

Compassion and Coexistence: An Auto-Ethnographic Inquiry through Dreams, Memories, and Dialogues

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Abstract- This paper explores the possibility of compassion and coexistence through an auto-ethnographic lens. It draws upon recurrent lucid dreams of Tibet, visions of Nalanda's destruction, and dialogical conversations with imagined companions such as Po and Pho. These narratives become the site of philosophical inquiry, where questions of knowledge, understanding, and compassion are examined against the backdrop of history—from Mongol invasions to British colonialism, from Tibet's fall to modern conflicts like Israel-Palestine. I argue that coexistence is impossible without compassion, and compassion impossible without understanding. Yet understanding itself is layered with perception, memory, and the veils of klesha. This paper does not claim to offer final answers but unfolds the process of seeking, where narrative becomes research, and dreams become epistemic sources. Is it the universal consciousness which creates and dissolves various civilizations and religions in time to increase its wisdom and understanding? The paper explores the reasons for rise and fall of civilizations which were very violent and even the civilizations which worked on compassion and understanding. The rise and fall of such civilizations are experiments in increasing the universal consciousness.

I. INTRODUCTION

I have always been a dreamer. My dreams are often more vivid than waking life—the colors brighter, the feelings sharper. Many times I lucid dream, aware that I am dreaming, sometimes even directing it. One dream, recurring since childhood, takes me back to Tibet, a land I feel I have lived many lifetimes.

Recently, after reading a call for papers on compassion and coexistence, this dream revisited me. In it, I was playing with my young son on green Tibetan pastures when the Mongols invaded. Fear gripped me so deeply I woke breathless, only to realize my son is grown and I do not live in Tibet. Yet the fear was real; even today I can still feel it.

This paper is born of such dreams and their questions: Is peaceful coexistence real? Can compassion sustain societies? Or is violence the inevitable order?

The feeling or process of coexistence comes into picture after the feeling of compassion and mutual respect, without the feeling of respect and compassion it's impossible to coexist. If my intention is to rob you and then declare you unfit to run your own country so that I can rob you for generations or kill the voice of discontent then we obviously can't coexist.

My civilization or society does not become subordinate to yours just because I have compassion and respect for you and you have guns. It is the 21st century and we still see countries like is real carrying out ethnic cleansing of a whole country on the pretext that they are uncivilized or violent. How can more violence be the answer to violence it defies logic but money is the gun of the 21st century. You control the banks, you control the economies of most big countries, so you are right in your faulty logic. There is no logic if you have all the money in the world.

To my understanding it's a learning curve, the more you think the more you will understand but there are no absolute answers to such problems. Are humans evolving, is real tells us no, but the fact there is only one is real may indicate that as a species we are evolving as per Pho. Pho tells me to sleep over it, maybe my subconscious mind will help me find answers.

As I wake up next morning after a deep sleep I wonder if it's lack of understanding that causes people not to have compassion. Understanding of culture, nature and truth of reality. As I ponder more suddenly po appears, this time in the mid of morning. As i ask him this question that does lack of compassion seeds from lack of understanding he asks me “ what is understanding and what is lack of it?” As I think more and more, I come up with an answer “lack of

understanding the lack of awareness of the true nature of reality.” “What is the true nature of reality?” how can you be sure the reality you perceive is true in nature?” “I believe that we are all one and the universe learns in different forms, we perform various experiments, the universe too performs various experiments, the best one continues to exist and the worst is deleted from the system.

“I know my experiment is better because it causes harm to the least number of sentient beings and I work towards harm to none. I cannot understand the true nature of the experiment which causes harm to a number of people. It may be saving many more from harm. I will know if that experiment is a success or a failure if it ceases to continue after a number of years.” In Lankavatara Buddha says there is no reality of things, just perceived reality. As the Dalai Lama says there are fewer numbers of wars now because universal consciousness is rising in its bandwidths.

For being compassionate I have to have the right understanding, understanding about myself first and then about the others and then the understanding that my understanding is also based on perceptions. To have compassion for others first I need to have compassion for myself, my compassion for myself stems from my understanding that I too am a part of the universe. Learning, unlearning and relearning from my own preconceptions. Nothing is universal, nothing is right and Nothing is wrong but my quest for understanding and knowing should not harm other sentient beings including myself. If my quest harms sentient beings including myself my culture will be in disharmony with nature.

I have to understand what my ultimate aim is, as po mentioned it to come back on earth as my descendents and make the earth a better place for all the fellow sentient beings so that it's a joy for them to come back too. As a Buddhist I am sure I will come back, others based on their belief may or may not come back but as long as I live, I have to make this experience a pleasant one for everyone around me not just for me. If I don't as a Buddhist, I will get negative karma and as someone else my civilization will cease to exist and people like me cannot populate the earth in future.

It's not about being right or wrong, it's about the harmony in the universe. It's not just about the humans, it's about all the other sentient beings as well. Humans don't live in isolation in this world, they live in towns and cities. As we currently see due to human activities there are disrupted rain patterns, the whole planet is dying. Do we believe the planet will die, I am sure it will not, there will be changes in the weather pattern. A lot of humans and animals will suffer especially the poor ones first and then the rich and powerful ones but the earth will sooner or later put itself in homeostasis. The earth will reset itself and if the universe sees humans as contamination then the universe will take care of it and get rid of the infection.

What is the universe then, the universe as per my understanding is just pure energy. From energy comes knowledge and consciousness, many thinkers have suggested the universe is itself conscious, Buddha too believed that consciousness flows through all of us and is in every atom. The unity with the universal consciousness is something that we seek with deep meditation. The ability to be one with the universe.

I do not believe my way is the right way and the way of others is wrong because I don't believe in you and me. My belief and understanding of text tells me you and I are one and so is the whole universe, what makes us different is the klesh avarana. Behind this avarna we are the same, your current behavior might be motivated by klesh in your mind. Klesh can originate because of various reasons.

The problem arises when kesh avarna or lack of understanding threatens my existence but as I understand more there is no I. One more recurrent nightmare I get is people walking in my room in beige robes and with shaved heads. At first I was scared and as they asked me what was their fault I realized they are the monks of Nalanda who were burnt alive. They have asked me this question repeatedly and I have not been able to answer. They were burnt alive. Imagine the pain and anguish of the feeling of being burnt alive. They were burnt alive because of their belief, the belief which I follow to this day.

Was it anger, jealousy, or lack of understanding that created such events in history? I am not against islam nor against the muslims, I know islam would never have survived for so many centuries if it was against

the universe. The universe will not support a failed experiment for so long. Then why do they choose a path completely different from ours? What if we live in a multiverse and the reality they have seen and experienced is completely different from ours, what if they are not stuck in the cycle of birth and rebirth and are just trying to break away from it.

I believe I have fragments of memories from many different lives, if they are memories or alay vijayana I am not sure but I know even if I die I am reborn in different forms or times. I have seen battles but I have not seen apocalypse. What if the religion is written post apocalypse, an event which happened in some metaverse and some people experienced it, the universal consciousness experienced it and is searching for answers and trying to save itself from the scenario.

If the universe is learning through us then why are we being punished? when I realise that there is no I, I cease to exist. My logic will still not ease the pain of the monks who were burnt alive at Nalanda, nor will it stop such occurrences in the future. We have to explore what might cause ease in suffering. Compassion, compassion towards other beings which roots from the understanding that there are no other beings but just the universe in me and him.

If his belief is to kill me in order to gain salvation then what should I do? I am not against muslims or believe it's about them. I am talking of invasion by chengeiz khan. He was ignorant and violent but I still don't believe an ignorant and violent person can end up being so successful as such a big conqueror. The universe or universal consciousness must have supported him in some way that is why he became so successful.

In one of my visions or memories or I don't know what to call it, it's early morning before the sunrise and Tibet is attacked, I see fire everywhere. They threw something burning with a catapult which used to be moving and burned down roofs of the houses. I believe he put live animals drenched in tar on fire and threw them with a catapult around the walls.

I keep wondering how an idea which supports so much violence be propagated for so long. As humans, we promote it since it's not exactly based on acquiring

more knowledge but rather living by the same sets of rules. If people have less knowledge they will be easier to control and rule.

But still when I believe that I am no different than you apart from our different kelsh avarans how you believe in an idea that tells you to harm me and I don't believe in it. It's the conditioning, this is what I have been told since ages by my family so I continue to believe that but understanding changes everything. My understanding is not just the knowledge I acquire from reading the books, knowledge is different from understanding. Knowledge may or may not lead to understanding.

Then essentially the question arises what is knowledge, knowledge is the scaffolding which helps you build understanding, once the understanding is achieved there is no use of scaffolding anymore. If we keep building buildings with the same scaffolding then we will have no taller buildings. We need to deconstruct our knowledge and even our understanding. We must understand that our knowledge is also subjected to our preconceived notions. Our knowledge comes from analyzing the fact and analysis itself is based on notions, anything based on notions can be challenged as its understanding is based on some set of guidance which may or may not be influenced by notions.

So where is compassion lost, compassion is lost when there is no understanding which may be in knowledge or no knowledge. If there is no understanding there will be no use of knowledge because that knowledge will end up in unnatural, unsustainable seeming development which will kill the harmony in the universe.

A sustainable system cannot be built without understanding, there can be no coexistence without compassion as the societies will implode if they are not destroyed by external forces when developed without compassion and coexistence because it will bring disharmony in the system.

Where does this understanding bring us, this understanding brings us to a belief that I am essentially not different from you and you are also me. If I believe that, do I believe that harming you is harming myself? If I have understanding I will know that. When I believe that I am superior to you I don't just cause

disharmony to you I cause disharmony in the universe and in myself. I say this when I talk as a living being, not just as a human.

My understanding leads me to believe that harmony in society and also harmony in myself. My lack of understanding causes disharmony in society and in myself. My understanding tells me to be compassionate, my ignorance tells me that I am superior to you.

The current problems the world is facing are also sociological in nature apart from being psychological. The feeling of insatiable hunger for material pleasures is a sort of mental illness promoted by the ones who want to control you. Controlling the understanding of people to use them as weapons for their own good is their objective. Less your ability to think better weapon or commodity you are.

The understanding of a particular group of people is being controlled so that they don't attain the ability to comprehend that they are no different than the rest. Killing anyone else doesn't make the world a better place for you or your descendents. It just makes the world a more violent place for your descendents as well and an unhappy life for you now.

II. METHOD: NARRATION, DREAMS, AND DIALOGUE

This study employs an auto-ethnographic methodology, where personal experience is both the subject and the source of inquiry (Ellis, 2004). Rather than observing from a detached position, I embrace subjectivity as a tool for understanding social, historical, and philosophical phenomena. Personal narratives, dreams, and dialogues function as data, revealing insights inaccessible through conventional empirical methods.

Dreams serve as rich epistemic sites. Lucid dreams of Tibet, visions of the burning of Nalanda, and recurring nightmares are analyzed as manifestations of collective memory, ethical reflection, and imaginative engagement with history. These dreams allow exploration of moral dilemmas and historical suffering through lived experience, bridging personal perception and historical reality.

Dialogues with Po and Pho are reflective tools that challenge assumptions, prompt ethical inquiry, and provoke deeper understanding. They function as imagined interlocutors, questioning my beliefs, revealing internal biases, and offering alternative perspectives.

Narration—writing and reflecting upon dreams, memories, and dialogues—transforms subjective experience into analyzable data. The act of storytelling integrates memory, perception, and philosophical reflection, making the personal ethically and epistemically relevant.

Historical context is incorporated through reflexive engagement. I revisit the Chinese invasion of Tibet (Shakya, 1999), the burning of Nalanda (Thapar, 2002), and British colonial conquest (Said, 1978), not as a detached historian but as someone who internalizes and emotionally experiences these events through dreams. This methodology recognizes that understanding emerges at the intersection of personal experience, historical awareness, and reflective dialogue.

My method is my narration. I rely on dreams, memories, and dialogues with inner figures—Po and Pho—as data. This is an auto-ethnographic inquiry, where the personal becomes a window into cultural and philosophical realities (Ellis, 2004).

I revisit historical traumas—the Chinese invasion of Tibet (Shakya, 1999), the burning of Nalanda (Thapar, 2002), the British conquest of India (Said, 1978)—not as a detached historian but as someone who feels them in dreams. My reflections are dialogical: Po and Pho question my assumptions, sometimes teasing, sometimes unsettling me into deeper thought.

This narrative style is intentional: I believe coexistence can only be studied through compassion, and compassion cannot emerge from cold detachment.

Narratives and Reflections

Tibet and the Question of Prosperity

In my dialogues, Pho often challenges me. Once, when I said Tibet was poor and underdeveloped, he grew angry. “What is prosperity?” he asked. We agreed that low infant mortality could be one measure (Sen,

1999). But beyond that, did Tibet lack prosperity because it lived simply, used herbs instead of antibiotics, respected nature rather than exploiting it?

The Chinese judged Tibet primitive because it had no guns. The British judged India decadent despite its thousand-year civilization. Who gave them the right to decide? Prosperity, I began to see, is not just about wealth or weapons, but harmony with nature (Escobar, 1995).

Nalanda's Burning and the Question of Compassion

One of my most haunting dreams is of Nalanda. Monks in beige robes walk into my room, asking me what their fault was. They were burnt alive—burnt because of their beliefs, beliefs I hold even today. Their anguish is unbearable.

Was it ignorance, anger, or jealousy that caused such violence? I do not blame Islam as a religion—no faith could have survived centuries if it was against the universe (Asad, 1983). Perhaps it was lack of understanding, or perhaps a different reality shaped their truth. But the pain of Nalanda lingers, unresolved.

Coexistence and Compassion

Can there be coexistence without compassion? I don't think so. If my intention is to rob you, enslave you, or declare you unfit for self-rule, then coexistence is a false word. Compassion means respect, and without respect, there can only be domination (Dalai Lama, 2002).

History shows us: the Mauryas, the British, the Mongols, the Chinese—all judged societies not by their harmony but by their guns and wealth. Today, money functions as the gun of the 21st century. Banks and economies are weapons (Harvey, 2005). Without compassion, coexistence remains rhetoric.

Knowledge, Understanding, and the Scaffolding Metaphor

Here I return to a central realization: knowledge is scaffolding. It helps build understanding, but once understanding is achieved, the scaffolding must fall away. If we keep building only with scaffolding, we build nothing higher.

Knowledge filtered through prejudice and superiority leads to disharmony. Only when knowledge transforms into true understanding—when I see that harming you is harming myself—can compassion arise (Freire, 1970).

Universal Consciousness and the Veil of Klesha

Buddha said there is no inherent reality, only perceived reality (Lankavatara Sutra, trans. Suzuki, 1932). The Dalai Lama suggests wars are fewer today because collective consciousness is rising (Dalai Lama, 2002). If the universe is energy, and perhaps conscious itself, then compassion is simply the universe recognizing itself in each being.

But klesha-avarana—the veil of afflictions—clouds our minds. Behind the veil, you and I are the same. Coexistence is possible only when the veil is pierced by understanding (Williams, 2008).

III. DISCUSSION

Dreams, dialogue, and historical reflection converge on a central insight: coexistence is impossible without compassion, and compassion is impossible without understanding. Yet understanding itself is neither fixed nor absolute. It is filtered through perception, memory, inherited notions, and the veil of klesha—the afflictive mental constructs that obscure clarity of thought and moral insight (Suzuki, 1932; Williams, 2008). This layered complexity explains why humans, despite millennia of experience, continue to perpetuate cycles of violence and domination.

The universe, through us, experiments. Some models—violent empires, exploitative economies—may succeed briefly but collapse in time. Systems rooted in compassion may endure longer. Perhaps evolution itself is the rise of compassion in universal consciousness (Capra, 1996).

My recurring dreams of Tibet and Nalanda illustrate the profound consequences of disharmony. The Mongol invasion of Tibet and the burning of Nalanda were not mere historical events; in dreams, they become lived experiences. The suffering of these communities is palpable, evoking ethical questions that transcend temporal and cultural boundaries. Through these dream-narratives, I confront the

mechanisms by which ignorance, greed, fear, and ideological rigidity catalyze violence. Here, the personal becomes a portal to the universal: understanding the inner world—its biases, fears, and afflictions—illuminates the outer world of human conflict.

Auto-ethnography allows me to link personal perception with broader sociocultural and historical phenomena (Ellis, 2004). The dialogue with Po and Pho highlights the iterative nature of ethical understanding: asking questions, confronting ambiguity, and critically assessing inherited knowledge. Po's persistent questioning—"What is understanding, and how do we recognize its absence?"—reflects the philosophical inquiry necessary for ethical action. Here, knowledge functions as scaffolding (Freire, 1970); it supports reflection but is insufficient in itself. Only when knowledge transforms into understanding, and understanding into ethical action, does compassion manifest.

Historical patterns reinforce this insight. Societies ruled by domination, whether through guns, money, or ideology, have repeatedly caused suffering. The British colonial conquest of India, Mongol invasions, and the Chinese occupation of Tibet exemplify systems where knowledge was weaponized to impose hierarchy and control (Said, 1978; Shakya, 1999; Thapar, 2002). Modern analogues exist: global economic structures and financial institutions wield disproportionate power, perpetuating inequality and indirect violence (Harvey, 2005). The lesson is consistent: systems lacking ethical awareness, grounded in compassion, cannot sustain coexistence.

At a philosophical level, the paper engages with the notion of universal consciousness (Capra, 1996; Dalai Lama, 2002). If the universe itself is a network of energy and consciousness, then ethical behavior is not simply a social expectation but a reflection of cosmic harmony. Actions that cause disharmony—violence, oppression, exploitation—resonate through both individual and collective consciousness, amplifying suffering. Conversely, compassionate actions restore balance, contributing to the alignment of human activity with larger cosmic rhythms. Dreams and dialogue reveal this resonance experientially,

demonstrating that ethical understanding is not merely cognitive but somatic and intuitive.

Moreover, the discussion extends to the epistemic dimension: the interdependence of perception, knowledge, and understanding. Knowledge alone can justify violence if it is filtered through prejudice or misinterpretation. Understanding requires reflexivity—the ability to recognize one's own conditioned assumptions—and ethical imagination: the capacity to empathize with others, including non-human sentient beings. Compassion emerges naturally when understanding is profound, for it is rooted in recognition of interconnectedness. The recurring theme in my dreams—the suffering of others, historical or imagined—illustrates this: without understanding the unity of self and other, ethical action remains aspirational, disconnected from lived experience.

The Discussion also considers the temporal and evolutionary dimensions of compassion. The universe experiments through consciousness: violent empires, exploitative systems, and oppressive regimes may temporarily thrive but ultimately collapse under disharmony. Compassion-driven systems, in contrast, endure because they align with the principles of balance, sustainability, and ethical coherence. From this perspective, human history can be seen as a series of experiments in collective consciousness: some fail, some succeed, but all contribute to the evolution of ethical awareness. In this context, coexistence is not merely a political or social objective; it is an ontological necessity, tied to the harmony of the universe itself.

Finally, the Discussion highlights the interplay between historical awareness, personal reflection, and ethical responsibility. By engaging with historical trauma through dreams and dialogue, I confront not only the injustices of the past but also the moral imperatives of the present. Ethical understanding is thus both retrospective and prospective: it requires reckoning with past harm while fostering conditions for sustainable coexistence in the present and future. Here, the methodology of auto-ethnography is particularly effective, as it bridges the subjective and objective, the personal and historical, the ethical and epistemic.

In sum, the discussion demonstrates that coexistence is inseparable from compassion, compassion arises from understanding, and understanding requires critical reflection, ethical imagination, and personal engagement. Dreams, dialogues, and historical narratives function together as a methodological triad, illuminating the human capacity for ethical insight and the structural conditions necessary for peaceful coexistence. The implications are profound: sustainable societies depend not merely on economic or military power, but on the cultivation of understanding and the embodiment of compassion in all spheres of life.

IV. CONCLUSION

As I continue to dream of Tibet and the monks of Nalanda, and as I converse with Po and Pho in reflective dialogue, I recognize that research on coexistence cannot be separated from lived experience. Coexistence is not merely a political strategy or social ideal—it is a state of being, emerging from compassion, respect, and the profound awareness of interconnectedness. To coexist ethically, one must recognize that the boundaries between self and other are permeable; what harms another inevitably harms oneself, and what benefits another contributes to one's own harmony.

Compassion, I have realized, is inseparable from understanding. Yet understanding is not a static endpoint; it is a continuous process of questioning, reflecting, and integrating new knowledge. It begins with self-awareness—understanding one's biases, limitations, and klesha-avarana (mental afflictions)—and extends outward, encompassing others, societies, and the natural world. The cultivation of compassion is thus an ethical, epistemic, and existential endeavor, requiring the courage to confront personal preconceptions and the humility to recognize the partiality of one's knowledge.

Historical traumas—the burning of Nalanda, the invasions of Tibet, and the violence of empires—remind us that the absence of understanding and compassion leads to suffering on massive scales. Contemporary conflicts, economic domination, and environmental degradation are modern echoes of these historical patterns. These events underscore the

necessity of ethical reflection rooted in awareness. Dreams, dialogue, and narrative serve as methodologies to bridge subjective experience and objective understanding, revealing the ethical stakes of coexistence in tangible, visceral terms.

From a philosophical perspective, the universe itself can be seen as a network of energy and consciousness (Capra, 1996; Dalai Lama, 2002). Actions that generate disharmony resonate beyond the individual, impacting collective consciousness and the wider web of life. Conversely, actions grounded in understanding and compassion restore balance. In this sense, ethical conduct and coexistence are not merely human concerns—they are cosmological imperatives, intertwined with the unfolding of universal consciousness.

Moreover, coexistence is intrinsically linked to sustainability. Disharmonious systems—whether political, social, or ecological—inevitably collapse or produce suffering. True harmony, by contrast, emerges from integrating compassion with understanding and translating knowledge into ethical action. The cultivation of coexistence, therefore, is not abstract idealism; it is a practical, necessary, and urgent undertaking. It requires each individual to reflect on their own actions, question inherited beliefs, and take responsibility for the well-being of all sentient beings, human and non-human alike.

Ultimately, this paper suggests that coexistence is not about asserting superiority or achieving dominance. It is about aligning oneself with the ethical currents of the universe, fostering conditions where all beings can thrive. Ethical understanding, cultivated through reflection, meditation, dialogue, and engagement with history, allows one to act in ways that reduce suffering, promote harmony, and contribute to the flourishing of life.

As humans, our duty is clear: to cultivate compassion in thought, word, and deed; to respect the autonomy and dignity of others; and to recognize the ethical interdependence that binds us to one another and to the cosmos. The universe will continue its cycles, the earth will seek homeostasis, and history will unfold. Yet our conscious participation in fostering compassion and understanding is the mechanism through which coexistence becomes possible, and

through which the human species may contribute positively to the broader fabric of life.

In the end, it is not about being right or wrong. It is about harmony, ethical integrity, and responsible engagement. It is about survival—not merely in a physical sense, but in the ethical, spiritual, and existential sense. Compassion, cultivated through understanding, is the path to coexistence; coexistence, in turn, is the path to a universe in balance, where the legacy of our actions resonates ethically and harmoniously across generations.

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