CHAPTER VIII

THE FRAMEWORK OF COMPARISON

(a) Introduction

In this chapter we shall examine the existing framework of comparative studies and suggest an outline of what probably could be a more fruitful framework for future comparisons. This issue of framework is discussed here in terms of the presuppositions, methods and aims of comparative studies.

For instance, we raise the question: What are the presuppositions of comparative studies being carried out today? We try to answer this with reference to the possibility and need of interaction, complementation and synthesis of the Indian and Western philosophies, as this possibility and this need are understood by comparative philosophers themselves.

It is argued herein that there prevails a somewhat complacent attitude about this synthesis, complementarity, etc. which is traced to a lack of a clear awareness of the two perspectives and their differences. It is suggested that, on our understanding of the perspectives and their
difference, it is premature to talk about a synthesis; this is because, in the existing circumstances, meaningful interaction of the two traditions is itself a very tall order. Further it is suggested that the possibility of such interaction depends, not so much on highlighting the points of similarity of the two philosophies in question, as on viewing each of these as a whole, with all its elements seen in their interrelationship so that one sees clearly the strength and limitations of each.

Thus, it is argued here that mutual interaction and understanding of India and the modern West depends on whole-to-whole comparisons. And, paradoxical though this might appear, such comparisons presuppose bringing to a head the 'confrontation' between the two cultures.

(b) Presuppositions of Comparative Studies

Discussing the possibility and need of mutual understanding between the East and the West, P.T.Raju takes note of an objection to comparative philosophy, viz., the view that the man of one philosophical tradition can hardly appreciate the philosophy of another tradition. Of course, he rejects this notion as unsound. But, rather than this rejection itself, it is the reason for this rejection that is of
importance to us. P.T.Raju, thus labours at length to establish that every man is the result of world history. He argues that, in the course of history, "the East and the West have influenced each other," that the two have "common historical roots", such that there can really be "no individual now whose historical consciousness can be purely Eastern or purely Western."²

The argument in short is that the East and West can understand each other because the historical consciousness of both Eastern and Western men contains elements of both, such that they have common conceptual modes to receive what each can offer the other. In this connection P.T. Raju approvingly quotes John Dewey according to whom there are "no cultural block Universe" existing like windowless monads, although, he says, there are "significant differences of emphasis on some of the conceptual patterns and experiences between the East and the West".³

The question before us is not whether it is possible to cut across cultural boundaries; it is, indeed, whether this possibility has to be explained in this particular way.

This explanation of the possibility of mutual understanding of cultures in terms of their common historical
antecedents, has to be distinguished from the stand which is implied by our understanding of the situation. Our stand is to accept, as a legitimate presupposition, the possibility of people seriously interested in the business of life, wherever they may be and whatever their historical antecedents, being able to understand life as a whole; they are able to understand the different philosophies of life, irrespective of the peculiarities of each one's formulation and the peculiarities of the conceptual tools employed in that formulation.

This presupposition regarding the possibility of intercultural understanding derives its legitimacy, not so much from historical and other contingencies, as from the plausibility of viewing the theoretical/intellectual aspect as a part and parcel of the larger human endeavour to attain certain goals, for, this goal-orientation immediately connects the intellectual aspect with the other aspects such as Experience and Conduct.

Thus, the intellectual/theoretical aspect, its own structure and details, may differ from culture to culture, and yet it is quite possible that the relationship this has with other aspects in terms of the role this plays in the total context, is largely the same for the different cultures. This would be so even when they do not have much in common in terms of historical antecedents.
And, in so far as the role of thought could be essentially the same for the different cultures, it is possible that the thought of one interacts with the significantly different thought of another; for, thought here is not interacting with another thought in isolation from the other aspects which go into the making of a culture. Visualizing this possibility amounts to viewing the nature and scope of East-West understanding in a new way.

If this is so, then, it is not necessary to say, as P.T. Raju does, that comparative philosophy is possible because "the eastern and western minds have inherently the same constitution." Differences in 'constitution' also need not make it impossible to interact, that is, if the role of the intellect is understood in relation to the roles by the other relevant aspects.

Not only it is not quite necessary, P.T. Raju's explanation of the possibility of interaction of cultures is not as useful as it might first appear. If mutual understanding of cultures were to be explained with reference to their common historical antecedents, it is doubtful whether this offers a satisfactory solution to the problem of intercultural translatability. One might even say that this kind of explanation does not involve a proper appreciation of the difficulty which this problem indicates.
It was B.L. Whorf who argued in a forceful way that our world conceptions are due to our language structures. If, as suggested by him, there is for every language pattern a distinct kind of reality, and if thus there are as many kinds of reality as there are languages, then the problem of translatability would remain in spite of some ancient common historical antecedents. This would hold even if, as Whorf himself suggested, there lies beyond these language structures an indefinite experience of reality which is common to all men. Until the relationship between this experience and the particular language structure is worked out, the problem of translation is not properly solved.

Matilal who points out that "the strongest philosophical support of Whorf's thesis comes from W.V. Quine who has developed his thesis of indeterminacy of translation", believes that scepticism of this kind "can somehow be answered, provided our demand for accuracy and exactness is not too high or fastidious." If it is fastidiousness to demand accuracy and exactness of a certain kind, it could as well be a failure to appreciate the problem that leads to the suggestion that we "lower our expectations".

On the other hand, if the possibility of intercultural understanding is approached in the way we have suggested here, then it is possible to meet this problem of translatability, in a more or less satisfactory manner. For, it is
then not necessary for us to deny the differences in the structures of language or their implications for translation; we do not have to regard the concern about these problem as fastidiousness. At the same time we are also not forced to the conclusion that the different cultures are block-universes existing like windowless monads. For, we look at the situation from a different angle.

We, thus, assume that the roles played by the intellectual and linguistic aspects are essentially the same in different cultures, and insist that these be viewed in the total context of life which includes the non-intellectual and non-linguistic aspects, and in which these different aspects have their intimate interplay.

The presupposition behind this interpretation of the possibility of mutual understanding of cultures may now be stated clearly. It is that comparison, or even translation is not an element-to-element correlation; rather it has to be an attempt to put the whole alongside the whole, so that the elements are understood in their organic unity and interrelationship. This is the concept of whole-to-whole comparison.

If it is whole-to-whole comparison that holds out the possibility of fruitful cultural interaction, then we have, as it were, avoided a number of difficulties. One need not,
of course, show that the two cultures have had some historical contacts in the past in order that one may show how they can interact. Also, as already noted, one need not show that the differences in the structures of thought and language are unimportant. Rather, we may now understand how the problems arising from these differences are real and yet how they be overcome if approached in the proper way. Thus, our interpretation of the possibility of intercultural comparisons does not unduly restrict the scope and extent of these comparisons.

At the same time, this interpretation does affect the character and direction of cultural interaction in certain significant ways. Thus, for instance, if the wholes are such that, on account of a difference in their perspectives, they do not easily go together, then there will be difficulties in viewing them as complementary to each other. For example, if we are right in saying that what is typical of Indian thought is its keen awareness of the organic relationship of the elements which constitute the whole, and if it is basically in this that India and the modern West differ then it implies certain difficulties in viewing them as participants in the process of evolving a world culture.

Our view of the possibility of East-West comparison, thus, implies that the idea of complementarity of cultures stands in need of review.
Northrop expressed this notion of complementarity clearly when he said that the East and the West can meet, "not so much because they are saying the same thing, but because they are expressing different yet complementary things, both of which are required for an adequate and true conception of man's self and his universe. Each needs the other." 8

This notion of complementarity which is by and large taken for granted, is also supported, partly at least, by the belief that the difference between cultures is one of emphasis on different aspects. A.J.Bahm, for instance, understands the European, Indian and Chinese cultures in terms of the differences in emphasis regarding reason, intuition and apprehension respectively, and speaks of the emergence of "a more complicated world culture." 9

In a similar vein, P.T.Raju asks the question: Which philosophy and which tradition have articulated which of its aspects best? 10 We have already referred to his statement that there are "significant differences of emphasis" on some of the conceptual patterns and experiences between the East and the West. Elsewhere, he says that the difference between the two traditions is due the difference between the "levels of being" in which they have been primarily interested, the interests giving peculiar colour to the
respective traditions. In so far as he has in mind the ethico-religious level on the one hand and the socio-economic and political levels on the other, it is evident that this distinction may be reduced to the distinction in terms of the differing emphasis on the so-called religious and secular values.

Now, if the difference between the two cultures is understood in terms of the differing emphasis on different ideas and ideals, it is indeed very tempting to say that the two are complementary and that they should be brought together so that each completes the other.

But, in so far as we see the difference between the two perspectives of India and the modern West, not in terms of the differing emphasis on different elements, not in terms of interest in different levels of being, but in terms of the different understandings of the interrelationship of the elements which constitute the whole, it is not possible for us to take to this notion of complementarity with the same enthusiasm as displayed by these comparative philosophers.

Nor can we accept without further examination the possibility of a synthesis of the East and the West which is yet another pre-supposition of comparative philosophy today;
this notion of a synthesis between the East and the West has literally captured the imagination of comparative philosophers.

There are, of course, some instances of a cautious approach to the issue, as is possibly the case with Sri Aurobindo who speaks of "the shock upon each other of the oriental and occidental mentalities" as that which is creating the future. The ambiguous way in which things are stated given room for all kinds of interpretations; but it is our surmise that the "delivering vision" that Sri Aurobindo speaks of is not to be understood in terms of a facile synthesis.

The possibility of a synthesis depends ultimately on the very possibility of meaningful interaction leading to mutual understanding. But when, on account of the very nature of the perspectives involved and the lack of a clear awareness of the same, mutual interaction or understanding is itself a tall order, it is premature to talk about the complementarity and synthesis of the two cultures in question.

As for the need for comparative studies, the prevalent notion in this respect might be seen as following from the aforesaid view of the possibility of mutual understanding, complementarity and synthesis of the two perspectives, a view that has been found wanting in the proper appreciation of the basic difference between India and the modern West.
On the view that each perspective is limited in its comprehensiveness and in matters of degree and place of emphasis it is quite natural to think that what is thus incomplete needs to be completed and what is a limited view may be made into a comprehensive one. This view of the need to compare the situations and to complement each other is, however, inadequate in the same way as the prevalent view about the possibility of comparison, complementation, etc., is an inadequate view.

Without at all denying that the two perspectives under consideration could each be limited in its own way, it may still be emphasized that what can follow from our understanding of the perspectives and their difference, is a different kind of limitation of these. Thus, the two perspectives may be regarded as limited in such a way that their incompleteness may be removed not necessarily by borrowing from each other; rather, this could be achieved by developing what is perhaps already present within a perspective but is not already developed within that.

On the other hand, if the limitation is of a different and more serious variety, development of the perspective in question may require giving it a whole new direction. But this would alter the very character of the perspective, and
would therefore merit consideration as to whether it is a matter of development or of a radical transformation.

On the assumption that what is required is a kind of development from within each perspective, such development is better understood as a matter of bringing out more fully the possibilities of each, rather than as a process of completing the incomplete by adding something from outside. For, this kind of development would not affect the basic character of either of these perspectives, as each would remain essentially the same even when there is a give-and-take relation between them. This point of view is different from the romantic view of the possibility of the two perspectives growing into one all-embracing perspective.

If, indeed, it is not development from within but a complete reorientation that is required, then it needs to be carefully examined how this has to be achieved.

In either case, it would seem that what is required is not a complementation of each perspective by the other. What is required is perhaps to bring about a situation where each perspective is seen in its totality and with all its implications and possibilities; may be, the situation will then have to be described, in the language of Kipling, as two strong men standing face to face.
The need, then, is probably to bring to a head the 'confrontation' between the two perspectives, rather than of complementing each other, or of effecting their synthesis. Complementation and synthesis, if at all possible, would require that each perspective is carefully assessed for its proper strength, not merely in terms of the elements involved, but more importantly in terms of the direction that is provided.

This, however, takes us to questions about borrowing and assimilation. For instance, is there no place at all for borrowing and assimilation in the scheme of comparison that is proposed here?

One might, of course, speak eloquently of the need for "adoption and adaptation ... so that our life may become fuller." But if our understanding of the two perspectives and their limitations has any plausibility, then the processes of adoption and assimilation may not have much more than a marginal role to play in their development; adoption and assimilation therefore become almost incidental issues in a discussion on the framework of comparative studies.

If the perspectives are different, not so much in the presence or absence of certain elements, nor in the relative emphasis each element receives, but in the way in
which the elements are understood as related among themselves and to the totality of these, then inadequacy of a perspective is basically the inadequacy of the understanding of, and insistence on, this relationship of the elements. Adequacy of a perspective would, therefore, mean understanding the elements in their proper relationship and letting this understanding govern the consideration of all issues that are analysed. This kind of adequacy can hardly be attained by means of adoption and assimilation.

If at all one wants to understand this kind of change in terms of adoption, assimilation, etc., it is important to remember that this is not adoption of a missing element, or of a missing emphasis on an element, but 'adoption' of a whole direction which was probably missing, for whatever reason, in the philosophy of a particular age. But, certainly, this is better described as reorientation than in terms of adoption, assimilations etc.

This is not to rule out totally the need for adoption and assimilation of the elements themselves by one culture or another; rather, this is to understand these in a different way; this implies limiting the scope for these and assigning them a peripheral role in the whole process of cultural interaction.
Adoption, then, should not be such as to alter the perspective into which something is newly absorbed; otherwise it would not be correct to regard it as adoption. It thus turns out that only certain kinds of elements can be adopted, and not elements of certain other kinds; what goes organically with the perspective can be adopted, and only that. As an example, one might cite here Gandhi's recommendation to adopt punctuality from the West. Incidentally, this analysis also throws light on Gandhi's opposition to modernization as a whole, and to machinery, the railways, etc., in particular. It might be said that Gandhi was not so much opposed to these as he was opposed to the 'philosophy' of modernization, industrialization, etc.

In short, the possibility of comparing, complementing and synthesizing different cultures of the world, as also the need for these and for adoption, assimilation etc., are viewed by comparative philosophers in a particular way today. Apparently we have the same presuppositions; for, we agree that there is the possibility of, and the need for, mutual understanding of cultures. But it is a possibility and a need in a sense which is quite different from that in which the comparative philosophers have often understood them. While they generally take it for granted that there is the possibility of and need for complementing and synthesizing Indian thought and modern Western thought, it is our surmise
that what is possible and desirable is something like a confrontation of the two, so that the strength and limitations of each will be fully brought out.

(c) Methods of Comparison

The method of comparative studies is yet to acquire a definiteness; this makes it rather difficult to discuss the procedures followed by comparative philosophers in their efforts to relate the different philosophies and cultures of the world. The method is only emerging slowly; it is, as P.T. Raju observes, "not something readymade and present at hand for immediate application."\(^{15}\)

If we may apply the same to the question of standard of comparison, it would appear that any positive statement of it is bound to involve a premature view of the matter. N.K. Devaraja observes that we need not be already in possession of a neatly formulated evaluative criterion in order to launch on a comparative study. What we need is, he thinks, a certain "frame of mind" with its sensitiveness to the different facets of reality, openness and impartiality of outlook, with of course a certain "commitment to truth" underlying all of them.\(^{16}\)

It is, however, possible to argue that without some
standard, implicit if not explicitly stated, 'commitment to truth', etc., would not amount to much. Thus, though there is not yet a clearout and well-defined method, some general idea of it is necessary for even the preliminary exercises in comparison to have proper content and direction. It is, then, relevant to ask which standard is to be adopted to ensure that comparative studies proceed in the proper direction.

A.J. Bahm is one who has attempted to answer this question in some earnestness. But, on examination of a number of possibilities, he finds almost all of them inadequate as standards. He holds, therefore, that the true standard will have to incorporate the best in each of these inadequate standards. This, however, reveals a certain view of the nature of inadequacy of standards which we shall find rather unacceptable on our premises pertaining to the nature of the cultures that are compared.

It has been noted by Bahm that the philosopher who thinks that his own philosophy is the absolute model, does not gain anything from comparative philosophy, a point which has been recognized by P.T. Raju as well. On the other hand there is a growing recognition of the difficulties involved in accepting a set of universal, unique, or selected traits as standards.
It is in this context that we want to briefly examine the notion of an ideal standard, also considered by Bahm; this implies "rising above one's own culture." One is perhaps inclined to think in terms of the possibility of rising above one's own culture, on account of the feeling that any standard would otherwise be not equal to the task of liberating comparative studies from the clutches of our natural prejudices. This feeling is strengthened when one discovers that the history of comparative philosophy is, as Bahm puts it, a history of biases. But the ideal of rising above one's own culture is itself beset with problems.

Let us consider for a moment what could be the meaning of rising above one's culture. It means, of course, being free from the limitations of one's culture. But, what kind of limitations are these? Could they be of mere overemphasis and/or under-emphasis of certain elements? Could they be limitations pertaining to the absence of some elements which could be regarded as important? Or, perhaps, could they not be limitations in the understanding of the relationship of the elements which are already present with their varying degrees of emphasis?

Our understanding of the difference between the two perspectives of India and the modern West suggests that the limitations which are significant are of the understanding of
the relationship of the elements among themselves and not of the presence or absence of these elements, or of the degree of emphasis on these elements.

Now, if the limitation actually pertains to the emphasis or presence/absence of certain elements, then it is one kind of limitation. It may be regarded as a comparatively minor sort of limitation; it may not make much difference if this limitation is removed or this defect is rectified. In this sense it is not so urgent to overcome this kind of limitation. In a sense, rising above such limitations is an almost impossible task; one never knows when one has actually included all the necessary elements or how to strike the exact balance of emphasis among the multitude of these elements.

On the other hand, if we have argued, the limitations pertain to the understanding of the relationship among the elements, than it is another kind of limitation, and it may have to be regarded as a major or fundamental limitation. For, if the understanding of this relationship is altered, it alters the very character of the perspective and not merely the number of elements in it or the degree of emphasis on these elements.

Overcoming this latter kind of limitations, therefore, amounts to abandoning the perspective itself. Such abandonment
of one's own perspective may ultimately be necessary and desirable in certain cases; and, yet, this cannot be decided in advance. The standard of evaluation has to be such as to facilitate viewing the different cultures as wholes without prejudicing the issue in one way or another. Instead, if the abandonment of one's own perspective is required for having the ideal standard of rising above one's culture, this cannot be said to contribute to the "meeting of cultures". It is, rather, disqualifying one of the contestants in the inevitable encounter of cultures even before they have met in the arena to fight it out between themselves.

If the adoption of a method/standard for comparison, involves the abandonment or rejection of a whole perspective, it is indeed, doubtful whether it is the proper method. It is in this background that K.C.Bahattacharya's seminal article on "Swaraj in Ideas" assumes great significance. He argues here that, to avoid cultural subjection, it is necessary that the native mode of thought is clearly articulated and brought into competition with the alien mode, so that the strength of each mode is tested and the limitations of each are also brought to light. It is only by making this competition possible that comparative philosophy can attain a breakthrough.

If our understanding of the two perspectives in
question in terms of the interrelationship of their elements has some plausibility, and if we are not to disqualify any one of these from taking part in a trial of strength, then it appears that the search for a proper standard has to take into account the need to evaluate the different understandings of the relationship of elements in these two perspectives. In other words, the standard, as well as the method, will have to suit this purpose of assessing the relative strength and limitations of the two perspectives, each regarded as a whole.

This is the concept and procedure of "whole-to-whole comparison." In this, our attention is not allowed to wander to the elements viewed in isolation; instead, it is kept steadily on the whole which is constituted of the various parts or elements viewed in a certain interrelationship.

Does this mean that we do not need, or cannot have, a more definite and specific understanding of the standard for the appreciation and evaluation of philosophies?

What our analysis has shown is that the standard or framework cannot be in terms of some traits or elements, that it cannot also consist in rising above one's own culture in any significant sense of the term, and that it has to be such as will permit and facilitate whole-to-whole comparisons.
As to the question whether it is not possible to have a more specific and positive understanding of the standard, one which is at the same time comprehensive and adequate, we shall briefly examine this possibility with reference to the suggestion by P.T. Raju that the standard could be the result of an "integrated conception", a conception in terms of which all philosophies may be evaluated.

P.T. Raju speaks of an integrated conception which "at first works implicitly in our interpretation and evaluation of the different conceptions, but becomes explicit at the end", one that "integrates the different understandings so far as they contain elements of truth, so that we can get an integrated picture of man and his nature which is at the same time the most comprehensive." And, such an integrated conception is that in terms of which, according to him, all philosophies are to be evaluated.

What may truly be objected to here is the very notion of integration of "different understandings so far as they contain elements of truth." The perspectives are understood by P.T. Raju as differing only or mainly in the presence or absence of certain elements, or with regard to the difference in the emphasis these elements receive, in the respective contexts. He has argued, on the basis of discussions of the
1964 East-West Philosophers Conference in Honolulu, that the characterization of different cultures as intellectual, aesthetic, etc. are "descriptions of primary emphasis." We have, however, argued at length that the more important difference between the perspectives of India and the modern West is with regard to the understanding of the interrelationship of the elements involved in the explanation of man's nature and his ultimate goal.

One would certainly agree with P.T. Raju when he says that the method of comparative philosophy cannot be phenomenological. He is, in fact, very emphatic about this. He says that in comparative philosophy "we cannot remain at the merely descriptive, merely sociological, merely psychological, merely anthropological - in short, at the merely phenomenological level;" he feels that comparative philosophy has to be "a value study." 24

He says further that there are different inadequate ways of comparison such as "comparing the ideals of one culture to the practices of another, or comparing the central doctrines of the one to the fringe doctrines of another, or comparing the straight application of the philosophies of the one to the perverted derivations of the other, or comparing the religious and transcendental concepts of the one to
the mundane and political concepts of the other." Indeed, one might think, here P.T.Raju comes rather close to the notion of whole-to-whole comparison that we propose here.

P.T.Raju also observes: "A culture is like a tree with a number of branches spread out in many directions. If we take the branches to be different from one another without noticing the trunk, we miss the tree, the interrelationship among the branches, the contribution of each to the others and to the whole, and the reason why and how the tree spread out so many branches." But, on many occasions, P.T.Raju himself goes against this principle of taking the whole into account while dealing with the parts. For instance, to speak of integrating the two cultures "so far as they contain elements of truth," is certainly to forget all about the "interrelationship among the branches."

There is also this suggestion in P.T.Raju, that "if a particular doctrine about something in Indian philosophy is found to be false and a doctrine about the same thing in Western philosophy is found to be true, then the former has to be given up." It seems, however, that this kind of grafting of branches cannot be consistent with the principle
of taking the whole into account while dealing with the parts
P.T. Raju does not consider what it is for a doctrine to be
false. A proper consideration of this may bring to light
the relationship between the 'falsity' of a doctrine and the
inadequacy of a whole system of philosophy. In so far as the
inadequacy of a system cannot be understood in terms of the
theory alone, it is clear that the 'falsity' of a particular
document also cannot be decided in such isolation.

The idea of integrating the elements of truth from
wherever they may be found, militates against the individua-
ality of the perspectives, each of which has tried to develop
an integrated view of man and his nature. If, on the other
hand, the attempted integration in a particular tradition or
civilization is to be evaluated by taking one's own under-
standing of integration as the criterian, then it is not
clear how this can escape the charge of subjectivity and
provincialism which P.T. Raju himself has raised agains
similar procedures. 28

Thus, one fails to find a suitable standard for
collection in terms of an 'integrated conception of man and
his nature' which is derived from the elements of truth
present in various cultures; and this failure is yet another
indication that perhaps our search for a foolproof theoreti-
cal standard for the appreciation and evaluation of philoso-
phies and cultures is a misdirected search.
This seems also to strengthen our argument in favour of a different approach to the study of philosophies and of cultures, an approach wherein the theoretical aspect is seen not in isolation from the other aspects, but in its interrelationship with them, so that the standard itself is not intended for testing/evaluating the theory in isolation.

Nor can the other aspects such as Experience and Life be compared in isolation. Thus, for example, it is not possible to compare the highest religious experience of different religions in isolation from their Thought and Life aspects. For, as argued in the second chapter, Experience does not play its role except in relation to the aspect of Thought and Life. Therefore, "comparison of religions on the basis of the description of the highest religious experience hardly illuminates the religions that are being compared". James' analysis of the varieties of religious experience needs to be studied with this in mind.

It is quite conceivable that, just as there is no universally acceptable theoretical system, there may not be a universally acceptable theoretical standard for evaluation of different philosophies. The standard may have to be in terms of the ideal of the highest human attainment understood as self-realization or God-realization, an attainment which
consists in the proper integration of the theoretical, the practical and the intuitive aspects.

The failure to find a theoretically adequate standard does not therefore imply that there will be no standard or that there is no need of it. Rather it suggests that the standard is of a certain kind.

The nature of this standard cannot, as already suggested, be described in purely theoretical terms. This standard can better be described as that which enables one to take the whole into account and view the parts as parts of the whole. When it is thus described in theoretical terms, this will have to be understood in terms of its relationship with the aspects of direct knowledge by intuition and concrete life as lived by the best individuals in a society.

In short, its holistic character is the essence of this kind of standard; and this is to be understood in terms of the actuality of the integrated lives that a perspective or tradition throws up. Carlyle had a good reason to speak about heroes and hero-worship; he was trying to figure out the essence of the civilization to which he belonged, and he knew what the key to it was. 31

Thus, the 'holistic' character of the standard of
evaluation that we have just mentioned, has to be distinguished not only from the eclectic nature of the ideal standard that one sometimes hopes to arrive at by taking the best from everywhere; it has to be distinguished also from the comprehensiveness of the kind which is limited to the theoretical level. The kind of comprehensiveness which is limited to the theoretical level, will, under certain circumstances, cut off the theory from the other related aspects, thereby virtually ruling out the proper functioning of theory itself.

A proper and adequate 'standard' of comparison has to take into account our propensity, natural or acquired, to ignore the interrelationship of the elements, non-theoretical as well as theoretical, in a particular philosophy or a particular tradition. In other words, this 'standard' should be such that it discourages element-to-element comparison and subserves whole-to-whole comparison.

Thus, the 'whole' does not mean just the whole of theory but includes, as the connections of the theory with them indicates, the non-theoretical aspects of direct experience/knowledge of reality and the actual living or embodiment of its truth in concrete lives; it is only to be expected that this method of comparing the whole to the whole avoids many of the difficulties of comparing significantly different cultures. Distortions are less likely in this sort of
comparisons. For, when the whole is taken into account and not the parts or elements themselves in isolation, these elements, being seen as elements of the whole, would be seen in their true nature. In other words, these elements are taken into account with reference to the role each one of them plays, together with the others rather than by itself, in the total context.

To apply this rather general observation to a specific case, let us see how the Samkhya and Descartes may be compared. We have seen how the mind-body problem of Descartes may be compared with the same in Samkhya. The questions we asked were not what mind means here or what body means there. Rather we considered the place of mind and body in the philosophy of Descartes, and how they are related to each other and to God who occupies a prominent place in this philosophy. We also noted how God, in spite of Descartes arguments for His existence, is not merely a matter of theory, how Descartes' own belief in God might have played a major role in his attempt to construct a philosophy which properly related man with God and Nature. Again it was noted how the Life-aspect is brought in by Descartes, almost in spite of himself; for he thinks that the attempt to understand the union of mind and body with reference to Life requires that we refrain from speculation. Thus we saw how in Descartes the Thought aspect may be seen as connected with the aspects of Experience and Life, however tenuous these connections may be.
Similarly, in the case of Samkhya, we saw that the body and the mind, the external and the internal, are to be understood not merely in their inter-relationship, but also in their relationship with Prakriti and Purusa, the discrimination between them being the ultimate goal of man. But this goal itself is not a matter of understanding alone; it is, at the same time, a matter of direct knowledge and of concrete life. For, the highest attainments are also a matter of dispositions.

How do we then compare Samkhya and Descartes? Mind in Samkhya with the same in Descartes? No. Mind and body in the one taken together to be compared to them taken together in the other. Not even thus. The whole of the thought of Descartes with the whole of Samkhya thought? Yes, but only in a sense. Because the connections of each thought with the related non-theoretical aspects are also relevant for the purpose of understanding them; they are therefore relevant for their comparison as well.

The same procedure could be followed in comparing Sankara with Kant. But this is more easily said than done. For one thing it can be an enormously difficult task to view the two as wholes and view them side by side; on the other hand, each whole is to be viewed in the wider sense of the term, that is, in such a way as to include the non-theoretical
aspects and their relationship with the theoretical aspects.

Thus it will be relevant in both contexts to ask: what are the example of ideal life, real or imagined, in whom Experience, Thought and Life integrate themselves into a unified whole. That such questions are asked more easily in one context than in the other, does not mean that these questions are irrelevant to the consideration of their nature and their comparative merits and demerits.

This sort of attention on the 'whole' does not imply that the elements are not analysed. Rather, the elements themselves are analysed, and understood with reference to the role each one of them plays in the total context. Thus, in this method of whole-to-whole comparison, each concept and each doctrine is analysed with reference to the role it plays in the total context of the theory of a particular system, and the theory itself is understood with reference to its role in the overall context which we have already described as the matrix of Experience, Thought and Life in a certain inter-relationship.

One thus becomes aware of the real differences between apparently similar ideas and concepts; one also becomes aware of the similarity of theories in so far as
their roles are the same. Similarity of function thus becomes the criterion to say the real similarities from the apparent ones.

To take an example, one could, by the application of this method, see the similarity of the notions of God and Karma. Both are present in both the Indian and Western contexts; but it is important to see that belief in Karma plays roughly the same role in the Indian context as belief in God plays in the other. This is seen when God is seen in relation to the related notions of soul, original sin, etc., and Karma is seen in relation to the notions of self, rebirth, etc. The correspondence between God-realization and self-realization becomes even more clear when we consider the saints in whom Thought gets organically related and unified with Experience and Life.32

But there is Eliot Deutsch who regards the theory of Karma as liable to the criticism that it is fatalistic, that is, when compared with the doctrine of original sin. Deutsch is quite aware that the doctrine itself affirms the possibility of change, that, even accepting this theory, it is open to one to remake his life, as the future is not a finished product like the past. Nevertheless, he contends that in practice this theory encourages a tendency to give up in the face of the enormous burden of one's past actions.33
G.R. Malkani's observation on this issue is worth noting here. He says: "People do not exert themselves sufficiently to remove the causes of their misfortunes; everything is blamed on the Law, and man's power to find redress is discounted." It is clear that Deutsch does not consider under what circumstances the theory encourages apathy to life. In other words, the Life aspect is left out in his consideration of the 'validity' of the doctrine of Karma. Once there is the corresponding effort to live the kind of life that is advocated, the limitations and inadequacies of the doctrine or theory can be seen in a new light.

Gandhi's insistence that a religion be understood with reference to the best lives it has produced, can now be seen, not merely as a good-natured practical suggestion, but as embodying the principle that theory or belief should not be isolated from the Life aspect for examination and evaluation. For, it is in these realized persons that the different aspects of Experience, Thought and Life find their proper integration.

Thought, word and deed are best harmonized in the realized person. The reality of the sthitaprajna or the realized person, therefore, provides the criterion to evaluate
the thoughts, words and deeds of all others. The principle behind the acceptance of this criterion is that an element of the whole needs to be viewed in its relationship with the whole. Gandhi's approach to the study of religions may, therefore, be said to involve the method of whole-to-whole comparison which we have tried to develop more fully and in some detail in this thesis.

The method of whole-to-whole comparison suggested here seems to make the task of comparison well nigh impossible. But, it does not rule out proper evaluation of the strength and validity of individual philosophical and religious systems. However, it makes such evaluation a rather complex and therefore difficult affair, thereby virtually ruling out hasty comparisons and resulting oversimplifications. It may therefore be argued not merely that the procedure suggested here and described as whole-to-whole comparison, does not preclude proper evaluation; one might as well argue that such a procedure is indeed necessary to make evaluations possible and render them authentic.

(d) Aims of Comparison

"Comparative philosophy must go beyond mere comparisons", says A.J. Bahm. What does this 'going beyond' really mean? It means, according to him, contributing to the "needed
emerging world philosophy. Now, would it be within the bounds of possibility to give shape to a world philosophy? What at any rate is a world philosophy?

One possible answer to this question is provided by P.T. Raju when he speaks of bringing together all philosophies for gaining "the deepest insight possible into the nature and being of man;" it is, according to him, the "gaining of this insight that is the ultimate aim of comparative philosophy." Again, he says, "Comparisons should lead to an insight into the existence of a deeper identity without which differences cannot be significant." And how is this insight obtained? "The concepts and doctrines of both the East and the West are critically brought together and compared, their full implications and presuppositions are fully brought to light, and in their terms the concepts and doctrines are co-ordinated or complemented, and synthesized." We have already seen in the course of our discussion of the presuppositions and method of comparative studies, that this idea of complementing and synthesizing concepts and doctrines is not such an attractive idea as it appears. When we take into account the possibility that the cultures involved here are significantly different, it becomes doubtful whether we can ever bring within the realm of reality the world-philosophy that Bahm speaks of; and it becomes necessary to
question the contention of P.T. Raju that "it is the duty of comparative philosophy to point out and demonstrate that Eastern and Western insights are parts of a wider whole". 40

Speaking of comparative religion, N.K. Devaraja says that its final aim is evaluation of the different religious traditions; he is quick to add that the aim is "not the glorification of this or that creed or religious tradition, but the improvement of man's religious sensitively." 41

The question really is not so much whether comparative studies should aim at evaluation of the different philosophies and religions one studies. Rather, the question is what kind of evaluation is possible and desirable.

The method of whole-to-whole comparison determines, partly at least, the aim of comparative studies; it determines this in such a way that evaluation of elements is made subservient to the evaluation of the whole which is brought within the realm of possibility. It is in fact the latter, that is, the possibility of comparing wholes, that makes the comparison and evaluation of elements meaningful.

Evaluation of isolated elements might appear a relatively easy task; but it is more likely than not that such evaluation seeks merely to legitimize our prejudices.
Evaluation of the wholes, though it is also open to the same risk, can, on account of the apprehension of the whole that is involved here, take care of these risks to a considerable extent.

The task, then, is not to compare and evaluate isolated elements. Thus, one should not aim at evaluating the elements of reason, intuition etc. in the different contexts. In so far as the relationship between reason and intuition could be different in the two perspectives under consideration here, it is possible that reason is not of the same kind in the two contexts. If it is not the same kind of 'rationality' that is involved, then the aim of comparative philosophy would seem to be to unravel this hidden truth and to bring out the implications of this for the nature and strength of the perspectives in question. This, of course, is evaluation; but, rather difficult of accomplishment, this is evaluation of a kind different from the one that is often attempted by comparative philosophers.

Northrop's view regarding the meeting of East and West will then have to be examined afresh for its soundness. He feels that the two can meet, "not because they are saying the same thing, but because they are expressing different yet complementary things, both of which are expressing different yet complementary things, both of which are required for an adequate and true conception of man's self and his nature... Each needs the other". This view rests on the assumption that the two civilization"supplement and reinforce each
other." Rather than accept this, we may have to say, on our assumption that the two perspectives are significantly different, that they can and should meet for the purpose of facilitating a discussion as to the comprehensiveness and direction of each of these understandings.

There is optimism also in our view of the meeting of East and West. But it is not based on the notion of complementarity of the two; rather it is an optimism which is possible in spite of the basic contradictions that exist between the two perspectives.

If it is possible that reason, intuition, etc. are significantly different in the two perspectives on account of the different understandings of their interrelationship, then, for proper communication and interaction between the two, both of them would have to be first articulated on their own, so that the possibilities and limitations of each are fully realized. It follows that, rather than aim at synthesis, comparative studies must first ensure a comprehensive understanding of each perspective as an organic whole without interference from the other.

Better understanding of one's own perspective does not always ensue from comparing it with the thought and
practice of another perspective. This is so, not merely on account of the practical difficulties and limitations inherent in the whole process of comparison, but mainly because a certain degree of self-awareness is a precondition for fruitful and meaningful comparisons. In the absence of this awareness, comparisons might merely confound us and not enlighten us regarding our strength or our limitations.

Thus there are circumstances when comparison and attempts at complementation, synthesis, etc. are better avoided. When, for instance, there is no awareness of the perspectives involved and their basic differences, it is more likely than not that comparisons lead to capitulation of one perspective to the other without a proper evaluation of their relative strength and limitations. Under such circumstances it is imperative that one resists the urge to compare, lest one make a mess of the cultures being compared.

It is in this sense one might say that rather than aiming at synthesizing the philosophies of India and modern West we should keep them side by side or face to face with each other; the immediate aim may be to strengthen each perspective to its utmost limits so that one strong perspective is pitted against another strong perspective.

To underscore the value of self-awareness as a
precondition for fruitful comparison is, however, not to argue for such awareness in a situation of cultural isolation. Rather, the dialectical interaction of differing perspectives can contribute significantly to the very development of self-awareness; provided of course that its framework in terms of presuppositions, methods, and aims is a valid framework.

To conclude, the foremost aim of comparisons should be to see that the two perspectives do not interfere with each other, that, as far as possible, they mutually help in their clearest articulation by way of a consideration of the points of similarity and difference between them. Communication or interaction between two philosophies may not be sought in terms of their inadequate comprehension and their incomplete articulation. It should be sought between the complete articulation of the abstract theories, their corresponding experiences and the details of concrete life in all their interrelatedness. This alone can avoid superficial agreements and disagreements. The immediate aim of comparative philosophy, is therefore the proper apprehension and complete articulation of the philosophies being compared; the indications are that this will simply rule out the kind of synthesis, etc. being attempted now.
(e) **Conclusion**

As early as in 1925, F.G. Crookshank, in his introduction to Paul Mason-Oursel's, 'Comparative Philosophy', recommended "the habit of comparing each fact in its context, with others in their context," so that we may escape sliding down "the slippery slope that leads us first to think all mean see as we do, then to declare that all should see as we do, and finally that only we see things as they are". 

Paul Mason-Oursel himself seems to have been aware of the principle suggested here for comparative studies, namely, the principle of taking into account the relationship between the parts and the whole when we analyse something; for, he formulated this principle, though in a different context: referring to an analysis by the dialectician Nagasena he says that it is shown how the name applied to an object can neither stand for the parts without the whole nor for the whole without the parts. But it is doubtful whether either he himself or the comparative philosophers who came later were really guided by this principle when it came to developing a method for comparative studies.

Here is a warning from Northrop which needs to be taken note of: "Correctly to know and to understand the East entails not merely having the immediate experiences of
its concrete cultural forms and practices, but also viewing these experienced facts from the Oriental rather than from the Western standpoint. Essential as it is, experience alone is not enough for this. The basic Oriental premises which have made these experiences what they are, and which have defined the standpoint from which the Orient views them, must also be grasped. Otherwise the Westerner is merely fitting his factual information concerning the East into Western theories and assumptions and evaluating it from his standpoint rather than its own, in a manner which will never enable him to see its virtues or to appreciate its riches."46

Northrop is aware of the need for a proper framework for East-West comparisons. But he feels that it is mainly a question of the differences in the "premises". This is because, as we found while discussing Northrop in Chapter 7, he understands the difference between the East and the West in terms of the emphasis that certain elements receive in the two contexts. As he sees it, the task of comparative philosophy is to "relate aesthetic and emotionally immediate religious values to scientific doctrinal and pragmatic values."47 The understanding of the difference between the East/India and the West which is implied here is basically different from that which we have tried to formulate in this thesis.

It is possible to multiply instances of such instinctive
awareness and indirect articulation of the need for whole-to-whole comparison. S.K. Saksena, for instance, observes that the modern analytical trend is to break up the unity of man into separate autonomous compartments of reason and faith. According to him, the chief merit of Indian thought lies in its "unitary vision of man and life." It may therefore be supposed that Saksena holds, by implication, that the comparative method should not violate this unitary character of Indian thought. But this position is too vague and inarticulate to be regarded as a theoretical understanding of the framework required for proper comparisons. It is vague and inarticulate precisely because "the unitary vision" that Saksena mentions is not considered or spelt out in sufficient detail.

Ninian Smart says about concepts, parodying Wordsworth: Not in utter nakedness, but trailing clouds of 'theory' do they come. We add that the theories themselves come trailing clouds of a whole perspective. If the concepts are to be understood in the context of the theory to which they belong, so also theories belong to a certain perspective, and this implies that we cannot compare theory with theory without taking into account the connections theory has with the aspects of Experience and Life.

In this chapter we have attempted a delineation of the existing framework of comparative studies with reference to
the views of some comparative philosophers, implied or expressly stated, on the presuppositions, methods and aims of comparison. We have tried to indicate both the limitations of the existing framework and the prospects for the emergence of a more appropriate framework.

It has been suggested that an important condition for the possibility of comparing, say, the Samkhya or the Advaita with Descartes or Kant, is to understand the Samkhya/the Advaita as laying down the conditions for the possibility of Prakriti-Puruṣa-Viveka/Brahmātmāikya. A minimum comprehensive understanding of oneself is a precondition for fruitful comparisons with others; and this understanding, we found, implies viewing the philosophy of the Samkhya or the Advaita in the context of a larger whole where it gets linked to the ultimate goal on the one hand and to the aspects of direct knowledge and concrete life on the other.

The method of whole-to-whole comparison that we have suggested, therefore, presupposes taking the goal-orientation of Indian philosophy and its implications seriously and understanding the real strength and limitations of this thought, so that we may fruitfully compare and contrast it to modern Western philosophy. This method also meant that the aim of comparative studies is not necessarily an integration of different philosophies into an all-embracing metaphysics.
Comparison of Indian thought with modern Western thought could thus lead to a sharpening of their contrast; but this does not imply widening the gulf between the two. If comparative studies throw more light on the two perspectives and their basic differences, then, paradoxically enough, the main hurdle in the comparison of the two is overcome; it is overcome in the very process of becoming progressively more clear about the existence and nature of this hurdle. Meaningful interaction is thus rendered possible between the two approaches to thought and life, each of which has its own strength as well as its limitations.
NOTES AND REFERENCES: CHAPTER 8

(References are to the editions mentioned in the Bibliography)

1. Raju, P.T., Lectures on Comparative Phil., pp. 16 - 25
2. Ibid. p. 23
3. Ibid. p. 24
4. Ibid. p. 48
6. Matilal, B.K., "Problems of Inter Faith Studies", in Meeting of Religions, Aykara, T.A., pp. 3 and 4
7. Ibid. p. 4
8. Northrop F.S.C., Meeting of East and West, p. 454
10. Raju, P.T., Lectures on Comp. Phil., p. 12
11. Ibid. p. 24
12. Raju P.T., "Metaphusical Theories ..." in The Indian Mind Ed. C.A. Moore; p. 58
13. Aurobindo, The Future Poetry, 1985; p. 270; however on p. 272, Aurobindo brings in the contrast between the "intellectual idea" and the "spiritual idea".
14. Raju, P.T., Lectures on Comp. Phil., p. 5
15. Ibid. p. 52
17. Bahm, A.J., Comparative Philosophy, pp. 25 - 44
18. Haju, P.T., *The Concept of Man*, p. 18; also his lectures on Comparative Phil., pp. 28, 29.


23. Ibid. p. 35.


26. Ibid. p. 27.

27. Ibid. p. 70.

28. Ibid. p. 29.


32. Dr. A.K. Chirappanath has, in his doctoral thesis submitted to the Karnatak University in 1979, suggested this way of comparing 'God' and 'Karma'.


35. Bahm, A.J., *Comparative Philosophy*, p. 22
36. Ibid. p. xii
37. Raju, P.T., *Lectures on Comparative Phil.*, p. 74
38. Ibid. p. 69
39. Ibid. p. 72
40. Ibid. p. 71
42. Northrop, F.S.C., *The Meeting of East and West*, p. 455
43. Ibid. p. 454
44. Masson-Oursel, Paul, *Comparative Philosophy*, p. 18;
45. Ibid. p. 126
47. Ibid. p. 436
49. Smart, Ninian, *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1964, p. 17