

Journeys of the Self: Everyday and the Question of Ethics

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Abstract: In this paper, I talk about my journeys, along different routes, at different points or moments in life. Journey here is conceived of in dual sense. I speak of physical journeys – journeys which transport us from one spatial and temporal locale to another and simultaneously invoke the conception of life as a journey. We encounter moments of ethical crises, both in the physical journeys and in the journey called life. Ethical living and ethical action, the universal prescriptions guiding them and the particular contexts and modes of ethical articulation are significant aspects of our everyday life. It is in the context of the everyday that we negotiate these moments of ethical crises. This paper is composed of such moments from my own life, from my own journeys.

Keywords: everyday life, self, ethical crises, journeys of the self, physical journey, self-actualization.

I

In this paper, I talk about my journeys, along different routes, at different points or moments in life. It is not a saga of the self – its trials and tribulations, and its ultimate triumph, in its journey towards self-actualization. At least it has no conscious objective to romanticize the journeys I have been compelled to undertake or I have chosen to embark upon willingly. There is no denying the fact that my life as a narrative, is very close to my heart. I believe all conscious and reflective human beings conceive of their lives in the narrative mode, and perhaps the narratives of their very own selves attract them the most, given the fact it is after all their own narrative, their own story. But for a person trained in

disciplinary sociology and anthropology, her own narrative or story is special, not merely because it belongs to her or because she owns it. The fact that the narrative or story, in all its immediacy, centres around her life or a particular moment or event in her life as the core of the narrative, experientially disposes her to creatively imagine the threads which link her life, her narrative and the objective and impersonal social world around her. To be a sociologist or an anthropologist is to be perpetually troubled - to lead a life where she desperately wants to surrender the baggage of concepts, theories and methods she has so dearly learnt during her training, just to preserve the supposedly lay-man like innocence. Yet this troubled life inspires her not to view her training, her work, as a limited domain of activity, but as a mode of being which facilitates merging the personal life and objective academic protocols - the storied self and the imperatives of disciplinary sociology and anthropology. It is understandable that the narrative mode is the perhaps the best way to come to terms with the nuances of the personal life or the storied self. But is the narrative mode a simple chronicling of the events in life, the lived, experiential and intimate, in a straight manner? No! Unlike chronicles which present life stories in a chronological one-after-another format, narratives choose not to *chronologically order* the major moments of the life course based on norms of causality, but throw up larger questions about life and living from the point of view of a moment or few *discrete and disparate moments from the life story*.¹

What I present in this paper is definitely not a chronicle. It is a narrative because both consciously and unconsciously I present here few disparate moments from my journeys, disparate yet having tremendous implications for how it impacted my psyche, my vision about what life is all about - what is its purpose. Another point, in my view, chronicles talk about great men and their achievements. Narratives, on the other hand, talk about the ordinary people; it is the favourite mode for ordinary people like us to share our experiences - not of our achievements but failures, not of our resolution of ethical dilemmas but our perpetual suffering for not having addressed ethical issues adequately and in the *right* manner.

Journey here is conceived of in dual sense. I speak of *physical journeys* - journeys which transport us from one spatial and

temporal locale to another and simultaneously invoke the conception of *life as a journey*. The difference between the two conceptions of journey I talk about over here is only conceivable at the analytical level; both intermingle with and inter-implicate each other in our everyday lives. At the analytical level, physical journeys are constituted of several singular experiences of moving across geographical spaces, having their own unique history, politics and culture and life as a journey is a more holistic experience, an all-encompassing summation of all singular experiences of physical journeys *plus an x factor*, too difficult to pin point through empirical indicators, which makes life as an experience, mind boggling and euphoric. But isn't this a too academic and disciplinary rendition of life as an object of reflection? Is it life, as constituted of several singular physical journeys and itself holistically as a journey, which necessitates its narrativization or is it the disciplinary imperative, the academic zeal, that creates the possibilities for its narrativization?

The decision to write about one's own journeys does not necessarily derive from necessities imposed upon by the discipline itself. Rather crisis as it is lived and experienced predisposes the author to write about the conditions from which crisis emanates and impinges upon how life is lived and reflected upon. Crisis makes reflective autobiographical writing possible and bestows upon it a narrative form. As long as life is well equilibrated, the urgency to narrativize it is felt less and less. The more equilibrium ceases, the reflection on what went wrong gains prominence, culminating in sustained internalized conversation on what has changed in life, how life is now at this moment, coupled simultaneous effort to narrate to others how life reached this state of flux, the present "critical" period from its previous "organic" state.²

II

As a child, I enjoyed the company of my father, accompanying him to the local market, listening to ghost stories, and in adulthood, I completely relied on him as my sole career-planner, but his retirement, his sudden hospitalization, culminating in his two months' struggle with needles, antibiotics, and pipe forced into

his lungs first through his mouth and then through a puncture in his trachea has indelibly marked my thoughts about my life, my journeys. When I graduated from college he was in hospital. As an undergraduate student, I hardly had any ambition to migrate somewhere else to pursue a higher degree. My father represented that generation in which sacrificing one's career, *suspending one's dream*, just to sustain the family, was not uncommon. Although he once told me that he should have got into academics, but he had to discontinue his studies beyond post-graduation to join the Banking sector. A steady monthly income was what my father, my grandmother and my uncles wanted at that moment. Pursuing academics and becoming a teacher appeared to them *too indulgent a dream*, too luxurious a career choice! Like most middleclass parents, who failed to pursue their dreams, owing to various constraints, my father too wanted me to achieve what he could not, but never pressurised me to blindly follow what he said. He ardently wished that I get through a central university for my post-graduation. Starting from applying for admission to the courses to accompanying me to the examination centres, every step was well planned and well executed by him. He had just then retired from service and channelized all his energy to set the stage for me to perform well and get into a central university. I was however reluctant and apprehensive. It is not that I did not want to appear in the entrance examinations. I was always curious about ascertaining my location in the national merit lists, thanks to meritocracy. But the thought of leaving my family, my *comfort zone*, appeared too absurd to me. I thought that shifting my base would be detrimental to my capacity to concentrate and work hard. My father was however positive and always motivating, whereas I was ever doubtful.

It was just the second month post his retirement, when he was suddenly detected having acute pancreatitis and an abnormal secretion of bile choked his lungs. He could not breathe and was put on life-support system. I was waiting his recovery, my graduation result and the merit lists of the national post-graduate entrance examinations. The merit lists of the national level entrance examinations were soon put up in the university websites, the graduation result was soon published but he never recovered. In that unbearably cold, hauntingly green curtained and pale white-washed Intensive Care Unit of the private hospital, I told him

that was shortlisted for admission to the post-graduate program in JNU. He was very happy but I was still unsure. He asked for a piece of paper from the nurse and wrote in illegible hand writing, *Rajdhani*, possibly indicating *Rajdhani* express. He could not speak; the pipe of the life-support system was put into his lungs through his mouth, thereby disabling him to utter a single word. I preserved and carried that tiny piece of paper with *Rajdhani* inscribed on it with myself, when I was in Delhi and even after that, until I callously misplaced it. Although initially he was overjoyed, he did not hold the same opinion throughout. Struggling with needles, heavy antibiotics and life-support system is extremely difficult. More psychologically draining for a retired person admitted in a private hospital is the fear of impending bankruptcy, especially if he has an unmarried daughter! He even insisted that I do not leave the city for the time being, and get enrolled somewhere over here in Kolkata. His facial expression conveyed to me the doubt that had crept into his mind—the fear that he may not be able to breathe his last amidst his loved ones. But by that time, I could hardly stick to my initial opinion about not leaving my city. I suddenly become too restless and ambitious. I thought that this opportunity will never come back. My mother was as indecisive as I was. My sister, who is six years elder to me, was also doubtful whether she would be able to manage in my absence. Just when I had resolved that I have always craved for the comfort of being-with-my-family, now in a state of crisis, I cannot leave them alone, that would amount to a massive betrayal, something happened which made me alter my decision. My paternal aunt and my maternal uncle convinced me and my ailing father that this opportunity cannot be wasted, once he recovers, which he never did, we all shall repent for not having been sufficiently brave when circumstances needed us to be so. Soon the preparation for the journey began. But at the hospital front, I did not know whether things changed for better or worse. The intensive care specialists kept on using a language charged with medical jargons and clinical parameters, which conveyed to us nothing concrete about our ailing father's condition.

Soon I landed up in New Delhi. It was a big leap. I befriended the simplest and most supportive people as friends and teachers, as my intellectual collaborators, in the unknown campus. Only three

weeks had just elapsed in the new campus, when my maternal grandmother's sudden death brought me back to Kolkata to support my family hit by a double-crisis. By that time my father was back home. The doctors had surrendered. The struggle with an imminent *multiple organ failure* and a feeble mind and memory came to an end six days after my maternal grandmother's passing away. There was no question of going back to the campus immediately. Managing family finances and negotiating a life without him appeared too bleak to all of us. A new phase of life began. On the other hand, the campus beckoned to me. I realized I have fallen for its beauty, its intellectual fervour, with its wonderful people with many whom I did not share the same language, skin colour, facial and physical features, culinary practices and culture. When my father fell ill, he was planning my elder sister's wedding. After the period of profanity was over, I left for the campus with a promise to my mother to immediately come back after my post-graduation is complete. The journey from Kolkata to JNU and back continued for some time with the view that I have to go back; that my stay at JNU is already timed. When I returned after successful completion of the MA program, the only thing that I had in my mind was my elder sister's wedding and supporting my cope with another socially ordained separation.

III

Living in a demographically and culturally diverse and intellectually active campus completely changed the ways in which I conceived of myself, my relationship with my family, my peers and acquaintances, with the society at large, and most importantly with my discipline. It made me comparatively more independent than before, more capable of thinking beyond the curriculum and envisioning alternatives to the dominant ideologies, practices and institutions. Life-in-the-campus is a life where the world-is-the-home. Events and occurrences in the global order affect the campus dwellers in all their immediacy. They are rendered ethically and ideologically perturbed. Politics centres on a deep sense of discomfort with whatever unjust is happening around. But when one leaves the campus the home becomes the world. *The Arab spring*, the execution of Saddam Hussein and the *Selwa Judum* became

external concerns. Getting the *Aadhar card*, paying the electricity bill or at least getting someone to do the work for me, and taking the doctor's appointment for my mother's routine checkup became more pressing issues of internal-familial equilibrium. When my mother fell ill, especially during winters, when arthritic pain and pulmonary disorder is more acute, I discovered the home-maker in me, dealing with the maid and the cook, which my mother otherwise strictly believed to be a feminine concern, like asking the maid to attend to the remotest corner of the house for dirt and convincing the cook to use less oil and simmer the flame while cooking.

I often wondered, and still genuinely do, how my elder sister managed everything for three weeks after I left for JNU. Balancing her duties at the professional front and a hospitalized father and a devastated mother at the familial front, must have been an uphill task. Even after my father's demise she managed everything for two long years.

I must admit that the two years of living away from home had thoroughly changed me as a person. Readapting to family life and the household structure after return was like a process of *resocialization*. Saying good night at 10.30 appeared too abnormal to me! Soon I realized that in that distant island, all passively accepted norms and regulations are subverted. There a dignified living indicates not a passive acceptance of received wisdom but a constant exploration of newer possibilities – experimentation with ideas, practices and institutions. Back home all those possibilities became restricted to the world of *Facebook* activism.

Beyond the walled empire life fell into a definite track, a good job was all that I needed at that point of time. It is not that the two years of M. Phil. were not eventful. I learnt a whole new lot of things. But somewhere down the line I did not nurture the same ambition which my batch mates did. They wanted to go to abroad, I did not.

Fortunately, financial insecurity did not last for long. After a short stint as a full-time teacher in a marginal post-graduate department of sociology in Kolkata, I joined the *West Bengal Education Service*. A new phase began and a new set of challenges ensued. I was posted in the Hooghly district and journeying for hours to reach

my place of work for doing what I like to do the most was not easy to accept initially. But eventually I was at peace with this fact of my new life. Robert Frost once talked about the merger of vocation and avocation in the context of the profession one is engaged in. Teaching for me is both a vocation and avocation. Thus, it is not merely an occupation, which helps me earn my bread and butter. It has a lot to do with the visions I nurtured and cherished along with my friends and teachers, in different intellectual spaces and institutions. Chandernagore was the site for endeavouring to realize those visions. Journeying every working day to this beautiful place, where I got to work with colleagues, who were my teachers back in Presidency college, and meet my students, was initially indeed tiring, but never painful, and I soon got habituated to this. It was the best place perhaps to lecture on the influence of European countries on social change in India, read Yogendra Singh's *Modernization of Indian Tradition* and pay a visit to the *Institute de Chandernagore*. Which place could be better than Chandernagore for knowing about European colonialism and its shaping of material spaces and intellectual imperatives of the non-western world? The journey, the exhaustion and the gradual internalization of how government colleges function as bureaucratic institutions became a part of my everyday reality and experience. Let me not overemphasise exhaustion, the pleasure derived from the dissemination of ideas, fruitful engagement with my students and intellectual dialogue with my colleagues also constituted my everyday experiences at Chandernagore.

Then arrived, the order of transfer! My apologies for sounding too dramatic! When one is suddenly dismembered from a particular affiliating institution, awaits a new membership, one embodies *liminality* and undergoes what Van Gennep calls *rites de passage*. And all passages from one state to another embody crisis and tension. Several projects were yet to be completed and some had just been planned. A question occurred in my mind: is it bureaucratic rationality or something else which is responsible for this sudden shift? But I sought not to pursue this question any further. My friends and fellow colleagues had been struggling in remote places well known for Maoist insurgencies and volatile political climate; they too have been uprooted and endangered, and as part of that collective teaching community I thought I

should also experience what it means to be exposed and endangered. A teacher cannot afford to live a sedentary life. A teacher needs to journey, journey constitutes her being. Journey exposes the teacher to unknown landscapes and forms of experience, and widens her vision. In short, journey enables the teacher. If the teacher refuses to accept this philosophy of journey, she becomes stunted, she refuses to grow. When one journeys from *South 24 Parganas*, to the periphery of the *Burdwan* district through *Kolkata, Howrah, Hooghly* and *Burdwan* to reach Mangalkote, one passes through unknown 'life-worlds' which widens her intellectual horizon and strengthens her sociological vision. When, the teacher reaches the place of work, after journeying for about 160 Kms., she is indeed tired but there is a celebration of a gratifying indebtedness. But how can indebtedness be gratifying? It is not a definite learning outcome which constitutes the essence of teaching-learning process but the recognition that the teacher is ontologically insecure without her students. Her students constitute her subjectivity, impels her to undertake the journey every day - wake up early morning, freshen up, quickly recapitulate the key points to be addressed in the lectures, get dressed up, pack the reading materials, official documents and most importantly the lunch boxes and the water bottle in her bag, and begin the journey in search for her communion with her being.

Perhaps all this sounds too idealistic and virtuous, as if, no negativity is part of the narrative. I obviously feel frustrated when I realized that a lot of time is being "lost" in the entire process, which could have well been utilized for reading and completing my immediate academic obligation, my PhD. At times, I envy people who have to travel less. Kilometres and hours have become more meaningful to me than ever before. A colleague once said why I don't rent a room near my college; the *housing rent allowance* is allotted for that purpose. True! But certain obligations are unavoidable and unexplainable. Perhaps living closer to my college would have helped me contribute more as a teacher, and would have enabled me overcome my city-centric bent of mind. It would have helped me become a true ethnographer. That would have indeed constituted a great experience and on the practical front helped economise on time and money. But somehow, I have developed a great love for this journey. The journey connects the urban and the rural, allows two different "life-worlds" and

mentality-types to collapse and melt into each other. This journey, the rickshaw, the metro railway, the bus, the express train, the pool car, and even the launch sometimes, connects me to my mother, my home, its routines and requirements, and its soothing warmth on the one hand, and with my students, with their world, its unique time frame and emerging dependencies and friendships on the other. This journey helps me recreate the possibilities I envisioned with my intellectual collaborators in that walled empire, and as undertake the journey every day, I see those walls getting gradually displaced, encroaching *SH 7*, the green pastures and the adjoining shanties, finally engulfing that white and blue building. The spirit of liberation that I once celebrated in that walled empire has now extended its walls to include my place of work. I know it is a “strange hybrid” but it is here only that I can seek my liberation, through learning together, waiting for another bureaucratic decision to extend the walls of that empire once again, and hence enhance my possibilities of seeking liberation.

Through teaching I do not seek to liberate others, I desperately seek my own liberation. The incessant journey renders this seeking possible, enables me to approximate that vision.

IV

Journeying from one place to another, whatever may be the distance and time involved shape human subjectivity. The specific context, cause, course and compatriots in the journey infuse it with certain uniqueness – energy, joy and struggle, and innumerable possibilities for learning. Whether it is for studying or for eking out an everyday living, journeying is not something one can cease to do. In our hyper-complex societies, while the techies throng to the city centres to serve the interest of corporate capital, we, the educators, in many cases, travel to the urban fringes or the remote rural areas to serve public interest. In this incessant journey from the city to the urban fringe or the remote rural areas, the station and the vehicle, primarily the train, local, passenger or express, are rendered the dominating metaphors for coming to terms with the ever-moving experience called life. However, journeying is not the sole preserve of the educators, college and university students, other public servants are also

witness to the same experience. We are collectively the 'daily passengers', victims of precarity, experts of trickery.

When I came back from JNU, I thought journeying was over, but it never ceased. While at JNU, towards the end of every semester, I used to book two or more tickets in advance, for two or three consecutive dates. Such was the restlessness to go back home. The exact date of the end of the end semester examination was always unpredictable and this strategy proved useful, although involved incurring financial loss. Some of my friends were highly irritated with this homesickness of mine. A dear friend once said, '*... ek do din hum logo saath bhi rahe jate, hum logo ko pasand nehi kya?*' But I always thought, once the semester is over there is no question of spending any more time in the campus. However, that happened only in the initial phase. Later on, as involvement in the campus activities increased, I so ardently wished my home, my weakness, and the campus I loved so much, were physically located in the same city. But my experiences would not have been so rich and myriad had they not been miles apart. The beginning of every semester was marked by the journey back to the campus. On the one hand, there would be immense curiosity about what the new semester has to offer intellectually and in terms of newer friendships and associations. On the other hand, there would be a deep sense of helplessness at not being able to deliver what I should have done for my family. Those days going to the railway station contained in itself a different sort of preparation. In most cases, I used to reach the station too early, especially if it was a case of coming back home. Waiting at the station hardly mattered. As the vacation has kick started, JNU has nothing to offer for now, I thought, so the destination has to be my home, my city. Perhaps there is an intellectual life in JNU even during the vacations, but that hardly mattered to me. Every time the Kolkata bound train appeared at the edge of the platform, whether it is *Poorva*, a *Duronto*, or *Rajdhani*, I thought of no hierarchy, they all appeared to me as my city embodied - my city ready to trans-port me to my city.

Even these days on my way to Mangalkote, where I am currently posted, I usually board the *Poorva Express*, a popular New Delhi bound train. Now it has a different meaning altogether. As a daily passenger reaching the station too early is a matter of failing to

economise on time. *Poorva express* is more of a local train for us. It is enough to board the train 10 minutes ahead of the time of its departure. But post transfer, negotiating with the fact that I am travelling in reserved compartment with a monthly ticket has not been easy. Getting into the shoes of people whom I have always disliked the most has its own pain and sense of guilt. Being implicated in illegality initially disturbed me a lot, eventually paving way for the rationalization that perhaps for the teachers and educators, doctors, students, and other professionals, who have the compulsion to reach the place of work within a stipulated time, which is far away, engaging in this illegality on an everyday basis is unavoidable and may be normal. Hiding in the train toilet or walking down the entire length of the train to avert a surprise check by the railway magistrate is in fact a matter of great expertise. The moment when the daily passengers resolve their sense of guilt, and convert their anxiety into expertise, they all, despite the differences in their profession and thus their purpose of travelling, coalesce into one category of people, which I have called “the precarious tricksters”. The railway officials are generally at peace with these *rouge* travelers, apart from penalizing them occasionally, just before *Holi* or *Durja Puja*. During such times of the year, they turn into “ruthless” defenders of the Indian Railways, and appear too unsympathetic to our cause. Experienced daily passengers believe that the railway officials need to show a stipulated number of cases per year to the Indian Railways, which is necessary for their promotion.

Journeying thus, is not only a literal expression to come to terms with what does for survival (vocation), for the work one loves (avocation), metaphorically speaking, beyond the physical movement the expression assumes, journeying everyday comes to have different meanings for different people, at different spatial and temporal frames. There are different ways in which one might think of the idea of journey. One way of doing this is that of thinking journey as one among different frames, which allows the text called subjectivity to gain a shape and a posture. The specificities of the journey undertaken, short or long, regular or intermittent, safe or hazardous, routine or erratic; the type of copatriots involved in the journey, known or unknown, mere colleagues or dear friends, and so on, shapes the subjectivity of those who undertake the journey. It is through thoughtful

involvement that the individuals bestow upon the journey with subject-specific meanings and relevance. Through the individual's or the subject's effort to narrativize the journey, the journey is transcended from its essential literal or physical basis to the plane of metaphors, where the journey becomes the object of profound reflection. The patterns, shifts and halts, the events in the journey; routine, well anticipated and some untimely and shocking, and therefore destabilizing, transforms journey into a metaphor for life - the experiences we have as living individuals. The subtle play of certainty and uncertainty which is so deeply felt in our physical journeys across spaces, times-frames and locales, also inhabits the narrative of life - the journeys of the lived self, who encounters stabilizing moments and destabilizing ruptures at different moments in life, and hence resorts to strategization in negotiation with them.

V

We encounter moments of ethical crises in our everyday journeys, both in the physical journey from place to another and the journey called life. Ethical living and ethical action, the universal prescriptions guiding them and the particular contexts and modes of ethical articulation are significant aspects of our everyday life. If we think reflectively, much of our everyday life, our journeys as human beings are full of moments of ethical crises, and the ways in which we sought to negotiate those moments. In fact, everyday life is inconceivable without ethical crises. Now the question is: if everyday life and every day journey, both in their structuring capacity and the unpredictability built into them, offers the ethical crises the human subjects are supposed to encounter and negotiate, then what guides and informs ethical action and living in the context of everyday life and life as a journey? Is it universal norms and prescriptions or particular and contextual exigencies which guide human subjects in their ethical posturing? But when one reflects on one's journey in life and the journeys undertaken every day, one is confronted with the question as to what extent one has succeeded in leading an ethical life, whether ethical living has at all been possible thinking from the plane of universal moral prescriptions? Although it is understandable that one creates an alternative frame of thought and ethical mode when one negotiates

with the transfer and the new posting as a teacher in rural Bengal as an expansion of intellectual horizons and sociological visions but a son who is convinced by his relatives to migrate to another for higher studies even when his father is fighting with impending death and a “precarious trickster” who bypasses law hardly conforms to the universal moral prescriptions?

There is clearly no straight cut answer to the universal-particular dilemma in moments of ethical crises. Sometimes we succeed in keeping up to the universal moral expectations, sometimes resolving or at least addressing the particularistic issues at stake appear more pressing. After all ethical action emanates from the slippery ground of interplay between the ideal and the real, between what one aspires to become and what one ends up becoming and it is at the level of the everyday that the negotiation with this interplay materializes. Deciding with certainty whether one has gone wrong in a particular situation is not possible. If structural constraints require an individual to surrender to the universal moral prescriptions for action, then in many cases, agential prerogatives override the structural constraints, to carve out a space for individual moral articulations. Perhaps it is ethical responsibility rather than conformity to the structure or action based on individual will and intention, which guides us in situations of ethical crises. It is at the level of the everyday life that the human subject negotiates this ethical responsibility.³

Ethical responsibility here does not stand for the human subject’s responsiveness to and reiteration of the structural imperatives or some higher principle or duty. Neither the subjection of the human subject to the structure nor the human subject’s pure will to live up to the higher moral expectations can explain ethical responsibility. It is derived from the human subject’s recognition of the relationality that binds her to others and the fact that the realization of the ethical in our everyday journeys is subject to a whole lot of uncertainty. The ethical therefore is not realized in its realization; its realization is continually deferred. Its continuous deferral however does not either amount to its wholesale suspension. To say that the ethical is realized in its deferral is a *contradiction in terms*. Yet this constitutes the moot point I am trying to convey. Ethical responsibility is not mere taking responsibility for one’s own action. It is the responsiveness to the fact that the

ethical is something we strive to realize, but it is not realizable. Its (un)realizability however need not necessarily result in moral paralysis. It is true that as humans we are thrown in conditions which are beyond control - conditions which conspire to suspend and render meaningless any willful ethical action. But the constant seeking of the ethical on our part as humans recognizing that there are structural constraints and conspiracies continually at work to suspend its realization constitutes ethical responsibility. There is no panacea for the ethical crises we encounter in our everyday lives. Perhaps the secret antidote to such crises lies in the realization that the (un)realizability of the authentic ethical moment need not necessarily render it redundant, the ceaseless striving for realizing it in our everyday social relations and encounters may nonetheless remain relevant.

Notes

1. See Gurpreet Mahajan, *Explanation and Understanding in the Human Sciences*. Delhi: OUP, 1997, for a discussion on the difference between narrative and chronicle.
2. These expressions are inspired from Auguste Comte.
3. The discussion here is inspired by the writings of Peperzak, Adriaan T., Simon Crithley and Robert Bernasconi, *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, and Anirban Das, *Towards a Politics of the (Im)possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms*. United Kingdom: Anthem Press, 2010.