long ago in ancient Israel and has evolved and undergone a number of changes since its beginnings. The Jewish people see themselves as a "nation," despite their varied geographic location due to the consistency and uniqueness of their beliefs and customs throughout history and furthers the unity among Jewish people.

The ideas that guide Judaism include a belief that God directs all aspects of human activity, public and private, individual and collective. It was also the first religion that insisted that its worshipers lead a moral existence by following the directions of its God. Judaism has had an immense impact on the formation of Christianity and Islam.

4.2 Christianity. Christianity starts with Jesus Christ as the figure who modeled the lives of many. Christianity fundamentally believes that Jesus was sent to live and die for his "flock," his people, to be raised on the third day into new life. By observing the Last Supper that Jesus shared with his disciples, his

death on the cross, and his resurrection Christians are reminded of their faith in physical and spiritual death and rebirth. Human dignity is also a strong value of Christians. Jesus used to eat with the outcasts of society- and calls his people to be humble and act as servants to each other. Peter Maurin, founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, described a society modeled after Jesus Christ that challenges us to transform ourselves from a society of go-getters to a society of go-givers (Super & Jacobson, 2010:42). Ministry in the form of distributing alms to the poor and aiding the sick and needy are fundamental to the Christian community.

Christianity has a staggeringly wide range of worship forms. Catholicism and Orthodoxism have a wide variety of diversified worship because each national or cultural group within the church brings its social and political customs into the church. The third major group Protestantism has a bewildering number of sects. Even so, all three believe in a Triune Godhead, the mystery of three separate beings that are also one. In this way Jesus can be seen as both divine and human at the same time. Christianity is the only faith whose historical founder is also considered to be its God.

4.3 Islam. Islam is a religion that finds its roots and background in Judaism and Christianity. It accepts both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament as authentic divine revelation. Muhammad is not considered to be the founder of Islam. Muslims believe that Islam always existed; it is just that Muhammad is the final Prophet sent by God and therefore the revelation is complete.

Both the Quran and Hadith accentuate the dignity of the individual in relationship to God, to others and the community as a whole. The Quran extends an open and unqualified recognition of dignity to all human beings regardless of color and creed. As a general conclusion, Islam extols the dignity of the individual while the West focuses more upon liberty (Kamali 2002). Dignity according to Islam is: Izzah (honor), Karamah (nobility), Qeemah (value), Shraf (distinction), and Fadilah (virtue).

A main difference between Islam and Judaism and Christianity is the belief that the Quran is the actual word of God as revealed through the Prophet Muhammad. Every word uttered in the Quran is God actually speaking to his people. They also believe that all people have had a prophet, but the final prophet was Mohammad.

4.4 Hinduism. Originating approximately 5,000 years ago and practiced by nearly one billion, Hinduism is arguably one of the oldest world religions and is the third largest. Hinduism incorporates thousands of sacred texts, has no one true founder, or deity, instead honoring countless gods. (Gabriel & Geaves, 2007). Although extremely diverse and complex, most adherents of Hinduism are henotheistic in that an individual devotee worships one god (iśvara) out of many. This iśvara is an embodiment of the supreme divine being, *Brahman*. Followers move through countless stages of reincarnation in order to gain salvation by completely identifying their *atman*, or innermost being, with *Brahman* (Gabriel & Geaves, 2007).

The manifestations of human dignity found within Hinduism are worthy of further inquiry. Perhaps T. Kumar, Amnesty International USA's Advocacy Director for Asia and the Pacific and a practicing Hindu, explains the inherent dignity in Hinduism best (Super & Jacobson, 2010:44):

> It is not an organized religion. It originated in South Asia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, that area. And, it is extremely practice-oriented, I mean, it's not being imposed by any religious leaders. Its individuals choose how to practice their faith. The fundamental theme of Hindu faith is non-violence and not hurting any human life. That's why Hindu faith basically dictates that we should not, Hindus should not eat anything that involves killing of any sort, including eggs, because eggs may become chickens, so don't even eat eggs. So, in a nutshell, Hindu faith, like any other religion, preaches non-violence, compassion, and human dignity (amnestyusa.org).

This is the essence of human dignity found within Hinduism. People are allowed the dignity to practice their religion in a way that

is personal and significant to them. The result is a diverse array of local religious customs and practices that are unique and meaningful to specific local cultures and communities. In addition, the universal non-violent and peaceful tenets of Hinduism allow for the cultivation of **mutual respect** and peace among practitioners of various sects as well as other religions, which furthers the inherent notions of human dignity.

Fig. 1. Women greeting: namaskār/namaste "I bow down to the divine in you." (Premium Images)

4.5 Buddhism. Sometime 2, 500 years ago in Northern India, a man named Siddhartha Gautama recognized the problems related to the caste system, and extreme ritualism, began a new philosophy for living that has emerged as a major world religion. Through the achievement of enlightenment, Gautama became the Buddha, and developed the dharma, or teachings based on four noble truths:

1.   Life is marked by suffering
2.   Suffering is the result of attachment/desire and ignorance
3.   Suffering can be overcome
4.   The Eightfold Path leads to the cessation of suffering (Puligandla, 1975:53-54).

Some scholars argue that because dignity arises from a divine creator or through the realization of man's responsibility for his own governance i.e. political institutions, human dignity is a foreign to the philosophy of Buddhism (Keown *et al.*,1998). However, the nature of the Buddhist philosophy is such that human dignity is embedded in its doctrine. Buddha realized that the suffering caused by the caste system was unjust and unfair and ultimately caused by the people belonging to the castes. Buddha argued that caste position could not be determined by karma, as every caste contained people who committed both good and bad deeds (Super & Jacobson, 2010:47). Buddha argued that deeds alone should define a man. This philosophy is integral to Buddhism. The Noble Eightfold path advocates for adopting the Right views (proper way to see the world), Right intention, Right speech, Right conduct, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration (Puligandla, 1975:57). The practice of this path is intended for adherents to recognize the root causes of suffering in the world as selfish desires and ignorance. In essence, the practice of Buddhism is the ultimate practice of human dignity. Buddhists practice dignity towards themselves and others by practicing respect and ethical treatments of all living beings. In this philosophy, humans are responsible for their own destiny. Thus Buddhism as humanism is the portrayal of human dignity.

4.6 Differences in Theory and Practice with Socio-Religious Groups. Theory and Practice are often at odds in the way socio-religious groups view themselves and others. The Jewish people wish to gain Palestine back from Zionists to make a completely Jewish state, also claiming the land of Palestine was granted to them by God. Before Zionist colonization, many Muslims and Christians inhabited the land as well. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is a violent one. Those committing violence on both sides create pain, suffering, and dying, and are surely going against their God's desire for compassion and human rights. The Christian churches, also often contradict their own teachings, however, in regards to human dignity. The Catholic Church, for example, has recently been charged with numerous incidents of clergy sexually assaulting others, children in particular. Members of the Catholic Church feel betrayed, desire to see justice, and are in need of healing and reconciling with their leaders. Many Protestant denominations have extreme difficulties not demonizing the poor and foreigners among us.

The caste (*var a*) system classified Hindu society into four hierarchical groupings: the Brahmins (priests), K atriyas (warriors), Vaiśyas (merchants) and Śudras (servants). Contentions with human dignity arise from this system, which primarily organized the Hindu societal structure. The argument stems from the centrality of the hierarchical caste system which makes for fatalism about social rights and social justice and, logically, for support for the existing ruling group (Lewis 2007, referred by Super and Jacobson 2010, 44). Despite reforms by the government which gave Dalits (downtrodden or the lower castes people) access to employment and educational opportunities; caste-based violence and discrimination is still very prevalent (www.ambedkar.org).

Though the central tenets of Hinduism advocate peace, compassion, and non-violence, along with the freedom of worship, providing a foundation for the rightful existence and recognition of human dignity, the prevalence of the hierarchical systems of caste and class continue to undermine true dignity afforded to a majority of practitioners.

Buddhism has not always found congruence with the evils that persist in the world. This is perhaps best illustrated in Burma, now known as Myanmar, during the twentieth century attempts of U Nu, who became the leader of Burma in 1952, to consolidate the similarities between socialism and Buddhism. U Nu hoped to develop a socialist, Buddhist paradise in Burma, but unfortunately, factionalist groups, communist pressures, rebellions by minority parties, and his inability to reconcile his Buddhist beliefs with the modern needs of the state resulted in disaster (Aung-Thwin & Myint-U, 1992 *apud* Super & Jacobson 2010:48). This example shows that mixing of religion and politics create problems. The establishment of a religion as a political tool adds an oppressive element to its nature, thus severely reducing the dignity it affords its adherents.

There are no perfect organizations, and the models that Judaism, Christianity and Muslims use create hope for furthering values of human dignity and social justice in the future. Without seeing through the other person's eyes,

without walking in their shoes, it is difficult to honor the dignity of each person. Dignity of the human person cannot exist where violence is. Though violent conflicts exist in all corners of the world, millions of people around the world follow a religion that challenges them to be more respectful and peaceful, and create a just world where the worth of every human is acknowledged.

5. PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE VALUE SYSTEM

Systems of Ethics become the systems of Morality in the realm of religions or ideologies. Systems of Ethics become the systems of Values in the realm of society's socio-political cultures. Both systems need to change in the context of evolutionary life.

5.1 Value and Ethics. Individually or organizationally, values determine what is right and what is wrong, and doing what is right or wrong is what we mean by ethics. To behave ethically is to behave in a manner consistent with what is right or moral. The Ethos is a Greek word meaning "character" that is used to describe the guiding beliefs or ideals that characterize a community, nation, or ideology. The comparable Sanskrit word is " ta" meaning right, which later developed into the word "rite."

What does "generally considered to be right" mean? This is a critical question. For an answer, we need to look what is right or wrong in a society. In Islamic societies, the concepts of right or wrong are tied to socio-religious strictures. In societies more secular than Islam, the influence of religious beliefs may be less obvious. In the United States much of what is believed to be right or wrong is based in Judeo-Christian cultural heritage. The Ten Commandments, for many people, define what is morally right or wrong.

Societies not only regulate the conduct of their members, but define their societal core values for the common good. "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" represent core American values. These are expressed in other tripartite mottos "liverté, egalité, fraternité" (liberty, equality, fraternity) in France; "Eingikeit, und Recht und Freiheit" (unity,

justice and freedom) in Germany. Societies differ from one another in specifics, but not in the general overriding principles. The notions of reciprocity, good intent, and appreciation of merit in others seem to be common to a majority of societies. Organizations, communities, and societies, to some extent, define what is right or wrong for their members. These are equivalent to "shoulds" or Indian "duties," because they are fundamental to trust and to team relationships. All who serve the nation must resist the temptation to pursue self-gain, personal advantage, and self-interest ahead of the collective good. Unfortunately a consumer society does not promulgate these types of ethical activities except as guidelines and only remotely or in extreme cases as a rule.

5.2 Two Sets of Values – Theoretical and Operational. It is evident that an organization may publish one set of values, while the values that really guide organization's behavior are very different. When there is disparity between stated and operating values, it may be difficult to determine what is "acceptable." One example will suffice to make the point. Most universities and organizations establish policies, called Regents Policies that serve only as *guidelines* and *not rules* for administrators. Generally, institutions are guided by operational costs and administrative interests to say nothing of an administrator's self interest. Universities, being autonomous, do not have to follow the Regents' policies or legislator's directives. Double standards exist, one idealistic for declaration and the other pragmatic for operation. Linguistically, one presents deep structure of the system and the other as the surface structure.

The same phenomenon holds true at the societal level. The principles by which the societies function do not necessarily conform to the stated and operational values. The individual against society is a common theme throughout history. In some cases individuals are encouraged to speak freely, while in others, they are silenced. Those in power may covertly allow the use of force to suppress debate in order to remain in power. There are many examples in history, Socrates being one.

Fig. 2. From Heather Blackmore's Socrates and His Hemlock, November 3, 2009 (Encyclopedia Britannica Blog) -*The Death of Socrates*, oil on canvas by Jacques-Louis David, 1787; in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City. **(***Francis G. Mayer/Corbis*)

The biggest problem for socio-political-religious leaders is to gain trust of all the diverse ethnic groups of their society. Though Gandhi tried to serve the public by carrying out a moral duty of attaining freedom by the use of noble and peaceful means, he was assassinated on 30 January 1948.
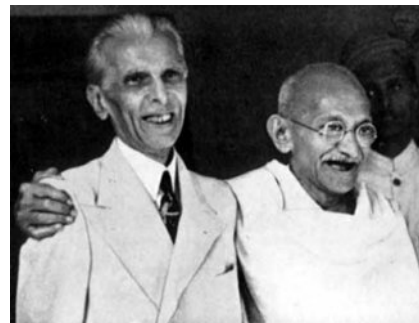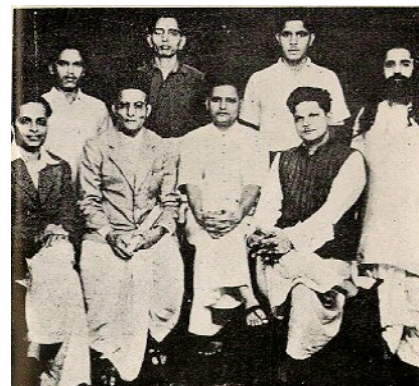

Fig. 3. Gandhi and Jinnah in Bombay, September 1944**.**

Fig. 4. A group photo of people accused in Gandhi's murder.

Apparently, Gandhi had not earned the trust of the Brahmins from Pune and Bombay. The assassination of January 30th was the fourth attempt to assassinate Gandhi. Why did Nathuram Godse and his associates behave so unethically in murdering their leader? The Brahmins, being strictly adherents of the Brahmanic faith, were interested in gaining an advantage in the competition for positions of power. The second reason was that these Brahmins viewed their extreme position as "right" and Gandhi's opposing position as "wrong." Most establishments encourage "going along" and discourage questioning the unethical actions of others.

The two concepts, values and ethics, are central to any organization: religious, educational, business, social or political. Values provide the basis for judgments about what is important for an organization to succeed in its core business. To behave ethically is to behave in a manner that is consistent with what is generally considered to be right or moral. Ethical behavior is the bedrock of mutual trust. To quote from a Department of the Army pamphlet of 1986, "Values are what we, as a profession, judge to be right."

Values can be defined as those things that are important to someone. That someone can be an individual such as a leader, teacher, or collectively, an organization. Most organizational visions are based on organization's core values—integrity, professionalism, caring, duty, teamwork and selfless service. Individual values include commitment, competence, candor, and courage. They are the moral, ethical, and professional attributes of character ("Values and Ethics," Ch.15, in *Strategic Leadership & Decision Making,* 1986)

5.3 Norms. There is another aspect to be considered, however, and that is the influence of societal or organizational norms. Norms are the unstated rules, usually informally reached by the members of a group, which govern the behavior of the group's members. Norms often have a greater effect on what is and isn't done by the members of a group than formal rules and regulations.

The reason norms are important for a discussion of ethics and values is that norms may allow or even encourage certain behavior as "OK" although it is not in keeping with society's or an organization's stated values. When there is discordance between stated and operating values, it may be difficult to determine what is "right." An example might be a company that has among its stated values to treat everyone with dignity and respect, but its norms have permitted and perhaps even encouraged a pattern of sexual harassment over a number of years. Do those in the organization know that the behavior is wrong, but condone it nevertheless? Is it clear to the majority of people that mistreatment of women is unethical and wrong, or would it fall under the mantle of behavior that is considered to be acceptable in that society? It seems necessary then to develop a universal system of ethics of core values in order to preserve and protect the dignity of *all* people, including women, poor, old, and disabled.

6. THE NATURE OF THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY: DIVERSE AND EVOLVING

The dictionary definition of a global community is the people or nations of the world who are economically, socially, and politically interdependent. Since the people of the world are diverse in body, mind, and conduct, the very nature of the global community is multicultural, multilingual, and multiethnic.

This multidimensional community is comprised of individuals of diverse value systems. What connects diverse humans from diverse cultures? The answer is humanity or human dignity. To guard this dignity, every individual in every society has to struggle. It is known as struggle for survival on all levels - socio-political-religious, physical (body), mental (mind) and spiritual (essential/existential). To put it simply, it is the struggle for dignified or valued existence. The difficulty with socio-religious morals or ideals is they become historical, inoperable or dogmatic in an evolving world and hence difficult to adhere to them.

6.1. How to Handle the Problems of the Modern Community? How can we fix the conflicts and problems of modern society? How can we build a more sustainable, equitable and democratic world?

To resolve the above, we need an empowered, connected and durable movement of citizens who foster core or basic or intrinsic values-- self-acceptance, care for others, and concern for the natural world. By acknowledging the importance of these values, and the "frames" that embody and express them; by examining how our actions help to strengthen or weaken them; and by working together to cultivate them, we can create a more compassionate society, and a better world. (*Common Cause*, 2011). Additionally, we need strong, ethical and determined leaders, teachers and guides who will value and respect diversity of opinions and invite common people's participation in the socio-political processes for finding solutions.

6.2 Leadership. Even the well-intentional leaders suffer if they do not conduct their activities within the society's established beliefs or norms. Such free thinkers are considered to be dissents and eliminated by competitive groups, seeking or wanting to maintain power. These leaders whether scientists, philosophers or social reformers are punished, expelled or terminated through the use of unethical and violent means. Take for example, Gandhi, father of the Independence movement, in order to gain independence from the British rule followed all the rules of ethics and morality mentioned by York Willbern (1984).

A leader is required to have basic honesty and conform to the law. The public interest should come first and not self interest. Gandhi's philosophy of detachment was reflected in the slogan: "Less you possess, less you want and better you are. The more you possess the more you want and the worst you are." The leader should be oriented to service and procedural regularities. Power should be used to circumvent procedures for personal gain. There is an ethic of democratic responsibility: an obligation to carry out the will of the people. Also there is an ethic of public policy determination: the responsibility is to make moral policies; the difficulty is in the determination of how moral a policy is. Ethic of compromise and social integration: this level deals with the necessity for compromise in a society. Willbern contends that compromise, rather than standing on principle, is moral, because without compromise there will be discord and conflict, and disintegration rather than integration of the society.

6.3 The Individual and Ethics. According to Kenneth R. Andrews (1989), there are three aspects to ethical behavior in organizations, the development of the individual as an ethical person, the effect of the organization as an ethical or unethical environment, and the actions or procedures developed by the organization to encourage ethical behavior and discourage unethical behavior. A person of proper moral fiber, properly brought up, simply would not cheat. Moral character is shaped by family, church, and education long before an individual joins a company to make a living.

The causes of unethical behavior seem to be related to three factors: Individual, society, and the socio-cultural environment. York Willbern (1984) summarizes the individual issues as follows:
- Complexity of Strategic Issues
- Competition for Scarce Resources/ Power/ Position
- Conflicting Loyalties
- Group thinking
- Presence of Ideologues

For an individual, although educated and free thinking, it is difficult to remain ethical due to the complexity of most issues. There are two factors, power and money, that seem to tempt those in business, governmental, religious and social positions to become victims of non-professional and non-ethical conduct. At the organizational or societal level, it is the cultural ideology that guides the behavior of the people.

6.4 Problems with Hierarchy. Hierarchy can be defined as a system or organization in which people or groups are ranked one above the other according to status or authority. This idea creates problems of non-equality, giving rise to various concepts. At a socio-political

level it allows stratification of a society based upon whatever criteria is used. At the personal level, husband, being the breadwinner, becomes the lord of his wife. This power is further used and abused in patriarchic societies.

This problem of hierarchy is resolved if every existence is thought to have evolved from the same source under different conditions and that every existence is unique in its purpose, function and contribution to "all-inclusive," and interdependent life. This philosophy is explicit in the String Theory or the M-theory according to which all lives originated from countless non-perceivable strings. Different species evolved under different conditions. Please see the evolution of "all" beings from the energy strings in figure 5 below. The comparable Hindu theory of the origin of 'Beings' is known as the theory of *Brahman*, the Ultimate/ the Absolute Reality from which every being is evolved and that both the origin and the derivative evolutions are sacred with the highest value of divinity. The concept that every life is divine permits common people to value any existence to whatever level they wish. That is why Hindus revere plants such as *Tulsi* 'basil' leaves and animals such as cows; please see the figures 6 and 7, respectively.
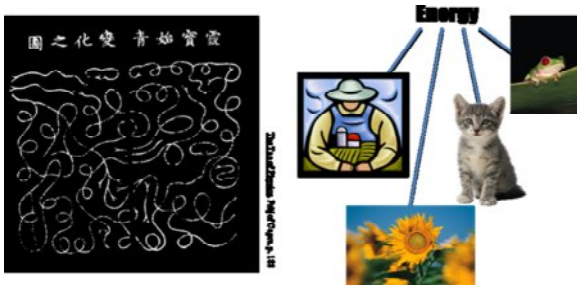

Fig. 5. Scientific Origin of the Universe: String Theory

6.5 Human Dignity in Indian Philosophies. The comparable term to human dignity of the West is explicit in the secular as well as religious philosophies of India. Indian philosophies perceive life to be sacred. In other words, not only human beings but also every life from animals to plants to microbes is divine in nature.

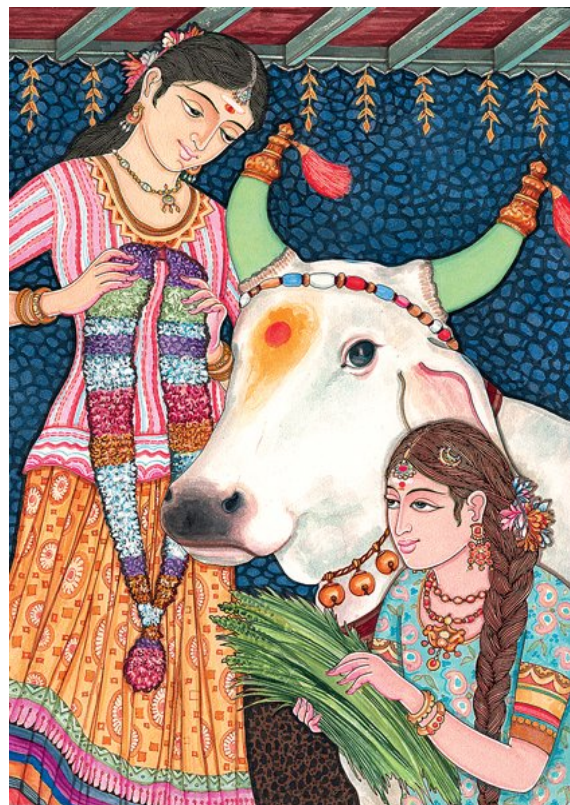Fig. 6 Sacred Basil (www.exoticindiaart.com)

Fig. 7 Sacred Cow (from Wikimedia Commons)

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The concept of God is all-inclusive, meaning God is composite of all cosmic existence, and therefore, contains accelerated or higher/stronger form of dignity. This divine interpretation transcends the human form, and bestows dignity on every universal element, from the plants, to animals, rocks and trees. Hence we see people honoring all lives. By no means people consider a cow or a tree as God. People do not worship all lives. They honor the essence and utility of life, however unseen and indirect they may be. Hindu households are spiritualized by the use of the concept of positive respect.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS: IDENTIFYING THE SOLUTION IN META-ETHICS

Socio-cultural morals have become the system of ethics of right or wrong. Any action, whether societal or individual, becomes right for some and not right for others. This is due to the diverse nature of people, their cultural upbringing, and their needs and modern ideologies.

In this world of relative reality, societies live by the principles of prescriptive and descriptive ethics, which have been constructed through languages which fall short of the description of the working of the cosmos. For various phenomena we have neither the linguistic mechanism (i.e. vocabulary) nor the intellect to express what we experience. Hence in the world of diverse cultures and communities, it has become necessary to transcend all the human made constructs and be directed by meta-ethics. This means we not only value and respect ourselves but all life and what it is made of. People or members of the diverse cultures need to acknowledge the opposing multiple forces and provide a moral path for transcending this reality or globality. Human dignity or the dignity of all existence are inextricably bound in the ethics of the moral path, walking together to further the ethical treatment and respect for all of humanity, nay all life in this world and beyond.

We still can develop a universal system of ethics, which may not apply to each and every individual and every situation. We can make it necessary and sufficient for the majority by appealing to the basic conscience, or the feeling of 'human dignity,' or the 'dignity of existence' by raising the bar of non-violence in word, thought and action with the tool/means of education. Unless everyone is taught to value all of creation, there cannot be peace at any level in the globe/universe.

Dignity, value and respect are global issues as they relate to every existence, which need to be identified and promulgated in order to establish and maintain an operationally valid world-culture. Dignity is the self worth that the individual or group inherently has and is identifiable externally to that group by others. Value is the weight that this self worth has both to the individual or group and also is identified by outside individuals and groups. Respect is recognizing the values of differences that various individuals or groups contain.

Simply recognizing these inherently is not enough as numerous social constructs and restrictions are created by people. Individuals and organizations can interpret and re-interpret any of these concepts for selfish ends. Ideologies, rules and policies can be established, but these policies can merely be for show, without any intention to use them other than to point as "guiding principle" that actually guide no one. It is necessary to promote the understanding of the true nature of the evolutionary self (one's own and of others), to recognize the value of all-inclusive existence; to assess one's situational needs and curtail them with the disciplinary mind with the eye on the welfare of others; to help develop virtuous characters through the teachings of universal ethics, values and respect and through the promotion of the concepts of interdependency, compassion and forgiveness. The change can be effected through education, changing socio-cultural-political-religious constructs and creating new ones.

Finally, it is imperative to understand that every existence struggles for dignified life, wanting to be valued and respected by others. Hence it is necessary to teach ethics of dignity, authenticity, value and respect through the

creation or production of new ideologies, new literature, and their promotion through new educational programs to bring a much needed change.

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