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Theme:

Practical Spirituality and Human Development

Guest Editor

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Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai



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Practical Spirituality and Human Development: An Introduction and Invitation to our Special Issue

We are living in a time of violence and terror where politically motivated use of religion is leading to mutual annihilation. Spiritual streams in religion and outside are also being held hostage to such political use and abuse of religion. Human development also has been handmaiden to accepted trajectories of State and Market and many a time continue a violent project of one-sided acquisition of power over others or accumulation of wealth at the cost of health of self, culture, society and communities. In this context, we are challenged to rethink the existing terms of discourse of religion, spirituality and human development. The present special issue of our journal joins this epochal task of rethinking and reconstitution of terms of discourse as well as modes of engagement vis-à-vis religion, spirituality and human development. It particularly explores the link between practical spirituality and human development.

In his opening essay, "The Calling of Practical Spirituality," Giri argues that practical spirituality involves a transformation in religion, science and politics and embodies a quest for beauty, dignity and dialogue in society. In the subsequent essay, "What it means to be religious," Ashgar Ali Engineer presents us an understanding of religious which comes closer to a spiritual realization of self and society. For Engineer, to be religious is to be animated by quest for truth, humility, compassion, confrontation of existing structures of domination and to be "transcendent in vision." In his subsequent essay, "Critical Spirituality: Towards a Revitalized Humanity," Marcus Bussey discusses how critical spirituality urges us to thrive rather than merely survive. Bussey's exploration of practical spirituality through cultivation of thrival finds a concrete expression in the subsequent contribution of Subhash Sharma, "Expressions of Self in Market, Society and Self: Towards Spiritual Praxis for Human Development." Sharma discusses, among others, how we can create transformative energy through practical spirituality in self, market and society.

Following Sharma, Stephen Turk tells us about the link between art and practical spirituality, how art works as a means of "spiritual growth." The subsequent essay of Anton van Harshkamp, "Existential Insecurity and New Religiosity" tells us about present day existential insecurity which in turn gives rise to a new religiosity which is less organized and more exploratory and expressive. In his subsequent essay, "Subud



- A Practical Mystical Path for the 21st Century,” Reynold R Feldman discusses the Subud movement from Indonesia and its work in practical mysticism and human development.

In her following essay, “The Spiritual Politics of Bio-Cultural Regeneration,” Frederique Apffel-Marglin discusses the spiritual politics of bio-cultural regeneration in Peru. She tells us how taking part in fair trade marginalized individuals and communities can have a decent income and sustainable livelihood. Apffel-Marglin’s essay is followed by Ajay Sekher who explores the politics of dissident spirituality of Poykayil Appachan in Kerala who questioned caste domination in religion and society.

The subsequent four essays in this volume continue our exploration of different dimensions of practical spirituality and human development. In his essay, “Practical Spirituality and Developmental Challenges among Tibetan Communities in India,” Thomas Kaufmann discusses developmental projects among Tibetan communities. In his subsequent essay, “Practical Spirituality and Engaged Shinto: Ecology, Peace and the Critique of Modernity in Reformed Japanese Religion,” John Clammer tells us about the work of practical spirituality in a reformed religious movement in Japan. In her subsequent essay, “Light Development in an Age of Climate Change,” Louke van Wensveen talks about light development which is full of light and light compared to the logic of heavy development in modernity. Pursuing light development helps us to address creatively the challenge of climate change and it is a concrete example of practical spirituality of our times. In the final essay in this special issue, Sudha Sreenivasa Reddy explores spirituality as a bridge between dualistic opposed dimensions of life and a quest for social harmony and dignity.

The essays in this special issue explore different dimensions of practical spirituality and human development and we hope this helps in overcoming violence in the name of religion and development and contributes transformation of religion, society, spirituality and human development in our times.

Ananta Kumar Giri

Guest Editor

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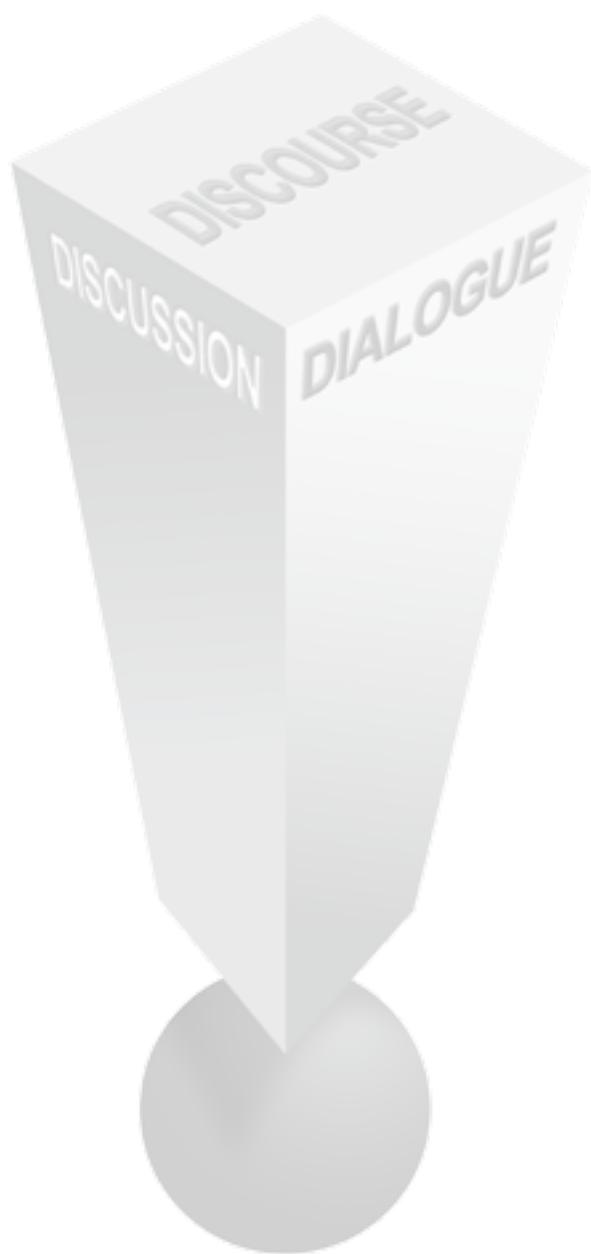
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The Calling of Practical Spirituality¹

Ananta Kumar Giri

Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai

Today we are so impressed with the progress of the physical sciences--originally derived from metaphysics-- that we return the complement and derive our metaphysics from natural sciences. But the scientific worldview has its own metaphysical presuppositions² which originated in ancient Greece in way of looking at the world that came to fruition in Plato and especially Aristotle. This dualistic view stands almost in dramatic opposition to a worldview based on the non-duality of the seer and the seen.

– David Loy (1988), *Nonduality: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*, p. 12.

It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the artists have increasingly become the spiritual leaders of our time. Artists are sometimes among the few who take time to reflect on the deeper meaning of life and to search for ways to express both the turmoil of their search and the tentative insights they have gained. They usually have more questions than answers, yet their work celebrates wholeness and coherence as well as bewilderment and mystery.

– Robert Wuthnow (2001), *Creative Spirituality: The Way of the Artist*, p. 266.

¹ Revised version of a paper first presented at the International Seminar, "Science and Religion in Modern India," New Delhi, January 2006. This has been subsequently presented in our workshops on "Practical Spirituality and Human Development" at Indus Business Academy, Greater Noida (2006) and Bangalore and at Institute of Sociology, Freiburg (2007). My grateful thanks to participants in these dialogues.

² Considering that our dialogue here is simultaneously with science and religion it is helpful to note that modern science has not only its metaphysical presuppositions it has also its superstitions. As Swami Vivekananda (1991: 28) tells us: "For practical purposes let us talk in the language of modern science. But I must ask you to bear in mind that as there is religious superstition so also there is a superstition in the matter of science." Tolstoy also writes in another context: "These new justifications are termed 'scientific.' But by the term 'scientific' is understood just what was formerly understood by the term 'religious': just as formerly everything called 'religious' was held to be unquestionable simply because it was called religious, so now all that is called 'scientific' is held to be unquestionable" (1997: 23).

God calls on us to be his partners to work for a new kind of society where people count; where people matter more than things, more than possessions; where human life is not just respected but positively revered; where people will be secure and not suffer from the fear of hunger, from ignorance, from disease where there will be more gentleness, more caring, more sharing, more compassion, more laughter, where there is peace and not war.

– *Deshmond Tutu (2004),
God Has a Dream, p.62.*

Introduction and Invitation

Practical spirituality involves a transformation of both science and religion. In the field of religion practical spirituality emerges in varieties of transformative movements and seeking in self, culture and society which interrogate existing structures of domination and strive for a new mode of self-realization, God-realization and world-realisation. Practical spirituality seeks to transform religion in the direction of creative practice, everyday life and struggle for justice and dignity. Practice here is not just practice in the conventional sense, for example in traditions of American pragmatism (cf. Aboulafia & Kemp 2002) or anthropological conception of practice as offered by Clifford Geertz (1973), Pierre Bourdieu (1971) and Jurgen Habermas (1971). These conceptions suffer from an entrenched dualism such as theory and practice, immanence and transcendence and work with a notion of subject which is predominantly “techno-practitioner”³ and cut off from its inescapable and integral links with transcendence. But practice in

practical spirituality is simultaneously immanent and transcendent⁴ and the actor here is simultaneously a “technopractitioner” and “transcendentally real self.” Practical spirituality embodies immanent transcendence, as for example in music⁵ or in the experience of transcendence in our various moments of everyday life-- love, meditations, scientific engagements and other activities of life and in society (cf. Bhaskar 2002).

Practical spirituality emphasizes experience and realisation--self, God and world--in and through practice but at the same time nurtures the humility not to reduce these only to practice. In its emphasis upon experience and realization practical spirituality has close kinship with the spirit of science which embodies, in the words of Albert Einstein, a holy spirit of inquiry. In its emphasis upon practice practical spirituality stresses that without taking part in practice we cannot realize truth--religious or otherwise. Practical spirituality involves manifold experiments with Truth as well as truths where truth is not a thing but a landscape of meaning, experience and co-realisation.

Practical spirituality also emphasises on transformative practice which leads to self-transformation, cultural transformation and world transformation. For example, poverty, inequality and oppression have been challenges with humanity for long and here practical spirituality has generated varieties of transformative movements in its struggle against oppression and domination. There are movements of practical spirituality from different religions of the world as well as from traditions of emancipatory struggles such as

³ This is how James Faubion (1995) characterizes the notion of subject in contemporary European social theory. For a critical discussion of this see Giri 2005a.

⁴ For an outline of such a notion of practice in the field of development please see Quarlese von Ufford & Giri 2003 and Giri & Quarles von Ufford 2004.

⁵ Consider here the following lines of Luc Ferry: “[...] When I hear a musical passage, it does not reduce to a series of related notes with no connection between them (actual immanence). On the contrary, it contributes—in an immanent way, apart from any rational operation—a certain structure that transcends this actual immanence, without being imposed on me from the outside like an argument from authority. This ‘immanent transcendence’ contains within itself, par excellence, the ultimate significance of lived experiences” (Ferry 2002: 26).

revolt against slavery, workers movements, women's movements, ecological movements and varieties of other transformative struggles in discourse, society and history. Liberation theology in Islam, Buddhism and Christianity is a recent example of practical spirituality.⁶ In Indian traditions practical spirituality has manifested itself in the Upanishads, the vision and practice of seekers such as Buddha, Bhakti movements, Swami Vivekananda's vision of practical Vedanta, Sri Aurobindo's strivings for *Life Divine* and Gandhi's experiments with Truth and struggles for liberation.⁷ Movements such as Bhakti movements have involved struggles against caste and gender domination with new songs of self and social liberation. They have also embodied efforts to go beyond denominational concepts of truth and religion. They have involved not only struggles for justice but also embodied border-crossing dialogues. We see this, for example, in the Sant tradition of India, which like Sufism and Sikshism, is a product of transformative dialogue between Hinduism and Islam (Das 1982, Uberoi 1996). Thus practical spirituality involves both struggles for dignity as well as new initiatives in transformative dialogues across borders.

Pathways of Practical Spirituality

In fact, practical spirituality involves both practical struggles for a better world as well as practical discourses for spiritual realization going beyond denominational fixation—not only in terms of boundaries among religions but also in terms of boundaries between science and religion, material and spiritual.⁸ Practical spirituality urges us to realize that through undertaking concrete activities to

ameliorate suffering we can realize God. From the Christian tradition theologian Johannes B. Metz (1981) urges us to realize that the Christian goal of unity of faith or what is called ecumenicism can not be solved at the level of doctrines alone. It can only be solved by undertaking concrete activities in addressing practical problems of life and society with the "Son of Man."

Habitat for Humanity is a movement from within contemporary Christianity which tries to worship God by building houses with and for people. It is built on the foundations of "Economics of Jesus" and "Theology of the Hammer" (Giri 2002). We see a similar emphasis upon devotional labor and sharing in Swadhyaya, a socio-spiritual movement in contemporary India which can be looked at as an instance of practical spirituality from within contemporary Hinduism (Giri 2006a). Both Habitat and Swadhyaya despite their limitations to always hold up their own ideals urge us to be more dialogical compared to their fundamentalist counterparts in Christianity and Hinduism. But the dialogical dimension of practical spirituality is multi-dimensional: it embodies not only dialogue between religions but also between religion and science, and also between the material and the transcendental. Swami Vivekananda has captured a bit of this sensibility in his vision of practical vedanta which has both a dimension of struggle for justice as well as hints towards dialogue.⁹ Practical spirituality, for Swami Vivekananda (1991: 354), urges us to realize that "the highest idea of morality and unselfishness goes hand in hand with the highest idea of metaphysical conception." This highest conception pertains to the realization that man himself is God:

⁶ Liberation theology from Latin America is more widely known but less known are movements of liberation theology in Islam and social engagement in Buddhism. Helpful here are the works of Farid Esack (1997), Abdullahi An-Naim (1995), Fred Dallmayr (2001) and Sulak Sivaraksha (2006).

⁷ This is not an exhaustive list but only a pointer.

⁸ As E.H. Cousins (1985: 7) tells us in his *Global Spirituality*: "people of faith now rediscover the material dimensions of existence and their spiritual significance."

⁹ Though the dialogical dimension in Vivekananda's practical vedanta seems to be imprisoned in fundamentalist interpretations of his work who would like to see his work only from a Hindu point of view.

“You are that Impersonal Being; that God for whom you have been searching all over the time is yourself -yourself not in the personal sense but in the impersonal” (Vivekananda 1991: 332). The task of practical spirituality begins with this realization but does not end there: its objective is to transform the world. The same Swami Vivekananda thus challenges: “The watchword of all well being of all moral good is not “I” but “thou”. Who cares whether there is a heaven or a hell, who cares if there is an unchangeable or not? Here is the world and it is full of misery. Go out into it as Buddha did, and struggle to lessen it or die in the attempt” (Vivekananda 1991: 353). What practical spirituality stresses is that the knowledge that one is Divine, one is part of a Universal Being, facilitates this mode of relationship with the world. This knowledge is however not for the acquisition of power over the other; rather it is to worship her as God. In the words of Vivekananda: “Human knowledge is not antagonistic to human well being. On the contrary, it is knowledge alone that will save us in every department of life, in knowledge as worship” (Vivekananda 1991: 353).

Practical spirituality emphasizes upon continued practice, not only on euphoric movement of realization, enthusiasm and miraculous experience. As Robert Wuthnow tells us drawing on his work with the spiritual quest of the artists: “Many artists speak of their work as a form of meditation. For some the sheer rhythm of the daily routine brings them closer to the essence of their being. Writing

all morning or practicing for the next musical performance requires mental and emotional toughness [...] For spiritual dabblers the insight that these artists provide is that persistence and hard work may still be the best way to attain spiritual growth” (Wuthnow 2001: 10).

Practical spirituality accepts the brokenness of the world and does not want to assert any totalizing unity or totalitarian absorption.¹⁰ At the same time practical spirituality is a striving for wholeness in the midst of our inescapable brokenness and fragmentation of this world. This wholeness is emergent as it is manifested in the work of the artists. Artists strive to paint landscapes of emergent wholeness in the midst of fragmentation and brokenness. Artists incorporate “[their] experimental approach into one’s spiritual quest” (Wuthnow 2001: 276).

An artist is a *bricoleur*, creating beauty and images of emergent coherence out of many fragments. “The creative scientist is also a *bricoleur*” (Bhaskar 2002: 394). There is artistic dimension to scientific quest as there is to spiritual quest. Inspiration of art in creative spirituality makes transformative bridges between science and spirituality.

Practical spirituality involves a transformation in the conceptualization and realization of God. It submits that in order to be spiritual one need not believe in God nor be religious.¹¹ But for the believers God in practical spirituality is not only in heaven but here on earth; she¹² is a presence in our heart and in every thing

¹⁰ Even Swami Vivekananda (1991: 382) writes in his Practical Vedanta: “Perfect balance would be our destruction. Suppose the amount of heat in this room, the tendency of which is towards equal and perfect diffusion, gets that kind of diffusion, then for all practical purposes that heat will cease to be. What makes motion possible in this universe? Lost balance [...] It is this difference, this differentiation, this losing of the balance between us, which is the very soul of our progress, the soul of all our thought.” This has profound implication for many domains of our lives including thinking about relationship between God and Man. This helps us to acknowledge the significance of disjunction and antinomies in our life in general and spiritual quest in particular. From a different point of view sociologist of religion Robert Bellah also helps us understand this in his Beyond Belief: “For me the search for wholeness from then on had to be made without totalism. A critical stance towards every society, ideology and religion was henceforth essential” (Bellah 1970: xx).

¹¹ Let us not forget here Buddhism which is silent about God and many atheists who do not believe in God.

¹² In their work on critical realism and transcendence Archer et al (2004) prefer to use He in talking about God. The use of she here is an invitation and it draws inspiration from traditions such as India’s where God is thought of as Brahma which is gender neuter.

we see. In fact, Swami Vivekananda speaks about a practical God: “Where is there a more practical God than He whom I see before me—A God omnipresent in every being, more real than our senses?” (Vivekananda 1991: 305). In this context Bhaskar’s following proposals about God in his *From Science to Emancipation* deserves our careful consideration:

- (i) Ontological realism about God, that’s a belief in the reality or experience of God is quite consistent with epistemological relativism;
- (ii) Ontological immanence, that is the view that God is immanent within being, is consistent with episteme transcendence either in the sense of being unknown, God could be real even if we do not know it, or in the sense of being knowable in a way which is susceptible to the normal canons of our discursive intellect:
- (iii) [Ontological ingredience] – if god is truly a kind of envelope which sustains and binds everything, then God in a certain way must be ingredient within us;
- (iv) the proof of God’s existence can only be experimental and practical. No one can prove to you that God exists. This can only come from your experience and practice;

- (v) [In this context man’s role is to increase presence of the Divine in one’s life, society and cosmos—I am here paraphrasing the subsequent thoughts of Bhaskar on this] (Bhaskar 2002: 35).

The above help us rethink God and realize her in a new way. God in practical spirituality is not only a moral God, omnipotent, God with capital G. God here is God with small g¹³. God in practical spirituality is also not anthropocentric.¹⁴ God in practical spirituality is not only a Father but also a Mother.¹⁵ God is also a child who is eternally playing in creative works.

Practical spirituality involves a transformation of our conceptions of sin and evil. In practical spirituality evil is not absence or the abandoned house of the divine but lesser manifestation of it. We find such a foundational rethinking of sin and evil in many different religious, spiritual and philosophical movements of the world. For Swami Vivekananda: “Sins are very low degrees of Self-manifestation (Vivekananda 1991: 300). For him, “Vedanta recognizes no sin, it only recognizes error and the greatest error says the Vedanta is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner” (ibid). From a Christian perspective Giani Vattimo (1999) redefines sin as failure in love. For Vattimo, we have all sinned not because we have fallen

¹³ Sulak Sivaraksha speaks about Buddhism with a small b: “There is a need to practice Buddhism with a small “b” (Engaged Buddhism). This means concentrating on the meaning of the Buddha’s teaching (*nibbana* or freedom) and being less concerned with myth, culture and ceremony” (Sivaraksha 2006: 1). Dallmayr (2005) urges us to understand the political and spiritual significance of moving from the big God and inviting “small” to our lives.

¹⁴ For Swami Vivekananda, “A God who is partial to his children called men, and cruel to his children called brute beasts, is worse than a demon” (Vivekananda 1991: 297).

¹⁵ In the Judeo-Christian tradition, the language of God the Father predominate. But this is not just in the patriarchal sense that we know. In this context what creative theologian S. Painadath (2007: 20-21; 22, 23) writes vis-à-vis the mystical experience of Jesus deserves our careful attention:

There are two primordial symbols to speak about the Divine in terms of a personal relation: father and mother. In most of the primal religions both the symbols are profusely used. In the semitic religions there is a dominance of the use of the symbol of father, while in Indian religions the mother symbol plays a significant role in speaking of God. Jesus belonged to the semitic spiritual hemisphere and hence his language has been considerably conditioned by the historical and cultural factors of his country. Therefore it is not surprising that Jesus never addressed God as *mother*. Does it therefore mean that the motherly dimension of God-experience has been lacking in his consciousness? Is language merely a product of the cultural psyche? [...] Deep within himself Jesus experienced the Divine as the Mother, though this experience has been articulated through the culturally conditioned symbol of the *Father*. [...] When we are sensitive to the motherly dimension of his divine consciousness, we realize that Jesus was not in fact addressing a Father seated above him, but turning to the divine Mother dwelling within him. This is not just a question of shifting the gender language, but an invitation to dive into the mystical depth of the experience of Jesus.

in love but have failed in love. Love is not a conditional exchange but unconditional and from this point of view we all can always be more unconditional in our loves overcoming our integral original sin of not being quite up to mark in our practices of love. God is unconditional love.¹⁶ From the point of view of unconditional love we fail in on our lives of love as realization of unconditional love is always a journey. Given our human limitation no matter what we do our love is always in need of much more intimate non-dual realization and this becomes our condition of original sin. Thus our task is to overcome this through more love and Grace and continue our strivings with gratitude and not simply for fear of punishment from a God conceived as a moral law commanding us not to do evil.¹⁷ Similarly from the shores of contemporary critical philosophy, Giorgio Agamben (1993) redefines evil as deficit of human existence and anything that blocks the realization of fuller potential including the potential of fuller God-realization and world-realization

is evil.¹⁸ Here Bhaskar (2002) also speaks about structural sin and ill-being referring to such fields as contemporary capitalism which leads to exploitation and blocks universal self-realization.

Both Swami Vivekananda and Roy Bhaskar urge us to go beyond a facile dualism of good and evil. According to Swami Vivekananda: “The real genesis of evil is unselfishness [...] A man who murders another is, perhaps, moved to do so by the love of his own child. His love has become limited to that one little baby to the exclusion of millions of other human beings in the universe. Yet limited or unlimited it is the same love” (Vivekananda 1991: 354). Roy Bhaskar also writes: “Once we begin to access our higher selves, we can begin to see that really the problem is not so much of evil. [...] For there is also, at least, philosophically a problem of good [...] love, goodness, nobility, courage those are displayed everywhere in the perpetuation of social ills” (Bhaskar 2002: 46).

¹⁶ Swami Vivekananda writes about it poetically: “[...] where the husband kisses the wife, he is there in the kiss; when the mother kisses the child, he is there in the kiss; where friends clasp hands, he the Lord is present as the God of Love. When a great man loves and wishes to help mankind He is there giving freely His bounty out of his love to mankind” (Vivekananda 1991: 394). For Tolstoy: “[...] but one thing only is needful; the knowledge of the simple and clear truth which finds place in every soul that is not stupefied by religious and scientific superstitions—the truth that for our life one law is valid—the law of love, which brings the highest happiness to every individual as well as to all mankind” (1997: 29). And Bhaskar (2002: 134) writes: “The ultimate is not freedom. The desideratum is freedom, the ultimate is unconditional love.”

¹⁷ Creative theologian IU Dalferth (2006: 18-19) also helps us with a new hermeneutics of evil:

The problem is rather to construe God’s will as law, and God’s law in moral terms as a set of divine commandments as to what humans ought or ought not to do. The result is a misleading moral sense of evil: If evil is that which is contrary to God’s will, God’s will identified with God’s law, God’s law reduced to moral instructions of what humans ought or ought not to do, then doing evil is equated with trespassing God’s commandments and evil is *everything that God prohibits us to do*. But this is a misleading way of stating the point of the Torah, the gospel, and arguably also the Koran. They are not a set of divine prescriptions, commandments and prohibitions which humans must obey in order not to do evil. At least in the case of the Torah and the gospel they are better understood in terms of God’s gift of a blueprint of a good and just human life in community with God and one another, the presentation of what God has done for his people and all humankind, and the unfolding or unpacking of its implications for human life at its best—as it could and should and ought to be. They outline a way of life that responds in gratitude to the goods received from God rather than to a set of arbitrary divine commandments and prohibitions that are to be obeyed on pain of punishment.

¹⁸ In the words of Agamben (1993: 44):

The recognition of evil is older and more original than any blameworthy act, it rests solely on the fact that, being and having to be only its possibility or potentiality, humankind fails itself in a certain sense and has to appropriate this failing—it has to *exist as potentiality*. [The only ethical experience is] the experience of being (one’s own potentiality). The only evil consists instead in the decision to remain in a deficit of existence, to appropriate the power to not-be as a substance and a foundation beyond existence; or rather (and this is the destiny of morality), to regard potentiality itself, which is the most proper mode of human existence as a fault that must always be repressed.

Non-Dual Realisations and Practical Spirituality: Transformational Challenges Before Science and Religion

The interrogation and transformation of the dualism of good and evil in practical spirituality as it is accompanied by a transformational conception of God points to non-dual realization as an important challenge in human life – science, religion as well as spirituality. In fact, transcendence in science and spirituality involves critique of available dualism such as sacred and profane, subject and object. The dualism between subject and object has been at the corner stone of modern science but recent developments in science such as quantum physics and system theory of pioneers such as Humberto Maturana challenge us to understand the limitation of a spectatorial perspective in science and the dualism of subject and object. “In the words of a biologist, if you want to really understand about a tumor you have got to be a tumor” (Knor-Cetina 2001: 520).

The dualism between subject and object in modern science finds a parallel in the dualism between ontology and epistemology. Modern science as part of the agenda of modernity has been primarily epistemic and procedural and has neglected ontological issues of nature of self and quality of self-involvement in practices of knowing. Moreover there is a profound revolution in varieties of scientific engagements now-- from biology to anthropology to philosophy of science-- where “to know is not only to know of” but “knowing with” (Sunder Rajan 1998). Knowing with involves both subject and object, epistemology and ontology, embodying what may be called an ontological epistemology of participation (cf. Giri 2005). This embodies transformations in epistemology such as virtue epistemology

which points to the quality of the knowing subject and in ontology – practical ontology-- which moves from a preoccupation with fixed subject to practical labor of love and learning. It also involves “weak ontology” characterized by humility (cf. Dallmayr 1991; Vattimo 1999).

Ontological epistemology of participation embodies a multi-valued logic in place of the dualistic logic of modern science. As J.N. Mohanty (2000) argues: “In multi-valued logic every point of view is partly true, partly false and partly undecidable.” This helps one not to be trapped in closure and be engaged in science and spirituality as a continued journey. Multi-valued logic draws inspiration from multiple traditions of science, philosophy and spirituality such as the Jaina tradition of *Anekantavada* (many paths to truth), Gandhian experiment with truth and non-violence and Husserl’s phenomenology of overlapping contents. Multi-valued logic builds on non-injury in our modes of thinking and non-violence in our modes of relationships. Multi-valued logic as an integral part of an ontological epistemology of participation is also an aspect of the transformational dimensions of science and spirituality.

Non-duality is an important part of ontological epistemology of participation in science and spirituality. Yoga helps us in overcoming our dualism and realize non-duality. As David Loy writes: “We may see the three traditional *yogas* as types of spiritual practice that work to transform different dualistic modes of experience onto their respective non-dual mode. *Jnana yoga* transforms or ‘purifies’ the dualistic intellect, *karma yoga* the dualistic physical body and *bhakti yoga* dualistic emotions” (Loy 1988: 27).¹⁹

The multi-valued logic of practical spirituality transforms not only sciences but also religions:

¹⁹ Bocchi and Ceruti also help us understand the significance of non-duality in our spiritual quest: “The dialogical and dynergic cosmology symbolized by the union of Shiva and Shakti and manifested in yoga has given rise to many philosophical systems of the two great spiritual traditions of classical India: Hinduism and Buddhism. Beyond all their differences and disagreements, they express a principle of ‘duality within the non-duality. The ultimate reality of the universe, the ‘noumenon,’ is defined precisely as ‘non-dual’: *a-dvaita* (a Hindu term) or *a-dvaya* (a Buddhist term) (Bocchi & Ceruti 2002: 47).

it helps sciences not to be dismissive about what it does not know and religions to be more exploratory, experimental, and less assertive. It urges religions to be more dialogical—to recognize and know more about each other, and also mutually interrogate each other with a smile.

Practical Spirituality, Practical Discourse and Democratic Transformations

Practical spirituality has implications for various domains and discourse of our lives such as secularism and democracy. It offers a new realisation of secularism which embodies spiritual cultivation for mutual tolerance, learning and criticism going beyond the confrontation between science and religion which has characterized the first stage of modernistic secularism (Annaim 1995, Giri 2005b). The dialogical dimension of practical spirituality is a helpful companion in reliving secularism in our turbulent world.

Practical spirituality also involves a radical reformulation of the logic of power and transformation of democracy. In their struggles for justice and dignity movements of practical spirituality confront and interrogate power. But they are not just preoccupied with capturing power as an instrument of domination but to have power as a covenant to realize the common good, as Hannah Arendt would put it (cf. Cohen & Arato 1995). These movements do not embody the logic of sovereignty of self and state in modernity which has an inherent propensity to mastery; rather they embody the aspiration and struggle for what Dallmayr (2005) reflecting on the struggle of Jesus calls 'sacred non-sovereignty.' While logic of sovereignty including the so-called democratic sovereignty in modernity has a propensity to make us bare (cf. Agamben 1995) and denude us of our dignity and mutuality practical spirituality as a struggle for 'sacred non-sovereignty' embodies a new ethics, ethics and politics of servanthood in place of the politics of mastery.²⁰

Practical spirituality as a struggle for dignity embodies multi-dimensional partnership between God and man. This struggle challenges us to widen and deepen our vision and practice of democracy; democracy as not only a political mechanism but also as a spiritual struggle. Democracy as public participation and public reasoning in the public sphere needs to be supplemented with practices of self-cultivation and cultivation of generosity of being going beyond the dualism of private and public. As Ramashroy Roy challenge us in his *Beyond Ego's Domain*:

[Public order is threatened by the split between] man's concern for his own good and that for the good of others. But can this threat to the public order be mitigated, if not completely eliminated, by the installation of the Polis? [...] For Aristotle, transcendence of self-interest is consequent upon participation in public affairs [but] the shortcomings associated with personal character cannot be expected to be rectified by the public realm, if it lacks necessary support from individuals reborn as citizens. To be reborn as a person who, rising above his self-interest, becomes attentive to and actively seeks to pursue collective good, is, then, to willingly accept a life dedicated to the cultivation of *dharmā*" (Roy 1999: 5).

Democracy as public reasoning and deliberation embodying what Habermas (1990) calls practical discourse where actors are engaged in moral argumentation about the nature of self and society is crucial for transforming spiritual traditions of India which in their structural organizations have been mostly authoritarian. While there has to be a transformative dialogue between practical discourse and practical spirituality, it must be emphasized that practical discourse in Habermas does not bow down before authority in a slavish manner and discovers moral insights from deliberation among participants. Such a public deliberation and democratic decision-making seems to be missing in varieties of socio-spiritual

²⁰ In our edited book, *The Modern Prince and Modern Sage: Transforming Power and Freedom I* and several of our co-collaborators are exploring this (Giri 2009).

mobilizations of India and here democratic participation for value formation can be helpful (cf. Dreze & Sen 2002).

Swadhyaya is a socio-spiritual movement in contemporary India but is now riddled with power struggle involving crucial issues of sole control of resources and doctrinal authority. After the passing away of its founder the control of the organization fell on his daughter, and this succession was not very different from the entrenched culture of dynastic succession in Indian religions and politics. The integral education movement in Orissa embodies aspirations of a practical spirituality as it works with children, parent and society for a more joyful and integral learning drawing inspiration from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. But it also face the challenge of generating spaces of public deliberation where people in management with power and money can sit together with teachers who join this movement out of devotion but are mostly without adequate resources (cf. Das 2001; Giri 2004).

Along with transforming secularism, democracy and authoritarianism practical spirituality also draws our attention to the spiritual significance of food, and realize the link between food and freedom (cf. Sen 1999). It draws inspiration from texts such as *Taittereya Upanishad* where it is written, *Annam Brahmeti Vijnanama* - Know food as *Brahma*. But what is the quality of food available in varieties of so-called spiritual places in our world? Outside the dining hall of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry once I read a pamphlet. "Oh children of the Divine, wake up! See the quality of food that is given to you." Practical spirituality challenge us to understand the link between food and freedom and realize the violation of the human and the divine when there is not adequate nourishment for us. It also challenges us to realize the significance of body and realize that the aesthetics of spirituality is not confined to places of worship only but also touches our bathrooms overcoming the dualism between the temple and the toilet.

In my field work with Swadhyaya I found that while in Swadhyaya orchards there is a separate special room for the leader which is rarely used the common bathrooms used by "devotee workers" is mostly dirty without even cleaning soaps. This is a problem not only in the rural projects such as *Brukhamandir* (tree temple) but also in Swadhyaya run schools as a senior Swadhyayee once told me in a conversation.

In his recent reflections on religion, Jacques Derrida (1998) tells us that one who claims authority in the name of religion speaks Latin today. Those of us who valorize spirituality also need to ask ourselves whether we are claiming authority in the name of spirituality. We need not close our eyes to the fact that there is a problem of entrenched authoritarianism in spirituality as well, and practical spirituality has to transform this authoritarianism by taking part simultaneously in political, moral and spiritual struggle in a new poetics and politics of transformation. *Bhakti* movements in medieval India were bound by a feudal order but practical spirituality now calls for a new *Bhakti* movement which embodies both democratic participation and a multi-dimensional generosity of being.

This multi-dimensional struggle for transformation – food and freedom, universal self-realization, transformation of existing institutions and creation of new institutions--calls for embodiment of values such as voluntary poverty and voluntary optimism (cf. Das 2005). Voluntary poverty is an important calling of both science and spirituality. Developments in science and spirituality have been facilitated by those who have chosen to remain poor enjoying the creative beauty of simplicity, unencumbered by many outward temptations of money and power, and resisted the pressure for conformity by the priests, merchants and the kings. Similarly voluntary optimism is an important aspect of both science and spirituality which points to the aspiration and the fact that despite all obstacles we are not giving to give up on our

persistent efforts and struggles to learn, to be, to grow and create a more beautiful and dignified world for us all.²¹ But this hope does not fall from the sky; it emerges from varieties of our experiments in and struggles for love and learning we engage ourselves in science and spirituality.²²

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²¹ As Sri Aurobindo (1950) urges us to sing in his *Savitri*:

A lonely freedom can not satisfy
A heart that has grown one with every other heart
I am a deputy of the aspiring world
My spirt's liberty I ask for all

It is helpful here to remember lines from a novelist and a theologian here. Writes Imre Kertestz (2002: 12) in his *Kaddish for a Child Not Born*: "Yes, my existence in the context of your potentiality [...] Now I no longer have doubts—it is in the clouds where I make my bed. And this question—my life in the context of the potentiality of your existence—proved to be a good guide." And for the theologian IU Dalferth: "In religious and in particular Christian contexts "hope" has a strong meaning. It is not merely a wish but a way of "seeing" the future, and one's role in it, in a particular light" (2006: 15).

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What It Means To be Religious

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There is great misunderstanding both among believers and non-believers about what it means to be religious. For most of the believers, religion is a set of rituals, appearance or even a set of dogmas whereas for non-believers (rationalists and empiricists) it is nothing but irrational beliefs, dogmas and superstitions which impede human progress and also cause of violence and destruction. Even terrorism, they believe, is due to religion.

Then the question arises why millions of people believe in religion? The rationalists maintain it is because of illiteracy and irrationalism. But then many highly educated people also believe in religion so it is not easy to assign it only to illiteracy alone. And all those who believe in religion are not superstitious. Many of them are quite rational and even accept science and scientific methods without reservation. Sir Syed even maintained that there cannot be contradiction between word of God (Qur'an) and work of God (Nature and laws of nature). Moreover many great scientists have been believers in religion)

Then the question arises what it means to be truly religious? For ordinary people (including educated ones) religion is mixed bag. It comprises dogmas, customs and traditions which come from our culture rather than religion. Religion, once it becomes a powerful establishment, represents more of vested interests than religious teachings and values. It loses its dynamism. Interests become supreme rather than real spirit of religion.

Also, dogmas become more central than change as change for many believers bring a sense of insecurity and uncertainty whereas they believe in religion to ensure inner security. Also, dogmas ensure constancy of leadership as any change brings shift from orthodox leadership to modern leadership and orthodox leadership is better able to manipulate and control peoples for most people religion is a matter of belief rather than thinking and reflection.

In fact in its higher reaches religion is neither superstition, nor dogma and mere rituals. Religion poses problems when it is made to

serve different human needs and interests. As water finds its own level, religion too finds its own level in unevenly developed society. For those who remain illiterate and backward it becomes a source of solace which is better served by dogmas and superstitions rather than thinking and change.

However for highly educated and developed sections of society it becomes a source of values and philosophy and invites them to reflect on God's creation. Qur'an repeatedly says why don't you think? Why don't you reflect on God's creation? Qur'an, if understood in its proper spirit creates intellectual ferment and dynamism rather than stagnation and dogmas. Dogmas were created by theologians and they put basic emphasis on these dogmas as they serve their needs and interests.

Also, for many, religion is ritual-oriented rather than value-oriented. By performing certain rituals and maintaining certain appearances they think they are religious. For many others, religion is a source of values rather than rituals. Rituals serve a sense of community and identity and often become mechanical exercises and hardly inspire any inner change.

Then how should one look at religion and being religious? There are five most fundamental qualities for being truly religious without which one can claim to be religious but can hardly qualify to be one. These five fundamental qualities are 1) constant quest for truth; 2) to be humble; 3) to be compassionate and 4) to be anti-establishment 5) to be transcendent in vision.

We would like to throw some light on these essential qualities to be religious. In every religious tradition God's name is truth. In Islamic tradition one of Allah's name is Haq i.e. Truth. Without being truthful and engaged in constant quest for truth one can hardly be religious. All great founders of religion from Buddha to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) spent years of their lives in quest for truth and got inspiration to understand truth. It should be mission of one's life to search for

truth, in all its manifestations. Also, truth does not have one form and one manifestation. It is not stagnant or a dogma but dynamic and intellectually challenging.

Along with constant quest for truth humility is required. Any sense of truth being any one's monopoly leads to sense of arrogance and destroys the very quality of truth. That is why Qur'an says that all previous prophets came with truth and requires Muslims not to distinguish between one and the other prophets, those who do so are not true believers. All prophets and great religious thinkers were committed to quest for truth. Also, Qur'an maintains that Allah has created diversity, not uniformity so that one could understand different forms of truth without leading to arrogance. Anyone engaged in quest for Truth has to have a quality of humility. Qur'an strongly denounces *mustakbitin* (the powerful and arrogant). Most of the Prophets mentioned in the Qur'an were of humble origin.

Third important quality for being truly religious is being compassionate i.e. being sensitive to others suffering. Anyone who is not compassionate cannot be a true human being, let alone religious. Allah's name in Qur'an is Compassionate Merciful (Al-Rahman al-Rahim) and Prophet Muhammad has been described as Mercy of the Worlds (Rahmatan li-Al'amin). Any Muslim who is not compassionate would never be a true Muslim.

Similarly a true religious person has to be anti-establishment as most of the establishments represent vested interest rather than values. Some people try to control these establishments and do anything to retain their control over it. They tend to become authoritarian and try to eliminate their rivals. Also, a truly religious person would always be inspired by future vision rather than what is given. He would be engaged in creating new world as what is given is never perfect. Those who have these qualities would indeed be really truly religious people.





Critical Spirituality: Towards a Revitalised Humanity

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The human dynamism implied by the concept of Thrival¹ is of particular concern to futurists engaged in exploring our human potential. This potential is not simply a matter of being able to chart a course and realise it; it is the ability to engage the multidimensional facets of out humanness in order to create maps to preferable futures that retain their promise and their openness. Such futures resist definition, challenging us as both individuals and societies to be our best, do our best and dream our best.

The utopian nature of any such future cannot be denied, it is a future in potential only. Much critical humanism has focussed on our current world - with its structures and illusions, its iniquities and inequities, its promises and false prophets - and developed thorough critiques of the social order. Critical futures is rooted in this tradition, it is a rebellious humanism,

which at its best offers a host of heterodox and paradoxical visions rooted in the critique of those forces that seek the closure of human potential. Ziauddin Sardar sums this position up when he says of futures studies:

“It must work in opposition to the dominant politics and culture of our time, resist and critique science and technology (the most powerful agents of change and thought), globalisation (the most powerful process of homogenisation) and linear, deterministic projections (the official orthodoxy of the future) of the future itself.” (Sardar, 1999, 16)

To challenge the hegemonic is one thing, to build an alternative future is another. Noted critical theorist Henry Giroux, in surveying the effects of critical theory, has observed that little has changed as a direct result of

¹ The theme for the conference at which this paper was delivered. Global Soul, Global Mind and Global Action: From Survival to Thrival, Tamkang University, November 2005, Taiwan.

critique. The problem he asserts, is that critical theorists of all complexions have concentrated too much on developing a grammar of resistance and not enough on a grammar of the possible (Giroux, 1986). In this too, little has changed. The disjunction between theory and practice gapes like a chasm at us over the centuries. Desiderius Erasmus made a similar observation over four hundred and fifty years ago: "If you keep thinking about what you want to do or what you hope will happen, you don't do it, and it won't happen." (Erasmus, 2005)

Clearly we need something more if we are to create the conditions for Thrival in our world. Critique, as it is currently defined, is not enough. The problem, as I see it, is that the human has been left out of humanism. Humanism has been too narrowly defined as an intellectual movement (which of course it originally was) with no sense either of the somatic condition of ideology nor of its liminal nature as an expression not just of the head but also of the heart and spirit. We need to reconfigure humanism to account for these essentially human qualities if we wish to engage neohumanistically with change.

The Neohumanist Moment

The conditions of late modernity have resulted in a convergence in history, environmental violence, economic injustice, political bankruptcy, resurgent religious fundamentalism, technological change and philosophical confusion. This moment places before us two possible routes into the future. The individual, every one of us, is faced with the choice between loss and alienation on the one hand (the future is an intensified and colonised extension of the present malaise) or a reclamation of self and spirit on the other (the future is an open and creative counter to present hubris). This convergence has created the conditions for the emergence of a neohumanist sensibility; we live at a moment in time that not just necessitates a deepening of human awareness but also validates it. At the heart of this process is our human capacity to

reflect upon our selves. This is something new at the collective level in terms of the history of human consciousness and can best be described as a neohumanist moment. Niklas Luhmann sees the capacity to self reflect as a defining feature of modernity.

"The question (for individuality) is no longer 'What should I be?' but rather 'How should I be?' ... An individual in the modern sense is someone who can observe his or her own observing." (Luhmann, 1998, 7)

This reflective faculty, when truly enacted transcends itself; it lies at the heart of this new humanism. It suggests a human formula for activating global Thrival that reads something like this:

Reflection + Ethics + Action = Thrival

This process links self-actualisation with social renewal. It is implicit to this new emerging reality that both go hand in hand.

In this sense we build a condition for re-imagining the possible by bridging the gap between the impersonal social imaginary faculty and the personal capacity to envision or imagine. The social imaginary is described by Cornelius Castoriadis as a process of signification:

"Social imaginary signification brings into being things as *these here* things, posits them as being *what* they are – the *what* being posited by signification, which is indissociably principle of existence, principle of thought, principle of value, and principle of action." (Castoriadis, 1997, p313)

The personal capacity to envision is linked to hope and the reflective capacity to deconstruct and reconstruct the world around us and choose specific sets of conditions over others. This is a form of *eupsychia*: the ability to imagine and enact the constantly improving self. At its deepest level this is a spiritual condition that strengthens the personal identification with the world around us and provides the

inspiration to come to its aid. This need to act is rooted in a set of conditions that are both personal (the desire for a better future for our children) and altruistic (the wish to care for the other).

From Survival to Thrival

In terms of the theme of this conference there are parallels between the formula stated above and the conditions of Global Soul, Global Mind and Global Action. These are summarised here.

Global Soul	Global Mind	Global Action
Reflect Meditate	Ethics Benevolent Intellect	Act Transform

To move from a condition of mere sufficiency which we can describe as survival - *and let us not forget that for many the condition of life does not even meet this minimum standard* - to a condition of Thrival will require a deepened sense of human agency: One that incorporates the spiritual and the critical into a meaningful balance of depth and analysis.

Such a proposition is illegitimate within both the humanist and neoliberal traditions that currently define the possible. Yet such is the pressure of the neohumanist moment that the urgency is being felt by many thinkers and activists. Sogyal Rinpoche sums the situation up by declaring:

“The danger we are all in together makes it essential now that we no longer think of spiritual development as a luxury, but as a necessity for survival.” (Rinpoche, 1992 p.363)

Similarly, the Australian academic and social critic David Tacey, in assessing the condition of the Australian ‘soul’, renews Eliade’s call for:

“...a ‘new humanism’ that is not based on rational materialism, but assumes that

the sacred is a basic category of human experience, and sees that the human cannot be separated from the nonhuman and the archetypal.” (Tacey, 1995, 4)²

Albert Einstein once observed that we cannot fix the problems of the present with the mindsets that created the problems. Critical humanism has failed to generate the change needed to build the personal and social conditions needed for the condition of Thrival. It has failed because it does not deal with the full spectrum of human potential. Over its long history it has dealt in various ways with the intellectual (including the theological), ethical and emotional domains of the human condition, and in addressing issues of inequity and the structural constraints that inhibit change and maintain current power arrangements it has also included aspects of humanities’ physical condition. Yet by situating itself within a largely material and secular discourse it has denied itself the spiritual resources that can challenge the deep myths and metaphors that condition so much of reality.

To step beyond Enlightenment rationality requires the inclusion of spirituality, only then can we meet Einstein’s condition of breaking out of the current paradigm. In this way we lose nothing of the strength of humanism, instead we augment it with the inclusion of a spiritual rationality. Thus the tradition that defines the rational remains intact, it simply modulates to include a fuller vision of what it means to be human. We must remember that, as Alasdair MacIntyre notes,

“...rationality itself ... is a concept with a history: indeed, since there are a diversity of traditions of enquiry, with histories, there are, so it will turn out, rationalities rather than rationality...” (MacIntyre, 1988/2003 p.9)

When we recognise that rationality itself is contingent then we become able to develop tools of rational dissent that may shift and

² A similar call is made by Konstantin Khroustski in his paper on Russian Philosophical Cosmology (Khroustski, 2005)

change according to context. What drives such dissent is a commitment to benevolence, a tolerance for paradox and a sense of community that values the vision of dissent as an integral part of the evolution of consciousness and the social and cultural processes that reflect it. Neohumanism, by embracing and validating a spiritual rationality, allows us to engage our critical spirituality in the quest for conditions that create, support and maintain Thrival; that condition of optimal self expression and security of humanity.

Critical Spirituality

Thrival will never arrive if we leave its emergence up to politicians, bureaucrats, economists or New Age gurus. Thrival will only emerge when we take personal responsibility for creating the conditions necessary for its continued presence on the planet. Critical spirituality recognises that, to paraphrase James Scott, what is rational to a bureaucrat is not so to a mystic (Scott, 1998, 22).

Donald Rumsfeld, in his famous *non sequitur*, described a range of knowns and unknowns. Much that is mysterious for him and his advisors falls within the domain of the valid from a critically spiritual perspective. Silence, mystery, awe and ignorance are all necessary categories for understanding the past, the present and the future. This is the fertile ground of dreams and archetypes, it is where the social imaginary of Castoriadis meets the personal imaginary of the citizen. It is here, where biography meets history, subject merges with object and agency and structure at last 'tie the knot', that we find a valid ground to engage Global Soul, Global Mind and Global Action.

This critical engagement with soul lies at the heart of Thrival as a key component of a revitalised humanity. When agency and structure are in balance then the future opens up and becomes a place of realistic dreaming. This is not a Utopia of closure where freedom is sacrificed to the Dream. Rather

it is a condition of continuous becoming in which personal subjectivities constantly renegotiate the context of their becoming through objective adjustment. This is the horizon of the possible, and is driven by what Louis Marin calls a utopic (Marin, 1993). The point, he argues, is that Utopia is a trap but paradoxically, humanity must have utopias, visions of the good, the hoped for other place, in order to shape and inform social choices. The creative energy involved in the generation and dissolution of utopic possibilities is central to the maintenance of the social order. This terrain is the place of dream (utopic), the emotional anchor of individuality within the impersonal process of the social imaginary. In this way, agency, a necessary condition for Thrival, is reclaimed.

Thus the condition of *being* ceases to be defined in the passive sense of submitting to an external reality, or as a denial of that reality as illusion or *maya*; instead it takes on a more muscular identity as a process of energetic reflective engagement with the conditions of mind and social ordering that so often deny agency as a condition of social reality. This condition of being involves both Global Soul and Global Mind as it is concerned both with spiritual reflection and intellectual critique. Meaningful *doing* is the result of effective being and results in Global Action. Personal and collective identity, purpose and fulfilment result and immediately Thrival becomes a dimension of social reality. *Dreaming* now takes on the creative potential of transformation. This is the gift of the emergent critically spiritual condition.

So critical spirituality creates new categories for making sense of reality and acting upon it. It fills the hole in holism by actively promoting an integrated vision of the human being and thus challenges the dominant hegemonic discourse that stifles agency and colonises the future (Milojevic, 2005). New categories allow for dissent. Some of these categories are steeped in Tantra and the Indic episteme, others allow for indigenous

insights into relationship and the ontology of identity (Mueke, 2004). Still others draw on new insights into human nature and the nature of ethical action offering a framework for understanding consciousness as a living energy, *microvita*, that has organic properties and can multiply and also die (Bussey, 2004). When categories are challenged we find the present is less claustrophobic, it becomes a fragile and contested terrain over which various possible presents and futures, and even pasts contend (Inayatullah, 2002, 8).

Dimensions of Critical Spirituality

The critically spiritual perspective integrates the concerns of critical theory for social justice, gender equity and processes of legitimation with an identification with the other that is based upon a meditative stance that establishes a sense of unity with and between minds. This identification is the root of relationship and was alluded to in the thinking of Michel Foucault as an ethic of care that had been eclipsed by the western obsession with the Socratic (Delphic) injunction to “Know oneself”.

“One of the main themes Foucault explored in the early eighties was ‘the care of the self.’ The nearly complete uncoupling of this imperative from its twin, ‘know yourself,’ is an essential element of his diagnosis of modernity, in which the latter imperative was gradually to eclipse the former as a philosophical object.” (Rabinow, 1997) xxiv-xxv

The schism created by the triumph of self-knowledge has led to the dominance of the head over the heart which was radically devalued as a way of knowing and engaging reality.

Critical spirituality fosters the identification of self with the world, the collective and the cosmic good. It does so by acknowledging the depths of the human condition and building contemplative processes to incorporate these

into the construction of knowing and acting. As Foucault acknowledges, care is a central ingredient here. Care implies relationship with both self as other (the deeper self denied by modernity) and also self as world: That part of reality that Joanna Macy describes in her book *World as Lover, World as Self* (Macy, 2005).

Implications for Thrival: Global Soul, Global Mind, Global Action

The neohumanist moment is here and we must look at ways to successfully negotiate the transition from survival to Thrival. This transition requires that we embrace our full humanity, one which acknowledges and utilises the full spectrum of human potential. This means we must have active bodies, active minds, active hearts and active souls. Only then will an integrative ethic emerge that will allow for the paradox of individual agency to strike a dynamic balance with impersonal structure.

Once this is done activism expands to embrace personal transformation as a political tool. Critical spirituality builds on the modernist capacity for self reflection allowing it to escape from the maze of the mind and find a contingent fulfilment in the soul. This implies a form of action learning in which theory is validated through practice and practice is validated in turn through reflection that then initiates another cycle. In this process, relationship becomes the basis for engaged ethics and a new language for defining the real, along with the probable and the preferable, emerges based on love and mystery.

Critical spirituality thus shifts humanity from the flatland of Giorgio Agamben’s *homo sacer* (Agamben, 1998), ‘alienated man’ and the ‘bare life’, to the spiritually and socially transformative reality of what Patricia Kelly has described as *globo sapiens* (Kelly, 2004), those in touch with Global Soul who recognise and build on their relationship with the other and this world. This creates the consciousness of the custodian, the one who holds today

in trust for future generations. This implies the awareness that we are ancestors of the future and that with this recognition comes responsibility and also the required energy to enact transformation, to shift from survival to Thrival.

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Expressions of Self in Market, Society and Self : Towards Spiritual Praxis for Human Development

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In order to understand the expressions of Self in Market, Society and Spirituality (Spiritual self), we need an understanding of various 'models of human beings'. I have many times undertaken a simple exercise with my students, workshop participants and corporate executives by asking them to indicate their model of human being. The results are always interesting ranging from the model of human being as a 'social animal' to 'political animal' to creative and innovative individual to a rebel and revolutionary individual etc.

Models of Human Beings

In the discussion below we provide various models of human beings rooted in the perspectives of Needs, Modes of Thinking and Envelopes of Consciousness.

I. Basket of Needs

In my book, *Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors* (1996), I suggested

the concept of 'Basket of Needs' based on six dimensional view of human beings (Ch 14, pp. 102-106) in terms of Biological, Economic, Political, Social, Psychological and Spiritual dimensions. These six dimensions can also be represented in terms of following three models :

- I. Human being as Bio-Spiritual entity
- II. Human being as Socio-Political entity
- III. Human being as Psycho-Economic entity

As Bio-Spiritual entities, human beings not only seek to fulfill their biological needs but also seek to explore their inner dimension/ inner self and its relationship with the world outside. As spiritual entities they tend to seek 'self realization'. As social beings they tend to seek fulfillment in social relationships and as political beings they tend to display power need. As psychological entities, they tend to seek self-actualization and as economic entities they tend to maximize 'utility'. The

idea of 'Basket of Needs', wherein the basket combines above presented three models, leads us to a holistic model of human beings. It may be indicated that the idea of 'Basket of Needs' not only takes us beyond Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs but also provides us an analytical framework for 'social-analytics' as we can use it to analyze the social dynamics in terms of dynamic interactions of the six dimensions of human personality and their manifestations in human societies.

In the model of the 'Basket of Needs', self is defined in terms of needs. Expressions of the self can be observed in terms of satisfaction of the six needs. Fig. 1 presents the 'Basket of Needs' model of human beings.

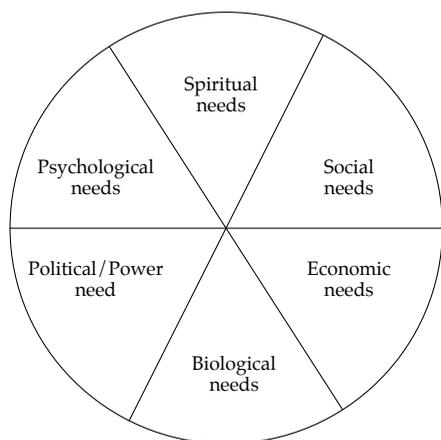


Fig 1: Six Dimensions of Human Beings and Corresponding 'Basket of Needs' (Source: Management in New Age: Western Windows eastern Doors, Subhash Sharma, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, p. 103)

Metaphor of basket in the context of needs implies that human beings have a choice in terms of 'selection of needs'. Thus, this model gives a sense of autonomy to individuals. Societies and nations can also prioritize their development strategies based on the idea of 'basket of needs'. Needs maximization, needs minimization and needs optimization are three different approaches to human development. Needs maximization approach followed by some nations leads to consumerism and it

further leads to unsustainable growth with disastrous environmental consequences. Gandhi said, 'There is enough for everybody's need and not for everybody's greed'. Holistic development implies a balanced approach to the satisfaction of needs based on 'needs optimization' strategy.

II. Modes of Thinking: Arrows of Mind As Five Forces Model of Mind

In the above mentioned book viz. Western Windows Eastern Doors (WWED), I also suggested, 'Five Dimensional Framework of Modes of Thinking' (Ch2, pp. 11-16) in terms of the following five modes of thinking:

- i. Power acquisition
- ii. Calculative and acquisitive
- iii. Knowledge seeking
- iv. Concern For Others (CFO)
- v. Liberation From Oppression (LiFO)

Different human beings display different mix of these five modes of thinking. Cultures, societies and nations also differ in their emphasis and mix of these modes of thinking. In fact, different cultures and nations can be studied from the viewpoint of their 'modes of thinking'. This will take us beyond Hofstede's (2001) framework of study of national cultures, wherein he studies cultures along five dimensions viz. power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation.

The above indicated five modes of thinking also represent 'Five Arrows of Mind' and the framework of Modes of Thinking can be referred as Five Forces Model of Mind. This framework is presented in Fig 2 indicating five arrows originating from human mind. In future neuro-sciences may identify the brain areas related to five modes of thinking. In this diagram we have presented calculative & acquisitive as well as power mode on the left side and Concern for Others (CFO) and Liberation modes on the right side in consonance with left and right sides of the brain areas. Knowledge seeking is indicated by the central connecting line. Further, in this

diagram calculative & acquisitive mode is balanced by Concern for Others (CFO) and Power acquisition is balanced by Liberation mode of thinking.

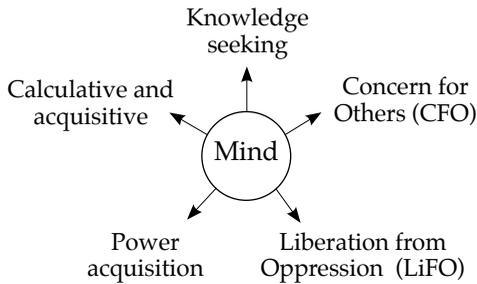


Fig. 2 : Five Forces Model of Mind: Five Arrows of Mind representing Five Modes of Thinking

The modes of thinking framework can also be represented as ‘Spider diagram’ to represent an individual’s intensities of modes of thinking and his/her configuration in terms of five modes of thinking. In fact various societies and nations can also be configured on such a spider diagram. Collectivistic societies tend to display higher intensity of Concern for Others (CFO). Marginalized and oppressed societies, communities, nations and individuals tend to display higher intensity of Liberation mode of thinking. This is reflected in many dignity struggles, identity struggles, class struggles that find expression in social movements. During India’s freedom struggle, the entire nation demonstrated a very high intensity of liberation mode of thinking. Fig 3 presents the Modes of Thinking framework in Spider diagram format.

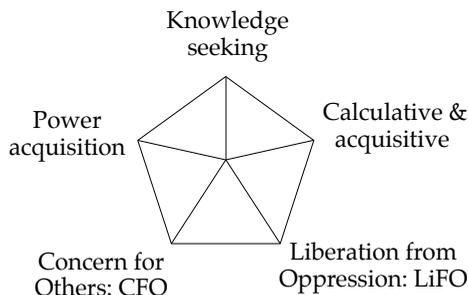


Fig. 3: Spider Diagram representation of Five Forces of Mind

It may be indicated that a self rating on a scale of 1 to 5 wherein 1 represents low intensity and represents high intensity of a particular mode of thinking, can lead to an individual’s personality configuration in terms of five modes of thinking. This can also be represented in the form of a ‘Personality Vector’ indicating the scores of an individual on five modes of thinking. This vector arrived through self rating is very useful for self reflection. Objective tests can also be designed to measure personality on these five modes of thinking and will be useful to the organizations in relating the personality vector with responsibility areas within an organization. It may be indicated that modes of thinking framework also leads us to a new view of motivation theories as it recognizes knowledge seeking and liberation as important motivational impulses of human beings.

III. Envelopes of Consciousness: Panchkosha Model of Human Beings

This model from Indian thought defines human beings in terms of five koshas (sheaths) viz. annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, viganmaya and anandmaya. Sri Aurobindo views these koshas in terms of five sheaths / envelopes of consciousness represented by Physical, Vital, Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual levels. These represent the five energies viz. Physical energy, Vital (Prana/ Life force energy), Emotional energy, Intellectual energy and Spiritual energy.

Panchkosha model leads us to the following model of human beings in terms of contemporary phrases:

$$HB = PQ * VQ * EQ * IQ * SQ$$

- HB : Human Being
- PQ : Physical energy Quotient
- VQ : Vitality Quotient
- EQ : Emotional Quotient
- IQ : Intelligence Quotient
- SQ : Spiritual Quotient

PQ represents the Physical energy Quotient. VQ represents Vitality Quotient represented by the ‘Pranic force’. Popularity of breathing exercises is an indicator of the importance of this force. EQ represents the Emotional

Quotient corresponding to 'manomaya kosha'. IQ represents the Intelligence Quotient and SQ represents the Spiritual Quotient. The term SQ was coined by Danah Zohar (2001) to give 'meaning and value' to life and human actions. As meaning to life brings pleasure in its 'ananda' form, SQ corresponds to the 'anandamaya' kosha. The model presented above helps us in a proper understanding of linkages between various levels and envelopes of consciousness and thereby corresponding 'energy quotients'.

IV. OSHA Model: Energy System's View of Human Beings

In my above mentioned book (WWED), I also suggested the OSHA model of human beings with its roots in Guna theory in Indian thought (WWED, Ch 18). According to this theory, human beings display three types of orientations and energies viz. Sattava, Rajas and Tamas. This idea leads us to OSHA model of human beings wherein individual letters have following meaning:

O : Oneness

S : Spiritual

H : Humanistic

A : Aggressive/ Arrogant/ "Animalistic"

This model can also be viewed in terms of three levels of self viz. lower self (ls), middle self (ms) and higher self (hs). Lower self is represented by aggressive/arrogant/'animalistic' approach of violent energy, middle self by humanistic approach of vibrant energy, higher self by spiritual and oneness approach of silent energy. This model also has connectivity with 'Basket of Needs', Modes of Thinking and Envelopes of Consciousness frameworks presented above.

OSHA model can also be considered as a model of 'Hierarchy of Thoughts and Actions (T-A)'. An individual's deeds and actions can be rooted in spirit of Oneness and Spirituality (OS) or in spirit of Humanistic (H) approach or in a spirit of Aggression (A). An Aggressive approach leads to creation of negative energy (neergy). Humanistic approach leads to

positive energy and human actions rooted in spirituality lead to synergy in organizations and society.

There is a need to understand the connectivity between Needs and Deeds. The framework of 'Hierarchy of Deeds' suggested by Sharma (1996) implies focus on means employed to achieve the ends (satisfaction of needs). Maslow talked only in terms of 'Hierarchy of Needs'. His framework does not tell us as to how the needs are satisfied. One can satisfy needs using Tamas, Rajas or Sattava means. 'Hierarchy of Deeds' model suggests movement towards Rajas and Sattava approaches in satisfaction of needs. Thus, in a way it provides us an ethical theory to satisfaction of needs. In fact it can also be considered as a 'general theory of ethics and values'.

It may be indicated that OSHA model suggests that we need to understand the difference between Greed, Need and Deed. At Oneness and Spiritual (OS) level, HOPE (Higher Order Purpose of Existence) and Hierarchy of Deeds play more important role, at Humanistic (H) level, Needs play important role as we recognize not only our needs but also needs of others and at "Animalistic"/ Aggressive level, Greed plays more important role. Thus, the framework of Greed, Need, Deed and HOPE is implicit in the OSHA model as well as in the framework of three levels of self viz. lower self, middle self and higher self.

Towards NMC Model of Expressions of Self

An integrative view of the above models of human beings leads us to NMC model wherein NMC implies, Need based, Mind based and Consciousness based perspectives of human beings.

Need based approaches such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Subhash Sharma's 'Basket of Needs' concept focuses on 'Needs' at the root of human behavior.

Mind based models of human beings focus on the mind/psyche. Field of Psychology deals

with many models beginning from Freud onwards. Modes of Thinking/ Arrows of Mind/ Five Forces Model of Mind, presented above belongs to this category.

Consciousness based models dominate the ancient Indian thought as well as contemporary Indian thought and provide foundations for Spirituality. For example, Panchkosha model is a consciousness based model of human beings.

'Practical Spirituality' takes an integral view of these three approaches. Accordingly it refers to application of 'Consciousness principles' in conjunction with Need and Mind based approaches, in day to day activities of human beings. Such an integral view of 'Practical Spirituality' has roots in thoughts of Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo and others.

It may be indicated that In the Psycho-spiritual view of human beings, there is an integration of the Need based (e.g. Basket of Needs), Mind based (e.g. Arrows of Mind) and Consciousness based (e.g. Envelopes of Consciousness) perspectives. Hence, we refer it as NMC model of human beings. It also broadly corresponds with BMS: Body, Mind, Soul perspective of human beings. This model has interesting implications for motivation theories. It points to three levels of motivation theories viz. need based, mind based and consciousness based. This framework can be used to classify different motivation theories in these three categories.

These frameworks are also useful in study of societies and national cultures in terms of their individualistic, collectivistic and cosmotivistic orientations. So far the focus of academic writings has only been in terms of two categories viz. individualistic and collectivistic orientations. However we need to add the cosmotivistic orientation to these categories. Different cultures create their linkages with cosmos in different ways. This may get reflected in the songs, dance and music of the society/nation / region.

Towards A Holistic View of Expressions of Self:

TCP (Total and Complete Person) Model of Self

The models presented above also have connectivity with TCP (Total and Complete Person) model of Self based on a view of life, a view of nature and a view of personality, that I suggested in my book, New Mantras in Corporate Corridors (2007, pp. 510-511) as a model of expressions of self in terms of following three TCP principles and corresponding equations:

1. T Principle refers to Total (T) view of life in terms of Transactional (T1), Transformational (T2) and Transcendental (T3) approaches to relationships of human beings with others including nature. This view of life can be expressed by the following equation:

$$T = T1 + T2 + T3$$

2. C Principle refers to the Complete (C) view of nature in terms of Competition (C1), Co-operation (C2) and Connectivity (C3). C3 represents the inter-connectivity of human beings with everything often captured through the concept of consciousness, particularly spiritual consciousness. C equation is as follows:

$$C = C1 + C2 + C3$$

3. P Principle refers to Personality (P) in terms of P1 (lower self), P2 (middle self) and P3 (higher self). It is also displayed through three gunas viz. Tamas (violent energy view of life), Rajas (vibrant energy view of life) and Sattava (silent energy view of life). P equation is a follows:

$$P = P1 + P2 + P3$$

When these three TCP principles/ equations are combined we arrive at TCP matrix presented in Fig 4 . This matrix can also be referred to as Matrix of Expressions of Self.

This matrix provides us a comprehensive view of human beings, life and society.

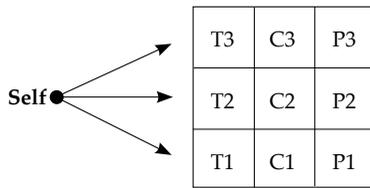


Fig 4: TCP Matrix as a Matrix of Nine Expressions of Self

Nine expressions of self indicated by TCP matrix find their manifestations in varying forms in Market, Society and Spiritual self. They also encompass the frameworks of 'Basket of Needs', 'Five Modes of Thinking', Envelopes of Consciousness & Hierarchy of Deeds and OSHA model etc. presented earlier. It may be indicated that various knowledge streams from social sciences such as disciplines of Economics, Political science, Sociology and Psychology can be integrated through this matrix. It may also be noted that the disciplines of Economics, Political Science & Social Transformation and Ethics & Spirituality are largely rooted in T1C1P1, T2C2P2 and T3C3P3 expressions of Self. The 'discipline' of management draws from these disciplines and thereby takes a holistic view reflected through this matrix. Hence, this matrix is very useful to managers and leaders as the matrix is not only useful for social-analytics but also helps us to understand the various expressions of Self in Market, Society and Spirituality.

It may also be indicated that the discussion presented above also has implications not only for social analytics but also for functional disciplines of management such as Marketing, Finance including Stock market, Organization Behavior, Human Resource Development, Corporate Social Responsibility, Business Ethics and Good Governance, Strategic Management etc. This is because various expressions of self not only take place in social and spiritual spaces but also in market place. For example it is important for marketing

managers to understand the concepts of 'basket of needs', modes of thinking and other expressions of self at the market place. For customer relationship they need to understand T1, T2, T3 approaches to build relationships with the customers. In general, organizations need to understand building such relationships with all the stakeholders. In the field of Strategic Management, Five Forces Model of Mind has interesting implications for Porter's Five Forces model as the behavior of the market players is reflected through Five Forces of Mind and is thereby shaped by their corresponding T- A (Thought-Action) patterns. This implies that play of the TCP matrix at the market place can alter our paradigm of Strategic Management.

Towards A New Understanding of Three Curves of Life:

The Metaphors of Rectangle, Triangle and Circle



The discussion so far leads us to a new understanding of three curves of life. In general, human life can be visualized in terms of three curves of life in consonance with three assumptions about nature of nature. These curves can be referred to as survival curve, potentiality curve and divinity curve. Survival curve assumes that nature is brutal, hostile, violent and dangerous. Hence, human beings are in adversary position with respect to their relationship with nature. They need to create rectangles around them to protect themselves from adversities of nature. Potentiality curve assumes nature is creative and manifests itself in many creative ways. It can also be referred to as creativity curve. It implies human beings share a creative relationship with nature. This creative relationship is expressed through triangle shape that has multiple creative meanings such as entrance, balance, mountain etc. Divinity curve assumes that nature is divine and miraculous and human beings share a spiritual relationship with

nature. This relationship is represented by the geometrical figure of circle that indicates inclusiveness. This curve can also be referred to as spirituality curve.

Many have explored these three curves of life. However, three important contributors to our understanding of these curves include, Darwin, Maslow and Aurobindo. For Darwin, life is struggle for existence and is driven by 'survival of the fittest'. For Maslow, life is actualization of potential through self-actualization and manifestation of creative urges. For Aurobindo, life is divine and is driven by self-realization i.e. realization of divine nature of nature and human beings. Thus, there are three curves of life viz. curve of survival, curve of self-actualization and curve of self-realization.

Above discussion indicates that nature operates at three levels and there are corresponding laws of nature represented by Fight, Flow and Fly. Survival curve insight leads us to law of jungle in the form of survival of the fittest and fight or flight approach to life. Self actualization curve insight takes us to next level of understanding viz. nature is creative and this is reflected in many ways through Flow approach to life. Self realization curve insight leads us to another level of understanding viz. nature is divine and this is reflected through Fly approach to life i.e. rising above the survival and self actualization levels. Broadly these three curves also correspond to BMS (Body-Mind-Spirit) model of human beings. This can be metaphorically represented by the phrase, Body wants to Fight, Mind wants to Flow and Spirit wants to Fly.

It is indeed interesting that these insights have originated from three different disciplines viz. Biology, Psychology and Spirituality. By taking a holistic view we can integrate the three disciplines through the idea of three curves of life. As different individuals operate from different curves, in society we find its manifestation in different forms viz. violent, non-violent/ creative/vibrant and silent revolution approaches to solve problems.

We can also represent the three curves of life in terms of three levels of self viz. lower self (ls), middle self (ms) and higher self (hs). Lower self represents the violent nature of human beings and it strives for fight and is driven by Darwinian urges of survival of the fittest. Middle self represents the non-violent nature of human beings and it strives for expression of creative urges of human beings through flow approach. Higher self represents the silent nature of human beings and it strives to explore the higher levels of consciousness. It wonders at the wonder of wonders. This interpretation is in consonance with OSHA model presented earlier.

It may be indicated that matrix of relationships in a society is determined by the three curves of life. When in inter-personal relationships, survival curve dominates, there is lot of negative energy reflected in various forms including terrorism. When relationship is at the creative curve level, there is positive energy and synergy. When relationship is at the spiritual curve level, there is spiritual synergy and positive spirit. In the first case, negativity and enmity dominates. In second case, friendship and fellowship dominates and in the third case, fellowship and 'swanship' (metaphor of flying swans in a gracious manner) dominates.

We have mentioned above that geometrical figures of Rectangle, Triangle and Circle provide us interesting metaphors of three curves of life. Rectangle indicates that life is based on calculative and acquisitive approach. For example, in Market context, everything is viewed in terms of measurement. Triangle suggests that life is a set of contradictions and human beings strive to achieve a balance. No doubt many social philosophers used the dialectical approach to social analytics. For example, Hegel's Thesis-Anti-Thesis-Synthesis framework is a well known framework. Circle suggests the spiritual dimension of life. Circle of consciousness expands to include every living and non-living entity in one's field of consciousness. Elsewhere have also referred to it as 'Omega circle' approach to life. Thus, three curves of

life broadly correspond to Rectangle, Triangle and Circle metaphors. Human Development implies a due recognition of all the three curves and corresponding perspectives represented by Rectangle, Triangle and Circle view of life representing Materialistic, Creative and Spiritual views of life.

Micro Forces Macro Effects:

Towards Holistic Globalization and Sacro-civic Society

Micro forces generated through, 'Basket of Needs', 'Forces of Mind' (Modes of Thinking) and 'Hierarchy of Deeds' not only express through 'TCP Matrix' and 'Three Curves of Life' but also lead to macro effects in terms of following four macro forces:

1. Force of Market
2. Force of State/ Government
3. Force of People/Community
4. Force of Spiritual self/Spirituality

At the macro level we find an interesting dynamics and interaction between these four forces. Force of Market is represented by the Corporate world. Power of Corporations is a manifestation of this force. World Economic Forum represents this force. Force of State is represented by the Nation-State and thereby by the respective Governments. Force of People finds its manifestations in varying forms such as social movements, civil society and NGOs. In economic field it finds its manifestation in 'Capillary Action Model of Development' in the form of Grass roots economic enterprises. Force of Self (Spiritual self) finds its manifestation in varying forms such as proliferation of Yoga and Meditation Centers across the world.

When all the four forces are considered together we arrive at the idea of 'Holistic Globalization' that I suggested in my earlier writings, wherein there is a proper balance between the Force of Market, Force of State, Force of People/ Community and Force of Self that may also find its expression in concern of ethical dimension and good governance. Fig 5 represents this model of Holistic Globalization.

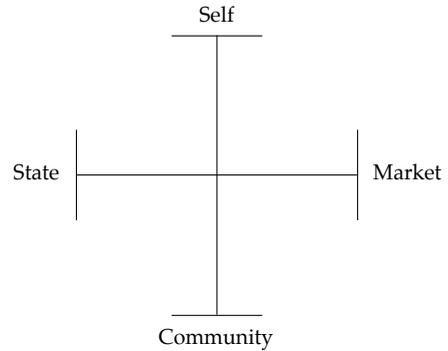
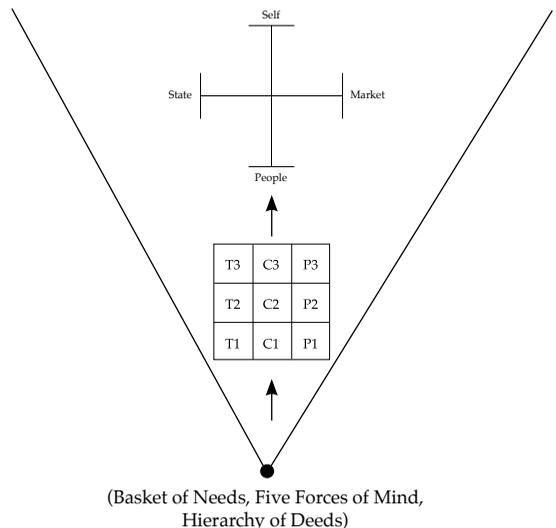


Fig 5: Four Forces Model of Holistic Globalization

It may be indicated that for many years, dynamics between Market and State has dominated the social discourse resulting in Capitalism Vs Socialism discourse. The model presented above introduces the force of people and force of self, in the social discourse. Thus, we get a better understanding of the social discourse. It also leads us to a new vision of society viz. sacro-civic society as it provides a due recognition to force of Self in functioning of society. This vision takes us beyond traditional visions in terms of Market Vs State approach to human development.

Fig. 6 provides us the linkage between the micro forces and macro forces through V diagram indicating the ascent of micro-forces. This diagram also integrates various concepts presented in this paper.



(Basket of Needs, Five Forces of Mind, Hierarchy of Deeds)

Fig 6: Emergence of Macro-forces from Micro-level

While Figure 6 presents the idea of ascent of micro-forces there is also descent of macro-forces in the form of institutional structures such as Corporates, Government Institutions, NGOs and Spiritual Organizations. Thus we observe an inter linkage between ascent of micro-forces and descent of the macro-forces providing us a new understanding of micro-macro dynamics and linkages.

Practical Spirituality and Human Development:

Towards A New Social Vision of Prosperity, Justice and Peace (PJP)

The analytical frameworks presented in this paper, including the idea of 'Holistic Globalization' indicate that Human Development is incomplete without incorporating the 'spiritual self' in visions of human development. During recent years, philosophers of human development such as Amartya Sen have argued for 'inclusive development' to include the marginalized sections of society as part of the human development process. However, there is a need to go beyond Amartya Sen as he does not include 'spiritual dimension' in his framework of human development. The idea of 'Holistic Globalization' suggested above includes the dimension of 'Spiritual self' as part of the Human Development. 'Practical Spirituality' implies recognition of this dimension in all human activities. It also implies creation of 'Spiritual Synergy' in all human endeavors. Hence, it is not only relevant for individuals but also for organizations, nations and the world. It adds the dimension of compassion to the process of Human Development. Hence, it leads us to a new vision of 'Compassionate and Sustainable Development'. While Sustainable Development draws our attention to environmental issues, Compassionate and Sustainable Development (CSD), draws our attention to the role of 'spiritual self' in the process of development.

Vision of 'Compassionate and Sustainable Development' can also be articulated in terms of three key phrases viz. Prosperity, Justice and Peace (PJP). The dimension of Peace in this vision is essentially an expression of 'spiritual self' of the community. Such a society is 'sacro-civic' in nature.

Practical Spirituality in Action:

Towards 'Shunya Engineering' in Management and Human Development

In organization context, Practical Spirituality can be operationalized through 'Shunya Engineering'. Shunya represents the spiritual potential of an individual. By Shunya Engineering we imply tapping this potential and using it for better performance of human activities.

With the acceptance of the idea of 'Spiritual Quotient' as well as 'Spiritual Capital' the discipline of Management is slowly inching towards the idea of 'Spiritual Praxis' that represents a non-violent/spiritual / sacro-civic approach to managing institutions and organizations in society. This approach is consistent with the philosophy of 'Compassionate and Sustainable Development'.

The idea of Spiritual Praxis provides us a new model of Leadership, that can be referred to as 'Shunya Engineering Model of Leadership'. This model suggests that a leader should strive to create Spiritual Synergy (SS) within his/her organization. In order to do the same, he/she should display Positive Spirit (PS) in his/her activities and decision making. In terms of 'modes of thinking' this implies 'Concern for Others' (CFO) should be an essential part of organization and social culture. In terms of OSHA model, it implies incorporation of spiritual dimension as well as heart values (*values of the heart*) in decision making. In terms of TCP model, it implies recognition of T2C2P2 and T3C3P3 dimension in society and organizations. In terms of three curves of life,

it implies due recognition of the third curve in human actions.

Thus, Practical Spirituality in its Shunya Engineering and Spiritual Praxis form can be defined in terms of SS*PS (Spiritual Synergy * Positive Spirit) model. This model is helpful in creating a transformation in organizations and society from negative actions and negative energy to positive actions and synergy. Once this expression of self takes place in market, society and individual actions, we move forward in the direction of 'sacro-civic' society based on 'Compassionate and Sustainable Development' rooted in the idea of 'Holistic Globalization' wherein 'Spiritual Self' is integrated with Market, State and Society.

Notes

1. This paper extends author's earlier work in this field that was initially published in 1996 in his book, *Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors*. The ideas presented in this paper were also presented by the author at the Workshop on 'Practical Spirituality and Human Development' Institute of Sociology, University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany, March 25, 2007. Some of these ideas were also presented at other International workshops and seminars that include First Annual India Trade Seminar, at Los Angeles, May 28, 2008 and a Workshop on Asian Social Theory and Asian Dialogues, Institute of Social Research, Chulalongkon University, Bangkok Dec. 15-16, 2009. Interactions during these workshops and seminars as well as subsequent reflective dialogues with many researchers, scholars and thinkers have enriched the contents of this paper. Author thanks Prof. Ananta Giri, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Chennai, who has been instrumental in organizing a series of workshops on 'Practical Spirituality and Human Development' for his comments and suggestions on this paper.

2. Hofstede's work on National cultures based on five dimensions viz. power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long term orientation is a well known contribution and is widely used in International Business (Hofstede, Geert, *Culture's Consequences, Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations*, Sage Publications, 2001). It may be indicated that Hofstede's view is largely a 'Corporate Perspective' of culture, where differences in culture are not celebrated. They are at best tolerated as nuisance. "*Culture is more often a source of conflict than of synergy. Cultural differences are a nuisance at best and often a disaster.*" Prof. Geert Hofstede, Emeritus Professor, Maastricht University (Source <http://www.geert-hofstede.com/>). It is indeed interesting that such biased views and opinions are taught to MBA students worldwide in the name of 'scientific research'.

3. The phrase, 'Spiritual Quotient' was coined by Danah Zohar and it aims at giving importance to 'meaning and value in our life'. For details readers may refer to, *Spiritual Intelligence: The Ultimate Intelligence*, Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall, Bloomsbury Publishers 2001.

4. Author's earlier publications that form the background of this paper are as follows:

Sharma Subhash (1996), *Management in New Age: Western Windows Eastern Doors*, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, 2nd edition, 2006

Sharma Subhash (2004), "Unfolding of Holistic Vision of the World: Towards New Directions for Development of Management Thought", *Global Business Review*, July-Dec. Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.

Sharma Subhash (2006), "Towards A New Vision of the World: Foundational Concepts for Holistic Development & Management (HDM)", *Vilakshan, XIMB Journal of Management*, March-Sept, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 73-82

Sharma Subhash (2007), "Towards A New Social Vision: Sacro-Civic Society and Calling of Holistic Globalization", *Vilkashan, XIMB Journal of Management*, March-Sept, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 121-130

Sharma Subhash (2007), *New Mantras in Corporate Corridors: From Ancient Roots to Global Routes*, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi

Sharma Subhash (2008), "Rotating the Pyramid: Towards A New Vision of Holistic Globalization and Holistic Development", *Southern Economist*, May 1, pp. 65-67

Sharma Subhash (2009), "Liberation as Development", *Southern Economist*, May 1, pp. 19-22





Art and Practical Spirituality

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If we consider the concept of art nowadays, it can be linked for instance with music, literature, plastic arts, constituents of a nation's imagery and history etc. We can therefore say such concept includes all aspects of life. As a matter of fact, the present idea of an artist refers to many different fields and is perhaps used too frivolously.

The oldest evidence of man's presence on the Earth proves that his creativity was related to his confrontation with the surrounding world. His close bonds with nature, or so to speak his reverence and fear towards it, inspired him to create mainly tools that were useful for his survival, as well as realization and acceptance of his fate. Marija Gimbutas, for instance, in her book *The Language of the Goddess*, is trying to explain how the sculptures, pictorial images, statues, tombs, paintings on pottery etc. from the European Neolithic were connected to ideas of death and resurrection, life, recreation, becoming, energy etc. These marks, carved on various objects, were not just a simple decoration, but a kind of language

with its own symbolic meaning, and so was the shape of the artefacts.

We can therefore assume from this point of view the ancient artistic activity had a supportive function, providing a deeper meaning and enriching human life. Past thinkers like Pythagoras, Plato and Boethius supported art as a means of spiritual growth. Art was for them a science with a specific meaning and goal. Nothing was accidental and superficial in it. If we read their works, we can realize the differences between this approach and the common widespread consideration of art. There were writers in the 20th Century that continued to promote this idea, like Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, Tithus Burckhardt and Pavel Florentsky. They showed how this concept was still present in both Europe and Asia. It is clear from their works that the ancient idea of art and concept of beauty was strictly connected to the purpose and propriety of its creator's action. According to this view, the ethical and moral rightness of a person stands out. The work of art becomes thus like a

mirror that reflects an artist's interiority. In my experience, for example, whenever my mind is not clear, the work fails. Therefore, the right attitude and interior harmony are essential for an artistic act. There is also the issue of purpose within an artistic performance. Ancient works of art like temples, cathedrals, mosques, carpets, sculptures and paintings reflect the laws of the universe and carried the task to stimulate the people to think about their life and existential condition. In this works we can find symbols, colours, decoration, shapes etc. that talk to the people.

During the last four years I started to focus my artistic research in order to address the above-mentioned issues. Before that I was only concentrated on the composition of the work itself and a form of instinctive expression, without any particular goal. It was a selfish need to bring out something I felt inside. In these situations the person lacks proper self-control and depends upon momentary feelings. During that period I was working mostly for myself but also had some exhibitions. It is very difficult for an artist to exist without other people. Like in other areas, they influence the life and fortune of the artist. To him it is without any doubt extremely important to show his works to somebody else and look for consent and approval. From this point of view we can consider the importance and the value of the artist's signature that determines his work. The idea of the artist that we have today and the value that we gave to it in the past are different. In the Middle Ages and in traditional Oriental art, for example, it was common that the author didn't sign his work. He was a craftsman and only an instrument of the Will. He used to lead a particular kind of life and follow strict working rules and instructions that determined the final result of his actions. If there was any innovation, it was in accordance with the tradition. Today, anything is allowed to the artist. He is considered a particular person that can move on the edge of the society or break certain rules. Our society has put the so-called artists too high.

Contemporary art often reflects our society's situations and is focused on exteriority. Many artists shock their audience or try to wake thoughts in them. My aim is to try to work on establishing a connection with the inner paths of life. In this way I want influence positively the audience. I hope to wake up something inside them by gentle means. The direction an artist may choose is also conditioned by shifting trends and market opportunities. From this point of view I think the ethical position of an artist and his intention are most relevant. My aim is to try and convey positive feelings and vibrations through colours and shapes. I believe it is possible in this way to affect people's unconscious.

First of all, my actual artistic research is linked to my interior research. My purposes are connected with my effort to change my way of watching at and experiencing the world. This point of view derives from different lectures about individual development and practical work on myself. In art I start to connect this path with my interest and passion for antique art, as well as modern artists like Vasilij Kandinsky and Paul Klee, who explored and approached the world of children and my experiences with children in school and creative laboratories. At the same time I must point out the influence and importance of the world of tales and of the primitive and oriental arts. They approach the world in a simple, fantastic, wonderful and innocent way like a child sees the world through his own eyes. The child is always amazed of what surrounds him. Nothing is obvious. He is curious and always open to a new experiences. His point of view is not static. In this world the conditioning influence of society and the adult world is still absent. For this reason child illustration, that I have started approaching four years ago, influenced very strongly my conception of art. For this reason I started to simplify my artistic language and investigate the qualities of colour and of the sign. For me the artistic work must be like a threshold of other dimensions where other persons are invited to enter. There they are out of time,

without their problems and difficulties. There they can take a break and step on the flying carpet and fly away and live fantastic adventures. In this dimension it is possible to come in touch with the deepest part of one's being.

In order to achieve this I took inspiration from different types of artistic and cultural elements. In other instances I tried to connect them together. I wouldn't want to lose my link with the past, especially with that connected with universal ideas. So I'm trying to reinterpret these ideas in a contemporary

expression. Today many artists create only for themselves and do not care for their audience. The question is, what does the artist want to say and express, what themes he approaches and how. It often seems that the artist does not care if the people can understand what he has done or tried to communicate. I think that in our society, where ethical and social values are undergoing a crisis, we need artists who can help people and direct their expressive researches in a better way. So the approach to Art is not supposed to be a simple game, but we need it to become a real work with a fixed purpose to help people evolve.





Existential Insecurity and New Religiosity

An essay on some religion-making-characteristics of modernity

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Since the sixties of the last century students of religion are engaged in debates on the fate of religion in the West. Is religion *disappearing*, as was stated already in nineteenth-century theories? Some sociologists of religion still think this is the case (cf. Bruce 2002). Or is religion *becoming invisible*, is it transforming in secular activities like sports, civil religion, pop music, entertainment etc. (Ter Borg 1991)? Or is religion *privatizing*, that is: retiring into private areas of individual believers, probably the most popular view among students of Western religion (cf. Luhmann 2002)? Or may we speak of a process of *de-intensifying* of religion? This view is held by those who point at the emergence of a new religious cultic milieu, in which religiosity is not practiced in institutional frames and in which, although it has less impact and saliency for the believers than religion of the old days used to have, it definitely is thriving (Sjödén 2002, 2003; Partridge 2004, van Harskamp 2005). Or can

we observe that there is a *co-existing* of religion with the secularized world and that religion has retained its vitality in particular circumstances, for instance among 'special', deprived people or in particular, 'underdeveloped' areas? As for instance David Martin observes (Martin 1990, 2002; cf. for distinct views on secularization: Woodhead and Heelas 2000: 307-341).]

Existential insecurity?

Recently, Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart presented an interesting view on the fate of religion and secularization (Norris and Inglehart 2004). According to them the question whether religions survives, thrives or vanishes, can be answered by pointing to the extent to which people have a sense of existential security. Norris and Inglehart give a special meaning to the idea of existential security. According to them people feel secure when it may be taken for granted that one simply may exist as a physical entity and as a social being.

The idea is that in regions where that kind of feeling is absent, religion would thrive. Norris and Inglehart believe that the importance of religiosity – they sometimes mistakenly confuse religion with religiosity – persists most strongly among vulnerable populations, especially those living in poorer nations, facing personal survival-threatening risks. They argue that feelings of vulnerability to physical, societal, and personal risks are a key factor in driving religiosity. They try to demonstrate that the processes of secularization, seen from a global perspective as the systematic erosion of religious practices, values and beliefs, have occurred most clearly among the most prosperous social sections living in affluent and secure post-industrial nations.

Now, it's my contention that it is useful indeed to study the relation between existential insecurity at the one hand (and what is often related with existential insecurity: feelings of uncertainty and doubts about its very own existence and identity) and religiosity at the other hand. However, it is not correct to 'reserve' the feelings of existential insecurity for people living in poor nations and poor regions, as Norris and Inglehart actually suggest. If religiosity has to do only with insecurity in poor nations, we could not 'explain' why the United States is a religious nation, or why so many wealthy people in the West are religious people (it's well known that New Age in for instance Great Britain – whether it manifests itself in the form of audience cults or client cults is of no concern in this matter – recruits its members from the white, the well-to-do and the wealthy).

Risk society and the fate of God

Today it is almost a cliché to bring forward the idea that Western societies are gripped by an ever-expanding preoccupation with risks (Furedi 2002: 15ff.). However, it may count for sure, that in a risk-society feelings of insecurity abound, also existential insecurity (and let's take the word 'existential' than as referring to central features of being a human person).

When we follow Zygmunt Bauman, we may say that God, who in the last three centuries was represented by means of 'churched' religion, was a God who was thought to give man an established place and forms of belonging. When modernity began to push God away – according to the French historian of culture Marcel Gauchet, God started to pass away ca A.D. 1700– 'society' became the mechanism that gave man his place and belonging. But now, Bauman argues in one of his important books, even 'society' seems to evaporate as an ordaining and arranging mechanism. It's now up to human individuals to make the case, for each one of them and for others, according to their desire and judgment. According to Bauman however, this disappearance of the ordaining and arranging social and cultural mechanisms, creates an immense uncertainty of fate and free floating feelings of insecurity, rather than certainty and security (Bauman 2002: *passim*). So, although some might dismiss it as sentimentality and narcissism, there can be no doubt that the search for an authentic personal identity is one of the central concerns of our culture.

Why is that? What has this search for authentic identity to do with those feelings of insecurity? Simply this: a strong, authentic personal identity can be considered to be the central 'instrument' by which feelings of insecurity can be dealt with. But, let's be careful here: we can only have some understanding of the cultural datum that the search for an authentic personal identity is a central concern right now, if only we realise that people in the West are at the one hand disciplined to be an authentic person by many disciplinary 'apparatuses' (in schools, universities, therapies, in advertisement: 'Be an original'), while at the other hand modern people experience to be 'plural selves', thanks to the fact that modern people in the West are living so to say on separate floors of existence (Derrida). Which can give us some understanding of the cultural datum that the search for an authentic personal identity is such a central concern, that it also expresses another datum, viz. that the search for an authentic personal identity hardly can be fulfilled.

And what has this to do with religion and religiosity? In a book, published in 2000, I've tried to demonstrate extensively that the search for authenticity may be interpreted as a culturally and socially induced ideal and 'necessity' – however, not an achievable ideal – coming forward out of the need to have a meaningful life in a fragmented cultural world (van Harskamp 2000: 58-83; by which, by the way, the truth is underlined of what the German sociologist Ulrich Beck once brought forward: 'how one lives becomes the biographical solution of systemic contradictions'). Now then, if we accept that the generations of the late twentieth and beginning twenty-first centuries in the West actually are the first post-traditional generations, the generations which cannot build anymore on taken for granted authority which once was located in traditions, *we may hypothesize that new religiosity, especially in the form of New Age spiritualities, is fed on the feelings of insecurity and uncertainty.* These feelings are in the last resort induced by the social-cultural necessity *and* by the impossibility to achieve an authentic personal identity. Sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger indicates that this structural uncertainty and the feelings of insecurity, brought about by the mobility, reversibility and transferability of all traditional markers of personal identity, *facilitate* religiosity and practices of spirituality, just because believers may feel to be able to find an authentic personal identity by means of these religious practices (above all by unifying subjectively fragmented experiences) (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 164ff.). So we may say, according to i.a. Hervieu-Léger, that modernity produces the demise of old, 'churched' religion, but also facilitates the emergence of new forms of religiosity.

It's not surprising then that most new forms of religiosity are *in the first place* characterized by a strong orientation on the self which, by the way, does not mean that there is a narcissistic tendency in every form of new religiosity, for there are quite distinct ways in which the orientation on the self can be worked out in new spiritualities, ranging from the desire for

self-fulfilment to the desire for subsumption of the self in a religious community or for the submergence of the self in 'the divine' or in a spiritual energy, as for instance in the cultic milieu formed by the students of *A Course in Miracles*; cf. Puttlick 1997). *In the second place* these forms are characterized by religious and spiritual eclecticism and by epistemological individualism, which indicates that religious authority is internalized (Partridge 2004, 62ff.). Characteristic for all forms of new religiosity is *in the third place* an anti-institutional and anti-dogmatic affect; nearly every new-religious believer will say that religiosity or spirituality is in the first place personal experience, feeling and spiritual practice, not adherence to institutions or believing in doctrines.

Sure, there are many, many forms of new religiosity. In the New Age cultic milieu for instance – let's not think here of the new religiosity in the charismatic and neo-evangelical cultic milieus – these forms can stretch out from crystal healing to shamanism, from Kirlian photography to psychic art, from angels to past-life therapy, from new 'Atlantic' liturgies to plain magic practices, from Theosophy to UFO religion, from New Age music to the vegetarianism of Suma Ching Hai, from *A Course in Miracles* to 'Spiegelogie' (litterarily: Mirror-logic) etc. However, seen from a theoretical perspective we may distinguish two main categories of new religiosity and new spiritual practices. There are in the first place those forms of new religious practices in which one is geared to induce the self affirming experiences of sacredness, the source of which is located *outside* the individual self (in which, in other words, the ground of being of the self is considered to be lying outside the self); and at the other hand there are those practices and forms which come closer to the classical mystical spirituality – as once impressively described by Ernst Troeltsch – and which are geared to self affirming experiences of sacredness, the source of which one is to discover *within* oneself (cf. Ramstedt 2002, 4).

Be that as it may, it is still not quite clear in what ways new religiosity is a cultural 'instrument'

with which people try to achieve authenticity and to cope with – or simply calm down – feelings of insecurity. Yes, one can indicate in very broad terms why new religiosity may be one of those ‘instruments’. We may assume for instance that new religiosity and new spiritual practices are thriving relatively well right now, because in a religious and spiritual orientation one may expect to *receive* an authentic self (by ‘divine grace’ as ‘old’ believers could say). Besides that: in many forms of new religiosity one can find a special way of dealing with insecurity and to search for authenticity, viz. by spiritually going on a journey or a pilgrimage; these words, ‘journey’, ‘pilgrimage’, are after all metaphors for the search for an authentic personal identity in which feelings of insecurity are counterbalanced. Moreover, religiosity can promise that feelings of shame will be taken away when people feel that they don’t succeed in achieving an authentic personal identity (for religiousness protects for shame, as it once taught the believer to deal with feelings of guilt). And, probably the most important attraction of new religiosity in these days: it may provide believers with ultimate experiences (‘Erlebnisse’), experiences with which the believer can get the impression that the self, who in ‘secular’ circumstances is always estranged from itself, may feel liberated towards a full, authentic life (de Caeter 1995; Schulze 2000: 58ff.).

Religion-making characteristics

But let’s try to dig a little deeper. The just mentioned possible functions of religion for the individual believer, who tries to remove feelings of insecurity by searching for authenticity, are based on rather shallow insights. There have to be more ways to get some understanding for the general idea that the search for authenticity in our culture can be frustrated to such an extent, that the desire for religion grows, and that this desire manifests itself in religiosity and spiritual practices.

Now then, there are dimensions *of life* which at the same time determine the *limits of life*. They

are immanent in life and yet transcendent, because they cannot be influenced or pushed aside by us. We can try to ignore them, but in the last resort we shall be confronted with them. We may think of what is called by some philosophers of religion the religion-making characteristics of life. Here we think of those characteristics from which we surmise that they will be religion-productive, especially in a self-oriented culture. They are, and please, don’t be shocked: a) death, b) ennui (accidie) as one of the collective moods and sentiments (‘Stimmungen’) of post-modern time, c) evil, and d) the experience of time! In our post-modern times, in which at the one hand we are disciplined to be authentic creatures, built around a real self, beings who act with character, while at the other hand we’re also driven to the idea that our selves are more or less contingent social creations or even illusions, in such times feelings of real existential insecurity can occur, in the form even of the so-called free-floating existential ‘angst’ (Jaspers). The German theologian Pannenberg once indicated that it can be these kinds of confrontational experiences with the just mentioned dimensions of life, which people may bring towards religious ideas and practices (Pannenberg 1983: 86ff., 219ff.).

Before we embark on a very short examination of the four, just mentioned characteristics, we have to make a reservation: what follows are purely theoretical considerations, one even may say: speculative philosophical considerations. The whole argument until now – feelings of existential insecurity *facilitate* new religiosity – was already ‘hypothetical’ in the broad sense of the word. This judgment applies even more on the following arguments. That is to say: in the next arguments assumptions will be indicated, which can form some materials for making real verifiable or falsifiable hypotheses, hypotheses which may be used in setting up specific sociological and ethnographical research. It is after all tenable to say that hypotheses for specific sociological research have to be geared by theoretically and philosophically induced assumptions about social and cultural realities,

but also ... that empirical research has to falsify or verify these assumptions.

Death

The ultimate symbol for the angst inducing feeling that the self has no foundation, or even worse, that the idea of the self is an illusion, is death. The Dutch sociologist of culture Meerten ter Borg has a sharp eye for the almost ever subdued but real presence of death in our pre-conscious existence. According to him religions, as well as the great secular ideologies and a lot of other encompassing philosophies of life, are attempts to eliminate angst, or systems to cope with it. However, he also points at the paradoxical ways with which especially on the public level the media are dealing with manifestations of death. According to him it is quite clear that the interest in manifestations of death and dying is continuously aroused by the media. Death is mediagenic. We don't have to think of news reports and newsreels on television by which we are confronted on a daily basis with death in the form of collective catastrophes, no, we may think of very 'serious' programmes on TV. in which death is showed and in which is discussed how one has to deal with death and dying people. Ter Borg however draws attention to some cultural mechanisms by which the disquieting intuition that the life of the self has no foundation – that 'no-thing threatens continuously' – is repressed, precisely by the abundant attention for manifestations of death and dying (Ter Borg 1993, 1996). There is for instance the idea that most people are inclined to think that the time which is spent with TV, is not real life time, not time which has to do with each person's real life. Ter Borg comes close to the observations which the German sociologist of culture Dieter Prokop carried out in the seventies of the last century. Prokop argued that the fascination we display for death and dying on the screen, actually is a form of voyeurism. According to him the main function of this voyeuristic behaviour simply is to escape from the disturbing intuition of one's very own mortality (Prokop 1979). Even if we hold Prokop's view for too simple, with

Ter Borg we may accept that 'the screen' of our TV and PC (personal computer) effectuates a distance between what we think to experience of death and dying and that which affect our very own, so called real life. Besides that, Ter Borg accentuates that the death and the dying we think to see, is either the death of a unique, singular individual being or the massive death of many people. In both cases we are inclined to think that death does not really affect us. The representation of death of always 'others' and the possibly repressing function of our fascination for death point to the correct suspicion, that as far as death is concerned we think of ourselves as being 'outsiders'.

However, it's a simple truth that what is 'repressed', will come back in an unexpected way. The 'repression' of death by confrontation with only public images of death, does not work out well. And here lies the so to say 'chance for death' to become a religion-making characteristic, as Mellor and Shilling brought forward some time ago (Mellor and Shilling 1993, 1994). We have to realise that on the one hand death is for every human being a real certainty. We all know after all of our coming death. So we may say that the coming death will be our very *own* death. But at the other hand, death will always be strange for us, not ours, not '*own-ed*', not an occurrence which can be experienced. And as Emmanuel Levinas made clear: before we de cease, we simply are not able to go through the experience that death comes forward out of ourselves. According to this great philosopher death is on a pre-conscious level endured as coming from another – the Other? – side, something that worries me, and even something that terrifies me, that is to say: if I am really conscious, if I am not living in illusions (cf. Levinas 1993: 15f.). Now, it's this specific contradiction between what is my *own* in my coming death, and what is not '*own-ed*' at all, that can urge us towards a religious orientation in which this contradiction is removed, or in which this contradiction can be coped with. A Dutch philosopher of religion, Christa Anbeek, indicates that the religious belief in a divine transcendence provides for

the ability to reconcile our intuition of our coming death and the terrifying 'otherness' of death (Anbeek 1994: 246-260). Basically, religiosity produces an orientation of openness for a situation in which the angst for death can be overcome (Levinas 1993: 80).

What's important here, is that we may surmise that precisely in a self-oriented culture that the tension in the just mentioned contradiction between knowing of our 'own' death and the repression of death as our own, will be stronger than ever. Simply because in our self-oriented culture, the chance will be great, that we will be confronted with ourselves, and with our unavailing attempts to find an authentic personal identity. Which means that we may assume that the desire for a religious induced removal of this contradiction, will be very strong too. That's one reason why in a modern, self-oriented culture, religiosity is one of the favourite ways to deal with death.

Ennui

One of the most peculiar collective moods in our culture is ennui. Ennui – or *accidie* – is the 'metaphysical' version of plain boredom. It is a mood from which in the nineteenth century was thought that it had been driven away by modern life (Bellebaum 1990: 198). Philosophers like Heidegger and Adorno, however, stated that in the culture of a bourgeois world, in which 'all that is solid melts into air' and in which a logic of speed is the foundation of technology as well as the determining logic for our experiences ('*Erlebnisse*'), ennui has returned: it is the subdued, but nevertheless living collective mood in our culture. It is continuously threatening to determine our attitude towards our world (cf. Svendsen 2002: 33ff.). How can that be?

Heidegger brings forward that in a modern culture in which the search for authenticity is a central concern, and in which simultaneously reflexive doubts are inevitable, there must be a considerable risk that people don't feel that they succeed in expressing themselves in the world out there. One of the effects could be that

the world is not considered to be my '*Mit-Welt*', that my world is so to say not 'with me', but remains an '*Umwelt*', i.e. a basically 'strange' surrounding out there. And that consequence could lead to the feeling that my surrounding world with her infinite appearances of different happenings, things and persons, is not '*eigentlich für mich*'. Which can make the world for me in-different: things do not make any '*différence*' for me anymore. So it can become a world, which in the end does not matter for me. It is just that sort of feeling, the feeling that 'the world does not matter for me', which can form and shape a mood leading to ennui.

That mood of ennui does not as a matter of course give way to something like a collective 'departure out of the world' or to a concentration on the inner world (which could be a logical consequence when ennui is becoming the reigning mood). No, already Adorno and Benjamin have pointed out, that the '*Erlebnisgesellschaft*' (cf. Schulze 2000) actually is the most conspicuous consequence of modern ennui. It is a society in which a cult of the new is rampant, and which we are continuously looking for new experiences. Adorno and Benjamin also have pointed to the logic of the desire for each time new '*Erlebnisse*'. According to them, the cult of the new as well as the pressure towards each time new experiences, can be interpreted as a rebellion against a modern culture in which things have become in-different (cf. Adorno 1970: nrs. 316, 318). A variation on this idea, today brought forward by quite a lot of philosophers of culture, is that we may interpret the '*Erlebnisgesellschaft*' as a rebellion against a world which is 'McDonaldized', a world in which 'kicks' are activities to relieve the pain inflicted by living in an over-regulated, homogenous and boring world; cf. Drane 2000: 63-66).

What have these 'observations' to do with religiosity? Heidegger, him again, can put us on the track of religiosity. This questionable man, who however was a great philosopher,

considers the mood ('Grundstimmung') of ennui as a possible *passage* to a philosophical, eventually even religious orientation towards the world! According to him, there is a similarity between the structure of ennui and the religious relation between what is transcendent and what is immanent. This similarity has to do with the nature of ennui as being a 'Zwitterwesen' (a 'middle being'?). For at the one hand we endure ennui as something from which the source is laying outside us: ennui is happening *to* us. At the other hand ennui is so immediately related to the inner life of the human subject, that it can be experienced as a mood coming forward out of the very own subject itself: ennui is happening *in* us and is something *of* us. We may also say that the mood of ennui is so deep located in the human subject, that it is undergone at the same time as coming from a different 'out there'. Which is similar to a specific religious structure; we only have to think of Augustine's 'intimior intimo meo': God is so close in me that He is different from me.

When Heidegger goes on analyzing the mood of ennui, he suggests the presence of a tendency of enduring it, that is to say a tendency of 'listening towards' ('Zuhören) the power in ennui. This 'listening towards' ennui however, has to take place in order to overcome ennui, not by action, and not by having deep 'Erlebnisse', but by giving the world out there a new radiance, thanks to which the human subject can affirm life again: an indication of Heidegger's existential 'Lebensphilosophie'. By that suggestion Heidegger actually comes close to the presentation of a religious orientation.

Let's think here for a moment again of what Adorno and others assumed about the rebellion against a deeply boring (today = McDonaldized) society, coming forward out of that very same deep boredom, i.e. ennui. We can get some understanding then for the possibility that just out of the immersion into the ennui of our 'boring world', a desire for religious enchantment of the world can grow! Sociologist George Ritzer, coiner of the

concept 'The McDonaldization of Society', has often stated that the rationalized systems which are creating McDonaldized effects, are leading in various ways to a disenchantment of the world. But he also pointed to the social fact that these systems paradoxically and simultaneously serve to create their own kinds of enchantment (Ritzer 2002: 169ff.). Well then, we may consider new religiosities as forms in which the tendency towards enchantment in our McDonaldized world is enhanced and even intensified. How can that be? In order to get some understanding, we have to realise that one of the 'effects' of religion is that it really can give radiance to the world. It enchants the world; it can do that, because the transcendent source of creation of all things in the world lends these things something of its own radiance. Which has as a side effect that all material and immaterial things, people, events and happenings, get something 'special' in the eye of the religious beholder. And above all: things are going to differentiate again: 'différence' is instantiated again.. That's the main ground for assuming that going through the ennui of our 'boring' McDonaldized world, facilitates the emergence of new religiosity: it gives 'différence' and liberates us from ennui

Evil

And now: evil. However, let's stop right now! Is it not complete nonsense to state that evil can be a religion-making characteristic, especially when we think of the excessive evil of last century? Even if one manages *not* to use the word 'evil' at all – one can consider it as being a too vague or a too much 'metaphysical' concept, or even worse, as a 'theological' concept (van Harskamp 2006) – is not the suffering inflicted by human beings on other human beings the rock on which atheism is built, 'der Fels des Atheismus', as Georg Büchner indicated already in 1835 in *Dantons Tod*? And is it not plausible to assume that the evil of the holocaust was one of the causes of a decline of belief in a loving and powerful God? (Marquardt 1988: 53-147; van Harskamp 1995).

And yet, it has some plausibility too when we assume that just because the repertoire of evil has never been so rich in our time, the need for religiosity inclines! Let's not think here of those theologians and church leaders – like the late pope John Paul II – who have brought forward the idea that just because modern people should have lost their ability to identify evil, we modern people are left in some kind of moral dumbness. Those theologians and church leaders can make use of what Andrew Delbanco, Professor of the Humanities at Columbia University, stated in his *The Death of Satan: How Americans Have Lost the Sense of Evil* (1995). Delbanco argues that one of the consequences of the disappearance of the devil, is that we have no means anymore for identifying evil. We even are afraid of using the word 'evil'. Delbanco's favourite quotation for pointing to our fear for the word 'evil' is from *The Silence of the Lambs*, where Hannibal Lecter says: 'Look at me, Officer Starling, Can't you stand to say I'm evil?' And Delbanco suggests that our culture has to be infused with forms, symbols, signs and images which can help us in restoring our abilities to demonstrate that *this* person or *that* act is evil, while other persons and acts are not. Delbanco's suggestion is grist to the mill of the just mentioned theologians and church leaders. They claim that Christianity has delivered, and will deliver again, those forms, symbols signs and images with which our culture could evade moral dumbness. According to them Christianity is the precondition for morality. However, as said already, we don't think here in line of this arguments of theologians and church leaders, and we don't agree with them, if only because the argumentation comes down to a purely normative statement: Christianity must return.

Our presumption here is that the experience of evil in our risk society is an experience which can disturb the feeling of human, personal identity. And it is in particular a religious answer to evil that can restore and affirm the feeling of personal identity. That's the main reason why we may presume that evil is a religion-making characteristic. Let's try to elucidate this presumption.

Let's keep our theory simple and say that personal identity comes down to the feeling of a person that he or she remains the same person while travelling through time and living in different contexts and on different levels of existence. In order to understand how a person manages to maintain that feeling, we may make use of the image of the self as 'an energetic field'. In that field a presupposed entity, the human subject, is continuously busy in 'identificating' the self, by appropriating features from the different social and cultural contexts and levels of existence and trying to integrate them into a unique identity. The movements in that energetic field are directed to a unity of the self.

Now it may be clear that 'having' ('possessing') a personal identity in our time is a mixed blessing. Not only because in our liquid times, where the free-floating, unencumbered individual is the popular hero, being 'identified' as a fixed person increasingly gets a bad press. No, 'getting' an identity, that is identifying oneself with ... (= appropriating features from the contexts and levels in order to construct an identity) inevitably means giving hostage oneself to an unknown fate which one cannot influence, let alone control. In modern times there isn't a possibility for of a controlled construction of a personal identity (Bauman 2004: 29ff.).

Why is that? Because we're living in a risk-society. The meaning of living in a risk-society is not only the simple idea that collective, human efforts can create new kinds of risks. The meaning of living in a risk-society *for the construction of a personal identity* is above all the feeling that everybody can be encapsulated in the processes of making risks. And when we transpose the word *effect* into one, simple, classical word, then we may also say: *evil*. For the effect of modern risks and evil have a similarity: both can be seen as being processes which are ultimately mysterious processes, because on the one hand they are coming over us, are happening *to us*, while on the other hand they can be considered as forming a negative

quality of human actions, they are happening so to say *out of us*.

With the German theologian Neuhaus we may suggest now, that trying to construct a personal identity in a risk-society, also implies the intuition that everybody can potentially be subject in the process of making risks, that is in doing evil (Neuhaus 1994: 318)! And precisely that intuition induces uncertainty and feelings of insecurity. That's why that intuition may be considered to be very 'risky' for the process of identification. The awareness of being related to evil is devastating for the construction of a personal identity.

So, modern people have to deal with the problem that they might be related to evil. One of the old and still existing solutions is: religiosity. For religiosity almost ever gives the instruments to deal with evil. Religiosity gives evil for instance a function (as an action of God, or as a lesson), or it gives evil a place in a dualistic system which takes the disturbing character of evil away, or ... it 'thinks evil away', as is often happening in those new forms of religiosity which declare evil to be a Gnostic illusion. One even has not necessarily to be a real believer in many forms of new religiosity, not someone who thinks that religious practices have to be directed towards the really existing divine or the sacred. The German philosopher Rüdiger Safranski writes at the end of his book on evil, that against the evil in which we are yet in strange ways encapsulated – for we all now that evil is not a product of the devil, but of human actions – we are *obliged* to live and to think *as if* there is a God who shall make all things better: we must live *as if* we are religious (Safranski 1997: 328ff.)! According to him we are *obliged* to do that, *obliged* to have trust in the life we're living, in order to be able to have faith in ourselves, and in order to create spaces for 'the good life'. So, the religiosity we're speaking about may be a pragma-religiosity, a form of religiosity which is directed at maintaining the self. It can be no 'coincidence' that numerous forms of new of religiosity are pragmatically oriented 'self-spiritualities', forms in which

not the question of truth is at stake, but only the question: are my religious practices helping my very own self in getting healed, finding my authentic self, freeing myself from estrangement, elevating myself to a higher self etc.

So, we may conclude now, that after a time when evil was a pledge against religion, it is quite well possible that in the contemporary self-oriented culture the manifestations and experiences of evil are 'productive' of religiosity again.

Time

From way back time was a religion-making characteristic. That is to say, it was a religion-making characteristic before modern times, when time was represented as a circle-like movement and when the experience of time referred to an 'eternal time' (Luhmann 1997: 997ff.). When, however, the ages became 'modern', time became a linear movement. The past was thought for ever gone, while the present should have been only a relatively short duration, pointing to an always open future. This development towards a linear presentation of the course of time was accompanied in the age of the Enlightenment by the idea that the time of history was a course which could be steered by human efforts. Which indicated that time and history were getting detached from God (cf. Koselleck 1979: 60ff.). The experience of time had almost nothing to do anymore with religion.

It has some 'logic' to assume that when time was not represented like a circle, but like a linear movement, the experience that time continuously passes by, should have caused some 'existential' problems for 'modern man'. However, originally these problems did not really occur, that is to say, not in the eighteenth, neither in the nineteenth century, when belief in progress of time and history was widespread. The secular belief in progress of time and history can probably be interpreted as a substitute for religious faith: they both helped in coping with problems with time. The belief

in progress apparently created the comforting feeling, not only that the world will be a better place, but also that 'living through time' has a positive meaning.

Today hardly anybody believes in progress of time and history. Besides that, linear time as a dimension of that belief is no longer characteristic for the contemporary experiences of time, as for instance Thomas Eriksen has indicated (Eriksen 2001: 66ff.). Today, living in a culture in which speed (of transport and information) is a value which determines our experiences of time, time is so to say stripped of duration, and compressed into a series of moments of which every moment is only present in function of what has immediately to be achieved by us (Eriksen 2001: 148ff.). This experience actually is an experience of a continuously accelerating time.

Many authors, however, have pointed out, that the experience of a continuous acceleration of time is going together with uncertainty and feelings of existential insecurity. It's our contention here, that when time is experienced as continuously accelerating, we may assume that time has become *again* a religion-making characteristic, simply because religiosity happens to be one of the possible ways in which uncertainties and these feelings of existential insecurity induced by time, can be coped with.

In order to get some intuition of the effects of religiosity in experiencing time in these days, we're going to spend some words – for the last time! – on Heidegger's thoughts about time.

It's no coincidence that many post-modern authors refer to Heidegger. Why is that? One of the main reasons must be that Heidegger's philosophy of time may be interpreted as an attempt to destroy a way of thinking about the human person as a being who is so to say organized around an essentially timeless and even 'worldless' nucleus (Kerr 1997: 46f.). According to Heidegger, even the 'bourgeois' way of thinking about the human person, a way of thinking which does not reckon with a soul or a ghost in an embodied machine, had

fallen prey to the idea that somewhere deep down there in every human being, there is a timeless and worldless entity.

When we dare to bring back Heidegger's philosophy of time towards a 'message', we may say that this philosophy actually is some kind of appeal, namely that we have to accept that time and not to forget, death, are the ultimate realities that we have to assent to. His 'message' is that we have to affirm time as a reality which is, on the one hand, stretched out and oriented at death and, on the other, is made possible by death (van Sluis 1997: 40). According to Heidegger, we are only able to have an authentic life if we affirm time. Living that kind of authentic life, is according to him a real challenge (we can feel the definitely dubious sides in this way of thinking). Heidegger however, also indicates that in modern times most people don't succeed in getting an authentic life. According to him there are a lot of ways to evade the challenge which is formed by the affirmation of and the assent to a real, 'timely' life. For people may escape from time (and the consciousness of death) for instance in the diversions offered by the entertainment industry. Or they fall prey to 'Das Gerede' (Chatter), which, according to Heidegger, is the most occurring cultural mechanism to evade leading a real and authentic life!

We've spent some words on Heidegger in order to stress the most incisive criticism of his way of thinking about the meaning of time, the criticism brought forward by Emmanuel Levinas (Levinas 1993). Levinas not only pointed at the unmistakably dubious character of a philosophy which stresses the affirmation of life (and death), he also pointed at the highly 'modern' and 'individualistic' view on human existence in Heidegger's thought. According to him Heidegger's philosophy may be seen as an expression of the view that every man lives for his own, not really related to others. But above all, Levinas brought forward that it is impossible to consider the accelerating passing of time as something that can be affirmed. He points to the meaning 'for me' and for my way

of living the lifetime (and the death) of other people. In the end Levinas is making clear that 'Otherness' – of the face of another man or woman – is a precondition for my way of dealing with time.

In a certain way the criticism of Levinas leads to the idea that religiosity can be a way of dealing with the pressures of time, especially with the feeling that the duration of time is vanishing in our days. For religiosity, which is another word for the orientation on Otherness, gives us so to say time. Another author, sociologist Richard Fenn, also brought forward that one of the main effects of religiosity, especially of religious practices like rituals, is that they grant time to us. In a ritual, states Fenn, time is bought for those who participate in that ritual; we know after participation in a ritual that we have time again, especially in a culture in which day in day out we have the feeling that we're busy losing time (cf. Fenn 1997).

These are indications, given in a very indirect way by Levinas and Fenn, that in an age in which the acceleration of time induces the loss of time, and induces uncertainty and feelings of insecurity, religiosity can be a way to cope with it. So we may surmise that this is probably one of the reasons why religiosity still plays a role for many people.

Conclusion

Time for a conclusion? Despite the abstractness and complexity of the just given arguments, despite the highly speculative and philosophical character of the last paragraphs, the conclusion may be very short:

The question what the fate of religion is in the West, is still not answered. Yet there are indications that in specific cultic milieus new forms of religiosity and new spiritualities are thriving. At least we can say that secularization apparently co-exists with religion (i.e.: religiosity). A next question is: what makes new religiosity and new spiritualities thriving? A plausible answer is: the uncertainties and existential insecurities concerning the self;

religiosity delivers 'instruments' in dealing with these uncertainties and existential insecurities, it promises that authenticity can be found. This is *even* the case, or we're entitled to say, this is *above all* the case among the wealthy and the well-educated in Western countries. And the last question is: but in what ways are those uncertainties and existential insecurities 'producing' new forms of religiosity? The answer is that in a time where individualization is rampant, we may surmise – we really don't know for sure – that the characteristics of human existence which were in the old days 'responsible' for religion, are doing their work again. We may assume that in an individualizing culture the pressures which come with the cultural 'facts' of death, ennui, evil and time, are making religiosity one of the ways along which individuals hope to cope with this pressures.

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Subud-A Practical Mystical Path for the 21st Century

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Abstract

Founded in Indonesia in the 1930s, Subud is a practical mystical path now followed in 90 countries by people of diverse faiths or none. Since Subud makes no use of propaganda or proselytizing, it is still largely unknown despite the fact that one can practice it while living an ordinary life in this world, the contact is easily obtained for free, one can do it alone or in a group, and there is no special study or asceticism required. In this essay a retired American university professor and dean, a 49-year Subud member, introduces the practice and its founder, Muhammad Subuh (d. 1987), and discusses why Subud might be a boon to humankind in the 21st Century and beyond.

Introduction

Putting the terms *practical* and *mystical* side by side poses a paradox. For mysticism, often seen as voyaging in the never-never land of the Spirit, is usually considered anything but practical. A Western person may think of the

Desert Fathers, mystics in the early centuries of Christianity, living in caves, fasting and vigiling for months, to gain some sort of spiritual union with God. There appears to be nothing practical or ordinary about these spiritual acrobats who have separated themselves from the everyday society of householders toiling away to make ends meet and raise and educate their children. The Desert Fathers and others of their ilk, East or West, were and are the Olympians of the inner life. What do they have to say to or do with the rest of us ordinary people in the technologically rich, material-oriented, and increasingly secular 21st Century?

Well, to begin with, the 21st Century, despite the worldwide increase in material and even political well-being, is a century in crisis. Increasing wealth does not bring happiness. Toiling away for material goods alone does not bring fulfillment. Even democratic governance is not a cure-all for hunger,

poverty, or disease. Wars meantime have become more dangerous and frequent. Our material lifestyle is depleting the resources of the earth and polluting the water and the sky at a frightening rate. Deforestation reduces oxygen, erodes soil, and increases the proportion of desert to arable land. Our global insistence on living beyond our planetary means is leading us on a one-way journey to disaster. What to do?

The answer has been ever-present in what the English novelist and philosopher Aldous Huxley (1894-1963) has called the Perennial Philosophy.¹ All religious traditions per Huxley have always contained both exoteric and esoteric, outer and inner, dimensions. While the outer elements differentiate one faith from another and frequently cause believers to think in terms of us versus them, the inner traditions are all based on the idea that every human being must ultimately achieve an integration of the individual self with the Universal Self, referred to in Hinduism as the merging of Atman with Brahman. This integration in the Western spiritual tradition is known as the *unio mystica*, or Mystical Union. And the pathway to that goal is not conventional religious belief, attendance at worship, or even adherence to a religiously sanctioned code of ethics, but *sadhana*, or spiritual practice. Here it is worth noting that the word *practice* is intimately related to the concept of practicality. The assumption is if individuals can truly achieve this union, they will attain a noble character and will be guided to live in harmony with themselves, others, the planet, and the cosmos as a whole.

Mysticism is practical in another sense too. Mao Zedong once said that human beings must walk on two legs. By that he apparently meant the leg of politics and the leg of economics. I prefer to think we human beings, creatures of spirit and matter, need to walk on both our material and spiritual legs. In the common stereotype, the West is thought

of as secular and materialistic, while the East is considered spiritual and other-worldly. To the extent that individuals and even cultures emphasize one of these poles or the other, it could be argued they hop on only one leg, the material or the spiritual. Consider that lands like India, China, and Indonesia, all homes to spiritually based cultures and thousands of spiritual paths, are now rapidly adopting materialist values and practices while the West itself perseveres in its dedication to the Almighty Dollar and the Bottomline. Time is everywhere becoming money. And money, in addition to being a medium of exchange, has become ever more the real god idolized by billions of adherents, East and West, despite people's official religious affiliations. As a result of this misguided materialism, the world faces imminent destruction.

Human beings are not meant to hop on one leg but to walk on two. It's all a matter of balance. Practically speaking, however, it is not possible for a 21st-Century citizen to desert his or her family, seek out some remote place or *ashram*, and be concerned only with personal spiritual development, even in an effort to restore the balance of the material and the spiritual. There needs to be a way of staying in the world, attending to one's worldly obligations, and yet, at the same time, finding a method to train and be trained by the spirit. In the rest of this essay, I will describe just such a way that I was fortunate enough to find in 1961 as a 21-year-old recent literature graduate from Yale University. I say "fortunate" not just because this practice has helped me develop and strengthen my spiritual life while having a successful academic career and family life, but because it (Subud) does not advertise itself and is virtually unknown.

Originating in Indonesia in the 1930s, Subud, the name, is an acronym based on three Sanskrit words—*susila* (SU), *budhi* (BU), and *dharma* (D). The founder, a Javanese named Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo (1901-

¹ See Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1945, or more recent editions.

1987), a Muslim like most Indonesians, defined *susila* as “right living,” *budhi* as “one’s highest self,” and *dharma* as “the path of surrender.” Taken together, the words mean that by practicing the surrender of one’s everyday self, or personality, to one’s highest and best self, or essence, one will eventually be able to live the noble life of a true and fully developed human being. In this context, Subud is a spiritual practice transcending individual faiths yet accessible to everyone. It enables participants to integrate the best aspects of themselves into everyday life while deepening their understanding of the principles and beliefs of their respective religious or ethical traditions. As individuals develop through the Subud practice, they spontaneously come to realize that Earth and all its precious cargo, including the entire human family, are intimately related and therefore deserving of continuing attention, mutual assistance, and caring concern. Hence the World Subud Association has organized affiliates that pool the talents and energies of its international membership to work individually or with other like-minded persons or organizations in pursuing a sustainable world characterized by compassion, wisdom, and ongoing life-friendly development.

Examples include Susila Dharma International, or SDI (www.susiladharma.org), which helps national member organizations support social-service, human-welfare, and educational projects in their countries; Subud International Cultural Association, or SICA (www.subud-sica.org), which furthers the work of artists, writers, actors, musicians, singers, dancers, and artisans in Subud; Subud Enterprise Services, or SES (www.ses-britain.org/new-website or www.subudusa.org/ses.php), which encourages entrepreneurs in Subud to create human enterprises that are win/win/win for the owners, workers, and consuming public; the Subud International Health Association, or SIHA (www.subudhealth.org),

which brings together physicians, surgeons, nurses, physical and massage therapists, psychotherapists, and other health professionals in Subud for mutual learning and support; and the Subud Youth Association, or SYA (www.youth.subud.org.uk), which reaches out to both Subud youth and their non-Subud friends and provides activities of interest to teens and young adults. In addition, a related charitable organization, the Guerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace, Brighton, England, and Paris, France (www.ghfp.org), funds positive educational, social, and interfaith projects both in Subud and out. An example is the Varindra T. Vittachi Education for a Human Future conference series. Thus far three international meetings including upwards of 500 educators and students have been held honoring the late Dr. Vittachi (d. 1993), a Sri Lankan native, vice executive director of UNICEF, and long-time chair of the World Subud Association: The first in Jakarta, Indonesia (2001), the second in Crestone, Colorado, USA (2003), and the third in Ifrane, Morocco (2006). Currently (June 2010) the Foundation is hosting a planning meeting in its Brighton headquarters of an international team of Subud professionals to develop a World Subud Association Forum, a vehicle to bring together expertise from the Association with world experts on the major challenges now facing the world, from planetary sustainability to prejudices of all kinds to issues of justice, effective governance, social egalitarianism, affordable and effective universal healthcare and welfare policies, and balanced human development including what we are calling “human education.”

To give you a more concrete idea of what the Subud practice is and how it works, I shall now draw on a description of my initiation, or Opening, as we call it, originally published in my spiritual autobiography.² I shall then share selected examples of my spiritual experiences over the last 49 years to show how this

2 Reynold Ruslan Feldman, *Stories I Remember—My Pilgrimage to Wisdom: A Spiritual Autobiography*. Honolulu, Hawaii: Wisdom Foundation Publishing, 2009.

particular form of practical mysticism works. Finally, I shall conclude by offering some thoughts on how and why Subud might serve as a way for both personal spiritual growth and global transformation in this exciting yet critically challenged and challenging 21st Century.

My Opening

May 22nd, 1961. Chicago. I arrived a little earlier than usual so that the men helpers could sit with me and I could become quiet before my opening. Like others before me, I was feeling a certain performance anxiety. Would I get it? What would happen if I didn't? Was the latihan, the Subud spiritual exercise, really from God? I felt it was, but was it really? Stuart told me that everything would be fine and that I should just relax and prepare for whatever God had in mind for me. All I had to do when I got into the exercise room was stand there and wait. "Waiting for Godot" was the phrase that went through my nervous English-major mind.

We walked into a large room, perhaps 15 by 6 meters. Chairs were arranged around the sides, leaving a large, empty space in the middle. There were perhaps 20 men standing around, waiting for things to begin. The three Chicago men helpers—Harrington, Lee, and Stuart—stood in front of me, while the other men had deployed themselves around the room. Everyone, including me, had taken off our glasses and watches and put these along with our wallets and loose change in our shoes, which we placed under the chairs lining the four walls. Then we all stood at ease, although I'll admit I felt the way I always had in boarding school just before beginning a 100-yard butterfly race in a swimming competition. The butterflies were in my stomach, now as then.

Harrington began to say the four or five sentences of Bapak's Opening Words: "We are helpers in the Spiritual Brotherhood [now "Association"] of Subud and are here to witness your wish to worship the One Almighty God.

We hope that your wish is truly based on sincerity. As you know, God is almighty, all-present, and all-knowing. Therefore it will not be right for you to concentrate your thoughts, self-will or desires but you should simply relax your thoughts and surrender everything to the Greatness of Almighty God. So that you will not be disturbed by the exercises of others, we ask that you close your eyes, stand quite at ease, and have no worries. Begin."

As Harrington slowly spoke these words, I felt myself relax. At first, maybe for four or five minutes, I simply stood there. Nothing appeared to be happening. No movement, in contrast to the prior Friday outside the room. I was simply aware that others in the room, including the helpers, were going about their business of walking, singing, invoking God's name, whatever. By this point I began to think nothing like that would happen to me. Then, as in a fairy tale, no sooner had that thought crossed my mind when I "saw" within me that someone was standing behind me with a gun pointed at the back of my head. "Nein! Nein! Warum?!" I said out loud in German. "No! No! Why?!" Then I "died."

Being killed happened so fast that I didn't feel anything. I sang a high note that went down to the lowest note in my register. Then I dropped to the carpeted floor and lay on my back. Being "dead" was fantastic. I have never, before or since, felt so peaceful or quietly happy. Then after perhaps ten minutes, a voice inside my head said, "Now you have to be born again." I objected. "No. It's much better here. Why must I go down there again?" But the voice insisted. So I stood up and starting dancing all over the room. I felt happy now. Then in my mind I saw a slowly turning globe. First I noticed Russia and said the Hebrew word *Adonai*, Lord, with what struck me as a Russian accent. Then I saw Germany and said *Adonai* in a more German way. Finally, I noticed that I was now looking at New York City, where I had been born in this life. As I started to feel myself being drawn down, I said *Adonai* one more time with an American

accent. Immediately thereafter, Harrington said “Finish,” and everyone including me moved to the chairs where our shoes were placed and sat quietly for five or ten minutes. After that, the helpers and most of the other members came up and hugged me. “Welcome to Subud,” Harrington said. “You’re a Subud member now.” And with an echo of the Catholic priest he once had been, he added, “May God bless you.”

When I left the latihan room and walked into the waiting room, a girl my age, Trudy, a fellow probationer who would be opened a few weeks later, gave me a questioning look. “So how was it, Steve [my name then]?” “Unbelievable,” I answered. But what had struck me were her eyes. Unlike those of the Subud members, which appeared clear and deep, hers seemed muddy, as if a thin film were covering and somehow obscuring them. Then, the Biblical line crossed my mind, “And the scales fell from their eyes and they could see clearly.” For whatever reason, I had never understood that line. I kept thinking that the *scales* were miniature weighing balances and couldn’t figure how they could get into anyone’s eyes. But now it struck me in a flash—as many other things would over the course of my nearly 50 years in Subud—that these were fish scales. Some of Jesus’ disciplines had been fishermen. A fish scale over the pupil would mimic a cataract, being translucent but not transparent. With such scales obscuring one’s vision, one would see human beings as “trees walking” and reality, in the words of the King James translation, “as through a glass darkly.” Now the scales had fallen from my eyes. In the well-known words of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” I “. . . was blind but now could see.” It was a new beginning, a brand new birth. From now on, my inner life would take on an entirely different meaning and direction. I was now opened.³

Historical Background

Subud, as mentioned earlier, was started by an Indonesian named Muhammad Subuh Sumohadiwidjojo. Bapak (“Father”), as he was called by his followers, was born in Central Java, volcanically fertile ground for mystical practices of all kinds, on June 22, 1901. Although descended from the sultan (Susuhunan) of Surakarta (also called Solo), his family was not wealthy. His father was a lower official for the Dutch Colonial Rail System; his mother, a housewife who went on to have a number of children.

When Bapak was born, his parents—actually his grandfather—named him Soekarno. Ironically, he was born a few weeks after and not far from the birthplace of his namesake, the future co-founder and president of Indonesia. In later years, he was in fact often mistaken for the president, even by Indonesians, because of their unusual height for Malays and a striking facial resemblance. But he did not keep the name. Within a few weeks, the baby fell ill. A wondering Arab, dressed in black, stopped by the house one day and warned that unless the child’s name were changed, it would die, since the name was dangerously incorrect. The Arab then recommended the name “Muhammad Subuh.” Muhammad was of course the name given many male children throughout the Muslim world. As for Subuh, it was the Indonesianized form of the Arabic *subh*, the Islamic pre-dawn prayer and standard Arabic for “morning.”

Once his name was changed, Subuh, as he was subsequently called, grew strong. He also turned out to be very intuitive. For instance, when his parents took him as a boy to weddings, he would comment in a loud voice if he felt the bride and groom were incompatible. Since he generally proved

³ “Opening” is a literal translation of the Indonesian *pembukaan*. Frankly, I was not crazy about the term when I first heard it. In graduate school, the year following my opening, I learned that George Fox, founder of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), referred to all his spiritual insights as openings. Frequently he would say, “The Lord opened it to me. . . .” Later, I found out that the introduction to the Qu’ran is called the *Fatihah*, Arabic for “opening.” A common Arabic prayer is *Yah Fatah*, in which one praises Allah as the One Who opens the way and takes away all obstacles blocking one’s progress.

correct, his parents stopped taking him to these occasions. It was just too embarrassing for all concerned. Also, the boy seemed unable to lie and became incensed when others did. Moreover, as a strong, tall child, he would take it on himself to defend smaller children from schoolyard bullies.

The itinerant Arab, who was never seen in the village again, had also predicted that Subuh might die at age 24—something his parents felt duty-bound to tell him so that he could take whatever steps necessary to become physically and mental strong or, as a good Muslim, to prepare himself internally to accept God's will, even if that meant an early death.

As a teenager, Bapak lived in a nearby city with his uncle so he could attend the Dutch-language high school. Fluency in Dutch was a precondition for natives to get any of the white-collar positions that were starting to be available to them in the early 20th Century. Through family connections, Bapak got a job with the regional railway while studying at night to become an accountant. As the story goes, one evening in his 24th year, Bapak finished his homework late and took his usual walk to clear his head before retiring. It was a cloudless, moon-free night as he passed the site of a new hospital under construction near his house. At that moment, he said, it was as if a bright light or ball of fire dropped from the sky and entered his head. (Later I was to learn that the Christian saint Hildegard of Bingen had had a similar experience as did John Travolta's character in the movie *Phenomenon*.) He started shaking and got home as quick as he could. As he explained, he thought he was dying. He knocked on the door, which his mother opened. "What's wrong, son?" She asked. "You look terrible." "Nothing," he replied, and went upstairs to his room, where he laid himself out on his bed, said his prayers, and prepared to die.

What happened instead was that he saw his hands as if with x-ray vision. Then he felt

moved to get up and do his regular Muslim prayers. For the next three years, various automatic exercises, not just traditional prayers, came to him and sometimes went on all night. Not only was he moved to walk and dance, but he also sang songs he'd never heard before and did a variety of spontaneous martial-arts-type exercises. Surprisingly, Bapak didn't feel especially tired in the morning and was able to do his work as usual and even got a promotion.

He was also shown a variety of things during these long nights. Once a large folio book with blank pages dropped onto his table. Whenever a question occurred to him, the answer would appear spontaneously in a kind of video format on one of the pages. He was also shown "videos" sometimes without asking a question. For instance, he saw in the late 1920s how in future the Japanese would occupy his country, drive out the Dutch colonists, and eventually leave themselves, after which Indonesia would be free. He also saw how he would travel the world one day and find himself in the midst of people of different races, religions, and nations, all of whom were worshipping God together.

Eventually, the book disappeared into his chest, and from then on he could ask questions and receive the moving-picture answers inside his mind. Finally, at the end of this three-year process, an Arab-appearing man showed up one night in his room and thrust a dagger into Bapak's chest. Bapak felt the pain yet miraculously was not wounded, let alone killed. As the man withdrew the dagger, Bapak noticed a clot of blood on the tip. The man spoke in Arabic, which Bapak could recognize from having memorized portions of the Qu'ran as a boy. Surprising, Bapak could also understand the gist of what he was saying, that the blood on the dagger represented the last of his impurities that needed to be purged before Bapak could begin his mission. For anyone familiar with the life of the Prophet Muhammad, a similar thing happened to him at the hands of an archangel.

But what was that mission? The man had only told Bapak that he would know when the time came. Meantime, he was not to go anywhere nor speak to anyone about what he had received until he was specifically asked. Bapak was puzzled. He had nevertheless experienced so many unusual things by that point that he felt confidence in what the man had said. As a young man, Bapak had consulted various well-known gurus and spiritual guides then active in Central Java. They invariably told him that they could not help him with his inner development and that, when the time came, he would be guided directly from above.

Not long after the Arab with the dagger had appeared to Bapak, two young men showed up at his door. They had been sent by their master, they said, to receive some kind of spiritual contact from him. They became the first Subud members, although at that time Bapak's spiritual exercises had not yet been named.

At first his exercises, eventually called the *Latihan Kejiwaan*, Indonesian for "spiritual training," spread slowly to spiritual seekers in central Java, including members of Bapak's family. It wasn't till 1951, when Bapak was living in Jogjakarta, the revolutionary capital of Indonesia, that an English Muslim named Husein Rofé (died in February, 2008), who was teaching English to officials of the first Indonesian government, heard about Bapak, met him, and was opened. Actually, as the story goes, Bapak had predicted to his followers that a foreigner with roots in Syria who spoke many languages would join the spiritual exercises one day and become the vehicle for taking them out of Java and eventually to the West. Rofé's father was in fact a Syrian Jew who had been raised in Egypt and then moved to Manchester, England, where he ran a profitable textile import/export business. Husein himself had studied Near Eastern

languages in London and proved so talented that the British wartime military had recruited him and quickly taught him Japanese so that he could monitor enemy shortwave broadcasts. By the time he reached the newly formed Republic of Indonesia, he had taught English in a number of countries and already understood, spoke, read, and wrote more than 20 languages.⁴

Since it was not possible in the early 50s for Bapak to travel in Indonesia, let alone overseas, he authorized Rofé to go first to Sumatra, then Hong Kong, Japan, and Cyprus, in all of which places he started groups. Finally, in 1956, he traveled to England, where he opened John Bennett, a physicist who was also a leader of the Gurdjieff Work in the U.K. In 1957, Bennett and some of his wealthy associates raised funds for Bapak, his wife Siti Sumari, and two spiritual assistants called "helpers" to travel to England, where they stayed for eight months. Hundreds of people, including Gurdjieff members from the Continent as well as the U.K., were opened during that visit. There was even a miraculous healing of the Hungarian movie actress Eva Bartok which the European tabloid press was quick to pick up. This notoriety brought many more people to Combe Springs, Bennett's Gurdjieff school in the countryside outside London. Some of these also joined what by then was called Subud. After, Bapak was invited to go home by way of a half dozen countries, where he and his party opened many more people. He also gave explanations about the aim, nature, and potential results of following the Subud spiritual exercise, especially if one followed them consistently over time.

Basically, one would do the exercise twice weekly—men with men, women with women—for approximately thirty minutes. Then, one simply lived his or her regular life. There was no requirement to do anything special. Over time, the "latihan" would purify

⁴ When Rofé moved to Hawaii in the late 1990s, he told me the number now stood at an even 70, and he was currently working on Tibetan and Georgian. He died in winter 2008.

the practitioner so that the individual's life would become peaceful, harmonious, and focused on drawing on his or her true talents to support him- or herself and family and to contribute to the needs of others and the world. Still, as with anything else, a person had to stick with the process for a while to see the benefits. Why do men and women do the Subud exercise separately? For one thing, so that people can receive honestly and not edit their receiving to impress the opposite sex. Also, Bapak explained how the vibrations of men and women differ, and that men might "drown out" the receiving of women. A third reason is that because individuals are very open and relaxed while doing the spiritual exercise, there might be sexual attraction between certain men and women, and that would not be appropriate to the Subud exercise.

When Subud first came to England, Bapak permitted interested people to be opened on the spot. After six months or so, he thought better of it and decided it would be preferable for "probationers," as they were then called, to wait three months while deciding whether or not they really wished to join Subud. Although the exercises are simple—you just do whatever you feel moved to do for a half hour—the process could occasionally lead to "heavy purification." Bapak explained that if people waited three months before being opened, they would be more likely to persevere if the going got rough until they could break through to a better place in themselves.

My First Meeting with Bapak

When I entered the old loft building on East 21st Street in New York City's Gramercy Park District that summer of 1963, hundreds of people had already taken their places on the uncomfortable wooden folding chairs that had been lined up auditorium style. I managed to find one about halfway to the front. Before long, we all stood up as Bapak and party made their way to their places. Bapak, wearing the typical black Indonesian fez

(called a *peci*, pronounced "petchy") and his hatless interpreter, Muhammad Usman, took their seats on the dais. The rest of the party, consisting of Bapak's wife, Siti Sumari, and Bapak's eldest daughter by his first marriage (His first wife had died.), Siti Rahayu, took their places in the front row.

As all this was taking place, a voice inside my head said, "Your prayer has been answered." "What prayer?" I thought. As far as I knew, I was totally blank. I hadn't been praying at all. Then it struck me. Back at boarding school, I remembered how disappointed I had been to be living in a world filled with technological wonders but seemingly devoid of people like Jesus. I remember thinking that if I had been given the chance back then, I would have surely followed him and not doubted. What a shame that there was no chance now! But maybe there was after all. Maybe my prayer *had* been answered.

That evening Bapak did the three things he usually did, as I later learned, when he visited Subud members around the world. He gave a talk. He did some public testing with groups of women and men. And he did latihan with the men, while his wife and daughter joined in the women's latihan. During the talk he explained the fundamentals of the latihan and clarified how, if we practiced it regularly—two or three times a week for a half hour—our souls would eventually be purified and our instruments, the heart and the mind, would become willing to accept the leadership of the soul, itself surrendered to God, rather than doing things of their own devising. As a result, our lives would become harmonious, we would find work that accorded with our true talents, and we would be able to live in a way that conformed to God's will for us. Moreover, when we died, we would be prepared for living in the world of the Great Life Force.

Bapak tested about fifteen minutes each with perhaps three groups of five men and five women. Bapak's tests with us were to

check how far our latihan had progressed. They were also to be illustrative for the other members present. He made sure to ask—all his Indonesian words being translated by Mr. Usman—that only those who had not gone to the recently completed Subud World Congress should come up for testing. As I recall, I was among the second group of men. He would ask questions like, “Where are your hands?” At that moment, we were not supposed to “do” anything but let our hands, as it were, speak for themselves. In other words, we were supposed to go into a latihan state of surrender and give space for our bodies to answer if they were able to. My hands went up and displayed themselves to Bapak, whom the five of us, eyes closed, were facing. “Now show what your hands can do” came the next question. Mine started mimicking long-hand writing, then typing. “What else?” Usman asked in English after Bapak’s Indonesian. I forget now what else they could do, but there were a few more things. “Can you cry?” All of us started sobbing in various tenor, base, and baritone versions. “What about laughing?” A few of us could laugh from the latihan, but not me. There was nothing funny. I simply couldn’t laugh. In fact, it took years of spiritual training before I could laugh in latihan. “You all can cry,” Bapak commented, “but only a few of you can laugh. But don’t worry, if you practice your latihan diligently, one day you will all be able to laugh, and this laughing from the inner will serve you well. Especially in the face of adversity it is important to be able to laugh, for laughter is something that can penetrate the clouds of emotions that often weigh human beings down and keep them from living satisfying lives.” Finally, he asked, “Can you sing?” To a man, all five of us, eyes still closed, sang “hoo” to our own individual note. Bapak commented that he was not asking if we could make the sound of a ship, but could we sing? The audience laughed. “*Lagi!*” Came his basso command. “Again!” Usman interpreted. This

time we each produced some kind of rough melody that seemed to form a collective piece of modern music. “Enough!” Bapak said in English. Then he explained. “Right now your purification has not proceeded far enough for you to be able to sing something beautiful and original from your souls. That will come later. It is important to be able to sing from inside. In olden times, not only could mothers quiet their babies as today, but people in general, who were still closer back then to their true selves, could sing in such a way as to cheer themselves up when they were sad or gain courage when they were afraid. This is truly something that human beings could use again today when the world is so much more complicated and dangerous. So it is important for you never to forget this gift of the latihan, which little by little can make something fine out of something coarse. All right. That’s enough. Finish now and return to your seats. Thank you.”⁵

The next evening, on the bus back to New Haven, Connecticut, and Yale Graduate School, I was still in a special state. My feelings were wide and at rest. As far as my thoughts went, it was almost as if my thinking had taken a sabbatical. Everything was fine. Everything would get done in due course. There was nothing to think or worry about. I was totally relaxed and content. To be sure, this special state lasted only another day. Once back to graduate life, there was plenty of thinking to do plus the usual patches of worry about whether I would get all my work done well enough and on time. Also, when I did my next latihan, alone in my living room, I felt a sense of sadness and even envy for my friends who had had the opportunity to spend not one evening with Bapak but an entire ten days at the Briarcliff Congress. If I had gotten so much from a mere three or four hours, just imagine how much they must have gotten from nearly two weeks! At that moment the quality of the light in the room shifted, and

⁵ The above is an approximation of what Bapak said, both in his talk and to our testing group, based on my memory of something that took place 35 years ago. It should not be construed as an exact rendering of what he actually said.

although I could not see him, I was aware that Bapak was now with me. "Why are you sad?" He asked. "Don't you know that in the case of your friends, Bapak poured slowly? But in your case, Bapak poured fast. All of you got as much as you were able to receive." Then I began to cry. I was so abashed at my spiritual greed, and also at my ignorance. Yet I also felt the love streaming from this man who had made sure that all his spiritual children received the full measure of what they needed and could digest from his visit. This was a big lesson for me.⁶

Experiencing a Miracle in Hawaii

In 1967 my family and I moved to Honolulu so I could take up a position as assistant professor of English at the University of Hawai'i. Within six months we had a group of 25 Subud members. In 1968 Bapak and party stopped twice in Hawaii to encourage our new group—first at the Honolulu Airport for three or four hours on April 1st on their way from Indonesia and then for four or five days in May on their way home.

Even the brief rest-stop in the airport's VIP Lounge proved memorable. All our members, including the kids, crowded into the room to be close to their spiritual guide and his Indonesian helpers. Both our new local members wanted to get Subud names—Subud's form of mantra—so I asked Muhammad Usman, Bapak's interpreter, if Bapak could take care of the matter on the spot. I asked loudly enough in Indonesian that Bapak overheard and said "*Boleh!*" ["Certainly."]. So I showed him the two women, explained they were our two newest members, and stated that they brought up our local non-white contingency to three. Then I handed Bapak the two lists of ten names the ladies had selected for themselves.

At this point, the activities of the horde of little kids, the van Royens' seven plus our Marianne,

made the lounge seem like a perpetual-motion machine. Bapak and the Indonesians, far from being annoyed, seemed to take pleasure in this young, innocent life. But when Bapak got quiet and received for a few moments about Grandma Rose's name, an invisible force seemed to pervade the space, and even the kids stopped what they were doing and made no noise. The effect was so dramatic that I was reminded of the classic sci-fi film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. For no one had shushed the children or anyone else. "*Nomor tujuh*" ["Number seven"], Bapak said. With that, Rose's name became Rosalind. The kids and all the rest of us, freed for the moment, went back to what we had been doing before. Then Bapak received again, this time for Donald's wife, Phyllis. Again the same thing happened. Total stillness—no movement and no noise, not even from the little kids. It was incredible. "*Nomor empat*" ["Number four"], Bapak announced in his rich bass. So Phyllis became Melissa. I thanked Bapak, and as before, the adults went back to visiting while the kids resumed their play. After, my wife confirmed that she had witnessed this seeming miracle also.

A Significant Encounter in Brazil

During my period as Dean and English professor in Chicago (1979-87), I was fortunate to have been sent to Brazil for two weeks as a representative of Subud North America. The occasion was a meeting of the so-called Compact Council, an assembly of Subud representatives from the eight international zones. Since Bapak and party would be in attendance, about 500 other Subud members from North and especially South America arrived in Sao Paulo as well. Since I already knew Spanish, French, and some Italian, I took advantage of the opportunity to study Portuguese during the four months preceding the trip. Our Pan Am jet arrived in Sao Paulo on May 22, 1981, my 20th Subud birthday. What a present! I remember thinking.

⁶ Bapak followed the older practice among Javanese of using his relational title, Bapak, literally "father," in lieu of "I." A servant I knew in Jakarta, Ibu Rus, likewise from Central Java, also spoke in the third person. "Ibu Rus just make brownie. Would Pak Reynold like to eat one?" (translated from Indonesian).

Some important Subud experiences happened for me during this trip. By that point I had received many experiences in latihan; however, “seeing things” was not one. During a group latihan in the convent we were using, I suddenly became aware of a large emerald-green cross hanging in mid-air before my closed eyes. It just emerged in my mind’s eye, stayed for a few seconds, then disappeared. I remember feeling very happy that, as in the hymn “Amazing Grace,” I was blind but now could see.

During the same visit, I was in a group of men Bapak was testing. He said that, if God willed it, we might be able to be given indications about our true talent. When he said “Relax!” and “Begin!,” I started spontaneously to make the motions of leading a symphony orchestra. I would signal one invisible section to play more quietly while, turning to another, I would gesture vigorously for them to increase the volume and gusto of their playing. In my mind I understood that this miming was a metaphor. It didn’t indicate that I had the talent to be a symphony conductor. Instead, it suggested that my true talent was leadership—the ability to blend the efforts of many into a harmonious whole. The test pleased me, because as a university dean I was responsible for leading the efforts of a number of colleagues and making best use of our allocated funds.

By far the most significant of my experiences at the Compact Council Meeting came from a mistake I had made—lending credence to the commonplace that mistakes can sometimes lead to good outcomes. Because I was due to arrive in Sao Paulo as the first of our three-person North American delegation and because I knew Spanish and some Portuguese, I had promised to arrange for my two colleagues, who knew neither language, to be picked up at the airport. In the case of the first, I did so with no problem. But somehow, in the spiritual sea I was swimming in, I totally forgot about the second, a psychologist from Frazer Valley, British Columbia. That night as

a bunch of us were standing around chatting, there was Mahmud. He came over and asked what had happened. “Oh, my God!” I thought. I had totally forgotten about him. Thank goodness he had somehow made it.

As Mahmud explained, when he arrived in the airport and found no Reynold there to meet him, first he waited for a while. So great was his faith in me that he hadn’t taken along a name, a phone number, or even an address for a Brazilian Subud contact. He was sure I’d eventually be there. When more time went by, however, and I had still not shown up, he found a Brazilian Catholic priest who fortunately knew English. After Mahmud told him what had happened, the priest went to a public phone, found a number in the directory for Subud-Sao Paulo—thank God there was one!—and made the call. The person at the other end was just 30 minutes away, she said; told the priest where Mahmud should stand; and everything worked out fine.

I apologized profusely and promised myself I’d find a way to make it up to Mahmud. My chance came twelve days later, appropriately enough at that same airport. This time Bapak and party were about to leave for Bogotá. Hundreds of us had gone to the airport to wave them off. Bapak and Sharif were ensconced in a VIP room. On either side of the entrance, two big security guards stood to keep the VIPs from being disturbed. Suddenly I saw Mahmud. Without thinking, I grabbed his hand and said, “Come with me!” He was surprised but didn’t ask any questions. We headed straight for the VIP-room door. In the moment before our approach, the guards each turned away, like two oversized ballet dancers in a carefully orchestrated *pas de deux*, to bend over and light their cigarettes. Consequently, we slipped in without being noticed.

I greeted Bapak and Sharif in Indonesian, wondering why Bapak, who was much older than Sharif, looked fresh, while Sharif himself seemed wasted. Sharif responded in Indonesian that it was always like that. Bapak

simply lit up the room with his big smile. This time I didn't forget my friend but introduced him to Bapak and Sharif. I also briefly recounted how I had unintentionally left him stranded at this very airport two weeks before.

Bapak by this point was sitting in an easy chair by a big window overlooking the taxi strips and runways. I went over to offer *sunkum*, the traditional Javanese leave-taking ritual, whereby one kneels and kisses the ring of a respected older person. Known for not looking others directly in the eyes for reasons we all speculated on, Bapak looked straight into mine. It was one of those once-in-a-lifetime moments, where time seems to stand still. I felt that he knew everything about me, all the good things and all those that were not so good, and that he was none the less bestowing on me an incredible gift of unconditional love. I also flashed on that evening in the summer of 1963, the first time I had seen Bapak, when I had rushed over to shake his hand, leaving dozens of folded chairs to crash to the floor in a cacophonous chain reaction, and receiving his dead-fish hand and averted face and eyes, while an undeniable look of disgust played over his lips. What a difference! This time I had expected nothing and had received everything—in God's time, not mine.

Conclusions

I have presented the above experiences, from my Subud opening in Chicago through the significant encounter, or *shakti*, in Sao Paulo to give you the flavor of the Subud spiritual practice as lived by one person. Bapak died the night of June 23, 1987, just hours after his 86th birthday. By that point I had been a consistently active member for 26 years and, at 47, was very much a mid-career academic professional. Now 23 years later, a 70-year-old Subud member of 49 years' standing, I can say that as extraordinary as Bapak was, what is really extraordinary is the Subud spiritual practice, or latihan, itself. Through its continuing practice, I have come closer both to myself and what I perceive to be the Great Life

Force, or God. The results are that I worry less, sleep better, don't use my mind except when cognitive thought is really useful, am able to relate to all ages and kinds of people, can interact easily with animals and nature, and was able to accompany my wife of 43 years, also a Subud member, in a strong, helpful way through the three-month process of her dying. Throughout my adult life I have felt a close connection with my true inner self and have received guidance to help me, as the Buddhist phrase puts it, to be in the world but not of it, that is, to live in a normal, effective way without ever being pulled down by material forces. At the same time, I have always been able, without drugs, bodily deprivation, or living in isolation or in a spiritual community, to feel a slow, steady sense of spiritual progress and a connection with all that is. This truly is a great gift for someone alive in our harried and hurried new century and millennium.

There are several other aspects of Subud that bear mentioning. First, the latihan is easily available to anyone who wishes it. Although we are still small—only about 10,000 active members—we are widespread, with organized groups in over 70 countries and members in over 90. An individual in practically any country can find a Subud contact nearby—someone from their own language and culture. Then there is the ease of transmission. Anyone wishing to receive the Subud contact does so simply by standing in the presence of a Subud member of his own sex who is doing the latihan, and the opening takes place. No mantra, no study, no penance, no payment, no advanced work is required—only surrender and the wish to receive.

Another factor that makes Subud especially fitting in this world of multiple divisions is its availability to people of all religions and traditions or of none. Religion is a matter of family tradition and personal conviction. By contrast, Subud, like any mystical path, is a matter of individual experience. That is why Evelyn Underhill calls mysticism first-person religion. Whereas religions depend on

revelations given to others, often thousands of years ago, mysticism is always based on a person's experience in the here-and-now. In this time of growing secularism and scientific proof, where the religions of former times seem increasingly old-fashioned and even superstition-based, Subud and mystical paths in general offer "proof" to each individual practitioner.

A corollary of Subud's universal availability to any interested person regardless of their background is the fact that it can be done together with people of different faiths, the diversity of the world's great religions, as well as with those who do not profess a religion. In Subud one does not have to change a belief or even a behavior. Personal change for the better evolves organically, like the seasons. Imagine the impact of Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Shintos,

Taoists, Atheists, and Agnostics all being able to receive their individual spontaneous spiritual exercises together in harmony in a world where the slightest difference can become the cause of dissension, even war. That is Subud.

Is Subud perfect? Of course not. All human institutions are inherently flawed, since they are made up of and run by us imperfect human beings. Not everyone who has come to the latihan has found it helpful or stayed. Others have had personal disagreements with one another. Still others have been put off by organizational politics. Yet 23 years after the founder's death, Subud offers the opportunity of a dogma-free, world-centered, accessible, interfaith, and above all practical spiritual training. Does it work? For better or worse, there is only one way to find out.

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The Spiritual Politics of Bio-cultural Regeneration

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[...] an attitude of doubt, however, which in the West was first clearly stated by Descartes, involves a breach of faith toward everything that is. This breach entails the hostility of all against all and against all things...Western thinkers since then have been increasingly driven to acquire mastery over the phenomena that aggressively confronts the ego... Gopinath Kaviraj (1965)

Introduction

In this essay, I explore the implications of the terms “bio-cultural regeneration” as well as the necessity to solve the problem of a sustainable livelihood in order to be able to obtain such regeneration. This is motivated by a keen concern for the cultural-environmental (or bio-cultural) destruction that development/modernization as well as globalization and neo-liberal policies are bringing about. Having worked for many years with some Peruvian intellectual activist organizations dedicated to the cultural affirmation of its autochthonous

peasantry, I acquired a deep seated admiration for this peasantry’s agricultural knowledge and its practices that are at once sustainable and rich in agro-bio-diversity. Following critics of development^[1] I reject, along with those organizations, the reality and concept of development, and its hegemony. With them I explored the possibility of putting in practice ancestral autochthonous practices as alternatives to development which meant a rejection of production for the market, rejection of monetization, rejection of the capitalist market economy, and rejection of modernization/westernization.

However, through prolonged contact with the most marginalized of the indigenous farmers I became aware that they wanted and needed money. Peruvian law now requires them to send their children to school wearing uniforms and having school materials, all of which have to be purchased. But more significantly, indigenous farmers want roads

and motorized transport to carry their produce to market, so they can earn some money to send their children to school and to the clinic, as well as buy some consumer goods such as transistor radios or TVs to be connected to the wider world. These needs cannot be on principle determined by any ideology to be rejected as threats to the native culture. To deny access to such amenities to the poorest indigenous farmers and urging them to live as their ancestors did soon seemed to me ethically questionable, since I, along with the members of the organizations I collaborated with, used and enjoyed them.

I eventually decided to investigate Fair Trade as a possible alternative both to autarchy and to the capitalist model. More broadly, I understood that alternatives to the hegemonic development project need not be conceived as its complete antithesis, rejecting anything connected with the development/modernization project. Such an attitude partakes of the modernist either/or dualistic mind set and is itself therefore deeply problematic. Given the fact that indigenous farmers need money, as well as are entitled to many of the benefits money can bring, I felt that I wanted to examine a potentially viable alternative, namely Fair Trade cooperativism. Fair Trade cooperativism is a hybrid phenomenon, using the global market while simultaneously contravening some of its basic tenets.

Part 1 of the essay focuses on what is meant by bio-cultural regeneration while part 2 explores in more depth the entailments of this concept and its power to shift us to less anthropocentric practices and forms of knowing. Part 3 focuses on Fair Trade and clarifies its hybrid nature. The last and fourth part of the essay introduces what I mean by "Spiritual Politics". What this essay argues, is that without a secure, sustainable livelihood, it is very difficult, if not impossible for groups to regenerate, along with their spirits (what here I call other-than-human beings) their bio-cultural inheritance. Some version of the market economy is a fact

of life throughout the world nowadays and one simply cannot wish it away. Fair Trade enables even the most marginalized farmers to have a sustainable livelihood and therefore makes possible the regeneration of their bio-cultural endowment by allowing them to remain on their lands, in their communities and with their spirits/deities. Let me start by clarifying what is meant by the phrase "bio-cultural regeneration".

What is meant by Bio-Cultural Regeneration?

The term 'regeneration' has a close affinity to related terms such as 'generate' and 'degenerate' or 'decay'. It is meant to convey that, like plants and most things in the world including humans and their artifacts, there is a process of birth (generation/making), growth, decay/degeneration and regeneration, all of those forming a necessary and inevitable cycle. The term is meant to by-pass the linear "forward/backward" evolutionary connotations of such a term as 'development' with its entailment of a linear temporal frame that necessitates a forward or progressive movement and demands the abandonment of what is seen as a 'backward' stance. Such 'forward/backward' language locks us into a position wherein all that impedes development must be jettisoned as 'backward'.

As Francisco Vanderhoff Boersma, the co-founder of the modern Fair Trade system states it, development is a one-way street. Regeneration by contrast alludes to a non-linear and more cyclical process in which elements circulate, generating, degenerating/decaying and regenerating, with the possibility of renewal but also loss as well as creation.

Although at first glance both terms seem to naturalize these processes, since both 'development' and 'regeneration' can be thought of as natural processes of growth, the qualifier 'bio-cultural' added to the term 'regeneration' is meant to obviate such an interpretation, as I will argue below. The choice of 'regeneration' for me implies a

non-linear, multi-directional process as well as underscoring that there is something valuable already present that is in the process of renewal rather than radical transformation or downright abandonment. This valuable something is both biological (organic and inorganic; the prefix bio is to be understood as a short hand; it is meant to include animals, plants as well as rocks, water and the like) and human made, namely cultural.

The term 'bio-cultural' is beginning to be used in anthropology and related fields (Balée, 1989, 1994; Smith 2001; Posey, 1999, Maffi 2001; Mann 2005 ^[2]) to capture the increasing recognition that most – and perhaps all – environments are in part the product of human activity, in other words are anthropogenic. The most dramatic example may be the Amazon River Basin with its vaunted rain forest. Recent research (Balée, 1989, 1994; Posey, 1999; Smith 2001; Mann 2005) has shown that the agricultural activities over the past 8000 years such as (among others) the widespread artful use of fire, the building of artificial agricultural soil, the planting of forest trees useful to humans, has shaped the Amazonian rain forest. It is not a 'virgin' or 'wild' forest, untouched by humans but quite the opposite.

However, both terms 'biological' and 'cultural' are deeply problematic as we will see later. Why use them then? Partly because there is a growing body of interesting work that uses them in the same joined form I use them, namely "bio-cultural", and partly because it is meant to convey the lack of separation between what is traditionally considered to be biological (understood in the above sense of both organic and inorganic) and what is cultural. Creating a neologism that conjoins what are thought to be mutually exclusive categories is always risky and fraught with problems. Nevertheless, it is my hope that as a first approximation it might be useful as well as needed in order to better capture the way of being in the world of the local indigenous group in the Lamas region, the Kichwa-Lamista. The Fair Trade Coffee

Coop I collaborated with between 2005 and 2009 is situated in this town of the Peruvian High Amazon. When trying to approximate indigenous ways of inhabiting the world, one is often in need of coining new terms since their world and the Western modern one are in some important ways extremely different.

The term 'regeneration' is also particularly appropriate for the High Amazon region since Fair Trade organic coffee and cacao are grown under the canopy of the forest, thus ensuring reforestation and the preservation or regeneration of the existing forest cover in a region of extremely rapid deforestation. The forest cover is being regenerated by the practice of organic coffee and cacao growing.

Qualifying the term 'regeneration' with the words 'bio-cultural' is intended to signal, as well as emphasize, the non-anthropocentric nature of the process of regeneration. That is to say, regeneration is not achieved exclusively by humans. Regeneration is a process in which humans and non-humans, as well as other-than-humans, are engaged. (I will below specify the difference between the latter two terms). It is meant to convey their entanglement. In this aspect it also flags a marked departure from the term 'development' and all its related cognates (developing, underdeveloped, sustainable development, integrated rural development, and others). All these terms refer exclusively to human endeavors; they are thus terms that re-inscribe an anthropocentric paradigm. ^[3]

Beyond anthropocentrism

A further clarifying note seems necessary concerning the terms 'non-human' and 'other-than-humans'. At first glance it may seem perverse to use such cumbersome terms when one could simply use the terms 'nature' and 'supernatural beings' instead. One reason for not using the word 'nature' or 'supernatural beings' is that the intention is to not categorically separate 'natural/biological' entities from human-made ones and also to not validate the category of supernatural since

it is totally dependent on that of 'nature'. The intent is to not re-inscribe the nature/culture dualism in the terms one uses. Some may very well ask why then not use the term 'cyborg' popularized by Donna Haraway (1989), which does precisely that and has enjoyed a fairly widespread diffusion. The term "cyborg" was popularized by Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline in 1960 referring to a concept of an "improved" human being capable of surviving in extraterrestrial environments.^[4]

The term 'cyborg' is a neologism that combines the term 'cybernetic' with the term 'organism'. It has the advantage of being short and concise. It immediately conveys an entity that is at once human-made as well as organic (often called 'natural'). However, the use of 'cybernetic' immediately excludes as well as renders invisible the manner in which many, perhaps most non-modern peoples, and in particular indigenous/tribal and smallholder agricultural peoples in the South, do not subscribe to the nature/culture dualism, nor to the modernist paradigm of a mechanized and unconscious universe. Cybernetics is a product of modernity that historically originated in the West.^[5] The Indian philosopher-saint Gopinath Kaviraj, cited in the epigraph, counter poses "Indian thinkers"^[6] (1965:108 passim) to the Cartesian 'breach of faith toward everything that is' and thus contrasts the latter with some form of Indian thinking.^[7] When we turn to Indigenous America in general and the Kichwa-Lamistas' worldview (or cosmovision) in particular, one finds no Cartesian "breach of faith toward everything that is" quite the reverse. "Everything that is" forms part of the commons, part even of wider kinship circles. Thus I have found it necessary to coin new words and phrases in order to approximate better the lived reality of the Kichwa-Lamistas. In part 4 below one can begin to glimpse this reality through the words of the Kichwa shaman I interview.

This alternative way of being in the world is radically non-anthropocentric. In modernity, the "phenomena that aggressively confronts

the ego" (G. Kaviraj in the epigraph) - since the ego is the human subject - are non-human. Before discussing what the category 'non-human' conveys, let us first focus on the Latin term 'ego', i.e. the first person pronoun. The ego is a Cartesian one meaning that it is a thinking ego, the subject of Descartes' famous dictum *cogito ergo sum* ("I think therefore I am"). More precisely, such a subject *represents* in its mind by way of language and/or mathematics and/or graphics what seems to confront it. The act of representation through language/mathematics/graphics is considered to be a human monopoly in the Cartesian (and more generally modernist)^[8] dispensation. Only human representations - linguistic, mathematic or graphic - signify. The world is signified or represented by the human mind. The world - i.e. everything confronting the human subject - does not disclose itself directly by means of meaningful communication to the human subject. Rather the human mind "discovers" through empirical, experimental or other forms of investigation what lies outside of itself. And what lies outside of itself is a pre-given "natural" object of investigation that does not speak or otherwise directly communicate to humans. In this dispensation, meaningful articulate communication is the monopoly of humans.

Gopinath Kaviraj contrasts this situation with the one he attributes to "Indian thinkers: "[Indian thinkers] have not seen beings as things to be represented in the consciousness of an ego-centered human subject in the forms of inner-psychic pictures, but as things revealing themselves directly to the human existence." (cited in Boss, 1965:120) It is not only the non-human things that reveal themselves directly to the human existence, but the other-than-human beings that do as well. Such a reality is the one voiced by the shaman interviewed in part 4.

Is there an intended difference between the term 'non-human' and the term 'other-than-human'? Let me clarify. Other-than-human

is meant to refer to beings that combine or entangle the non-human with human-like characteristics. Such other-than-human beings may or may not have a human shape but typically can directly communicate as well as exchange gifts with human beings. They incorporate non-human elements such as rivers, springs, mountains, rocks, wind, stars, the sun or the moon, houses, trees, human-made objects, etc. By the term other-than-human I mean to include entities such as spirits, deities, demons, djinns, sacred mountain-beings, river-beings, rock-beings, sacred object-beings and the like.

In the Cartesian/modernist worldview such beings are classified as belonging to a *supernatural* realm. That is a realm beyond matter, beyond nature. Non-empirical (i.e. supernatural) beings have tended to be interpreted as not empirically real.^[9] This is particularly true the further away from modernity the people concerned are. The other-than-humans of non-modern peoples in particular, have generally been seen as projections of the human mind onto the non-human world, namely as acts of anthropomorphizing through metaphors and symbols. Such a view is the inevitable result of the absolutist stance of the Judeo-Christian religious traditions (however, these religions' mystical traditions do not share in such absolutism.)^[10] It is as well the result of the equally absolutist view of the ontological - that is Real, i.e. absolute or universal - separation between the cultural (the products of the human mind) and the natural enshrined by the victory of modern western science in the 17th century

In worlds where the production of meaning, the act of signifying, is not seen as being exclusively lodged in the human mind (or ego), mind pervades the world. Entities such as spirits, deities, demons or djinns^[11] are the forms that particular historical human collectivities recognize in the communications coming from the non-human world. Such communications tend to crystallize over

time into diverse personalities with specific characteristics, names and narratives. They dwell in a non-mechanized, non-inert, dynamic, communicative and conscious universe made up of multiple species of sentient beings. They embody both the historical specificity of the local non-human landscape as well as the historical specificity of the local human group(s). In other words, they entangle the human and the non-human. To ghettoize such beings in the realm of a purely human imagination and of the 'super-natural' is to assume the universality of the modernist understanding of the world. It is also a thoroughly euro- (and andro) - centric move.

The foregoing clarifications are necessary to elucidate why I do not simply use the term 'culture' and have been using instead a term like 'bio-cultural collectivities'. It is not because I do not think that "culture matters", quite the contrary as my discussion of other-than-human beings should have made clear. It is instead due to the fact that the term 'culture' inevitably gathers its meaning through its opposition to its contrary, namely 'nature'. Just as nature is everything that is not made by humans, i.e. everything that is **not** culture, culture is everything that is **not** nature. These two terms mutually constitute each other by way of an exclusive opposition. It is thus impossible not to imply an ontological or universal given-ness to the divide that separates them when using either of these terms. Continuing to use these terms reinforces a privileging of the Cartesian/modernist/western worldview and renders other worldviews, in particular the realities of Amerindian peoples in general and of the Kichwa-Lamistas in particular, invisible. Such invisibility leaves the door wide open to discourses about such collectivities that see only lacks and obstacles.

Fair Trade and the Economics of Tragic Choices.

The fact that Fair Trade is an international, even globalized phenomenon, shipping products from southern countries to northern

ones is sometimes interpreted as therefore being a phenomenon tainted with all the problems of free trade and globalization.

Mexico signed the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA) treaty in 1994^[12]. Such a treaty has had a cruel effect on the great majority of smallholder farmers in the country sending many of them to the slums of Mexico City or to face the dangers of crossing the border into the US. Nevertheless, devotees of the market economy view such an effect as the birth pangs of a more efficient, more competitive, market. Such a view was articulated by the Mexican Secretary of Agriculture at the time of the writings of Vanderhoff Boersma, the worker-priest who co-founded modern Fair Trade along with an indigenous coffee farmers' cooperative in Mexico in the 1980s. The Mexican minister publicly declared that there are 20 millions of small farmers in Mexico who should better get out of agriculture and find a different employment. (Vanderhoff Boersma 2005:69) The lucky ones might find employment in the infamous *maquiladoras*, those sweatshops where labor is often paid poorly and working conditions are atrocious.^[13] The unlucky ones would join the other millions involved in the often-illegal, often dangerous and insecure informal economy.

The Harvard economist Stephen A. Marglin has called this deplorable situation "the economics of tragic choices". In a chapter of the same name in his recent book *The Dismal Science: How Thinking like an Economist Undermines Community* (2008), he points out that most economists regard the choice between sweatshops and worse alternatives as no more tragic than any other. The 'best alternative' is declared to be so because it is assumed that individuals maximize their self-interest. In such a view the small agricultural producers will find the best alternatives for themselves while simultaneously the free functioning of the market will allocate in the most efficient manner possible all the factors of production as well as all the products.

This kind of economic thinking has led to the deterioration of the environment, in particular the increase of global warming with its disastrous consequences for everyone as well as the severe erosion of cultural diversity. Both types of deteriorations amount to the severe erosion of bio-cultural collectivities.

For those who are washed in the blood of Ec 101 as Stephen Marglin puts it, the fate of marginalized peoples^[14] is perceived through the twin premises of the self-interested individual and the efficient allocation of resources by the Invisible Hand, namely the free functioning of the market economy. Labor is a (human) resource and one of the factors of production as are capital and natural resources. In such an economic perspective, the bio-cultural patrimony of historical collectivities deserves to survive only insofar as it can be marketed, and given an economic value. Concerns for the dignity and even survival of marginalized folks and their bio-cultural patrimony is left to bleeding heart liberals or radicals who are labeled naïve romantics. Hardheaded realists know better than to intervene in the free workings of the market. For redistributive goals as well as for assuaging consciences, there is charity. Naïve folks mix what should be kept carefully separate, namely charity and efficiency. To conflate the two is risky they maintain, in that it will inevitably lead to damaging efficiency and thus, it is firmly believed, everyone's welfare.^[15]

Fair Trade specifically intends to avoid creating dependency among small agriculturists. By joining together and forming cooperatives, such poor farmers are able to bypass the many middle men and sell directly to northern buyers. The Fair Trade seal obtained by being Fair Trade certified, signals to northern consumers that this product is bought directly from the producers. This is what leads a growing number of socially conscious northern consumers to be willing to pay a little more for such a product. The Fair Trade Labeling Organization (FLO) in turn guarantees a

stable price for Fair Traded products that not only covers the farmers' cost of production but gives them an additional amount to better their standard of living. This protection from the vagaries of the international market in coffee (and many other Fair Traded products) is crucial to the sustainability of the farmers' livelihood. The price of coffee (and other products) can vary enormously on the international market. When it has fallen below the cost of production, this has historically led to farmers selling or abandoning their lands in search of other employment, usually in cities or in Northern countries.

The stable price guaranteed by Fair Trade Labeling enables marginalized peoples to stand on their feet, produce a product of high quality that they can justly be proud of and that has the potential to enable them to regenerate their bio-cultural patrimony and along with that, their sense of self-worth. The northern consumers who are willing to pay the little extra for a Fair Trade Labeled product are moved by solidarity with such marginalized producers.^[16]

Drawing on the Spirits for Bio-Cultural Regeneration.

I will in the last paragraphs try to clarify the link that I see between Fair Trade as I have observed it in the Peruvian High Amazon, and what I call "bio-cultural regeneration". In this section, I will start by writing of some other-than-humans of the region, namely the spirits of certain local plants, by having recourse to the words of a local shaman I interviewed in 2006. The reason for this choice lies in the fact that such plants are indispensable to Amazonian shamanism. The most important of these plants can only be gathered in the mature cloud forest. With increasing deforestation, shamanism itself is threatened.

There are a remarkable number of medicinal plants that are original to this region, including several psychoactive ones that induce visions. Many of the former kind of plants are in great commercial demand both nationally

as well as internationally. I cannot here deal with the enormous issue of bio-piracy by pharmaceutical multi-national companies (MNCs) since it would require its own separate essay. I wish rather to focus on the category of other-than-humans, and particularly with those that are associated with plants.^[17] My reason for doing so is that the most powerful and spiritually relevant among them are to be collected only in old growth forest. They are not to be cultivated in one's garden since they belong spiritually to the forest and their power is also the power of the forest itself. For the Kichwa the forest is itself a deity/spirit called Sachamama, experienced as being embodied in a snake. With increasing deforestation, the habitat for such plants is fast disappearing and with it shamanism itself is threatened.^[18] In order to illustrate and enrich the foregoing, as well as introduce the spiritual power of plants, let me quote from an interview with a native shaman,^{[19], [20]}. I have chosen his words since he expresses views widely held not only among local shamans but among Amazonian peoples in general. I will identify him by his initials: S.P.

E. Where do you find your plants?

S.P. Some of them I grow around the house so as to have them ready at hand. But others are far away and are untouchable.

F. What do you mean by 'untouchable'?

S.P. I have a chacra of medicinal plants up the mountains of almost one hectare. There I have several plants, which I take care of. I put up signs in front of it that say: Private Zone, Entrance Forbidden, because those who do not know about medicinal plants may collect them to use as rope or for other such purposes, or they may even cut them down. Every three months I go there to weed.

However, for the extremely powerful plants I go to Yurilamas [which is at 6 hours by foot from his village, up the mountain where there still is old forest cover] and I collect them from the forest.

I have to collect them before breaking fast in the morning, before eating or drinking, at the break of day. The plant is alive. A serpent lies next to it; it is poisonous. It is its spirit (*ánima*). I blow on it with tobacco and I enchant it with an *ikaro* (shamanic song) and the serpent falls asleep.

F. Can you enchant plants in your chacra?

S.P. One could, but 95% of the plants in our coffee chacra are not for curing. One touches them, grabs them, one prunes, one puts up insect traps and so forth. It is not really feasible for curative purposes. The chacra of medicinal plants must be very separate, no one must see it. The plant must grow in its own way. When you weed, you must abstain from alcohol, from sex and if it's done by a woman she must not be menstruating. It is very delicate; during the 2 or 3 days of weeding, one must take great care. *Ayimacuerpoiki* (Quechua for "one must have a 'good'/'pure' body")

F. How do you know what plants to give a patient?

S.G. One cannot decide oneself what to give a patient. I first have to take ayahuasca [a powerful psychotropic plant brew used throughout the Amazon Basin^[21]] and *ayahuasca* tells me what plant to give and at what dosage and how to prepare it. If you do it badly the patient can go crazy.

One has to see the illness. I take ayahuasca in the name of the patient. It opens up the private life of the patient to me. What he/she suffers from, what he/she thinks of me. The patient sleeps but the spirit [of ayahuasca] brings him/her to me. Ayahuasca communicates to you what plant to use, what dosage. I sing the spiritual *ikaros* that the plant gives to me. They emerge by themselves. And for the patient they get rid of his/her stress.

The plants communicate directly to the shaman, as well as to other persons taking the plant brew under the proper ceremonial conditions. Such direct communication from the non-human and the other-than-human world is not considered possible in the modernist worldview. That is why such plants are typically called "hallucinogens". The understanding is that one hallucinates, that is creates visions emanating from one's doped up brain. The possibility of parts of the world directly communicating with humans is simply considered a false notion in the modernist worldview.

Jeremy Narby, an anthropologist who was cured of an intractable back pain by a shaman while doing fieldwork in the Amazon Basin, decided finally to take what his shaman told him seriously. What his shaman told him is the same as what S. P. and various other shamans told me (as well as other researchers), namely that the plants communicate with one directly and tell one what medicinal plant(s) to take and in what dosage, how to prepare them, followed by what kind of diet. In the case of the ayahuasca brew, in which the ayahuasca vine is boiled along with the leaves of the chakruna plant till the brew is reduced by a factor of 20, Narby calculates mathematically the probabilities of this knowledge having been achieved through a pragmatic process of trial and error. He arrives at such an astronomically high number, that it persuaded him it was clearly totally impossible for such knowledge to have been obtained by that method. ^[22] He concludes that what the shaman told him must be true. He himself took the brew and the experience transformed him. ^[23]

What makes such a possibility so difficult to take at face value for those of us educated in the modernist curriculum, is the fruit of centuries of class and gender warfare where the worldview of the winning class and gender was able to de-legitimize its rival worldviews – collectively referred to as *hylozoism* ^[24] – and impose itself by the end of the 17th century. I have elsewhere ^[25] recalled this history and

argued that the claim of the mechanist vision of the world and of the representationalist onto-epistemological doctrine, is no less an entanglement of mind and matter than the rival worldview that was in the process totally discredited, in spite of claims to the contrary.

There were at the time many rival worldviews; however they all shared a non-dualist paradigm and have all been classed by some historians under the label of "hylozoism". Hylozoism refers to the view that the universe is alive and possesses agency.

Conclusion

So, what does Fair Trade have to do with plant spirits, you may well ask. Let me try to summarize briefly how I see the connection. Fair Trade provides a sustainable livelihood for the poorest farmers. The alternative for poor farmers to obtain money is to raise cash crops for the national and/or international market or to sell their labor. We need to keep in mind that in many parts of the world, and that is definitely true for the Peruvian high Amazon, poor farmers try very hard to be self-sufficient (and thus secure) in terms of food. Most of them have food fields, locally known as *chacras*, from which they feed their families. However, this does not allow them to earn sufficient money (through selling on the local market the surplus food after feeding the family) for the children's education, health or for buying not only some consumer products but some necessities, such as kerosene, salt, matches, and other necessities. For the latter, farmers need to enter into the market economy. This they can do mainly in two ways: 1. they can sell their own labor and go work on large agricultural plantations or in factories in the city. 2. they can themselves raise cash crops for the national and/or international market.

It is in the second option that the Fair Trade economic alternative is possible. Without entering in the Fair Trade market, the poorest farmers are at the mercy of the labor market (option No.1) or the product market traded on the national and/or international trading markets (option No.2). Both the labor market

and the products market, unregulated by the price protection of Fair Trade, can fluctuate a great deal, leaving the poorest at their mercy and often forcing them to abandon their lands and communities in search of employment when product prices plunge or labor opportunities dry up.

What the Fair Trade alternative makes possible is the sustainability of the poorest farmers' livelihood. Such a sustainable livelihood allows them to stay on their land and in their communities, raise families and even improve their communities. It also allows them to keep their own ancestral lands and cultivate them in their own ways. All of this means that the farmers and their non-human world can stay together which in turns means that the other-than-human in their world do not disappear. When agricultural lands are bought by large agro-industrial companies and the people who used to own them become workers on such lands, the land is deforested, agro-chemicals are used and the forest with its plants and spirits disappear. When the people migrate to the cities or to northern countries, they have to abandon the forest, the land, along with the plants and their spirits.

Needless to say, the world of agrochemical agriculture or urban factory work is one that arose after the non-human world became an unfeeling, unfeeling machine. It is a disenchanted world without spirits that exists solely for the purpose of satisfying the needs of humans (that are now defined as being infinite). It is a world where the non-human has become a mute, mechanical environment without its own needs and where the spirits – when they survive at all – have migrated to a sphere beyond 'nature'. It is impossible in such a world to regenerate the bio-cultural patrimony of people. Among Amazonian peoples and in particular among the Kichwa-Lamistas, ceremonies and rituals led by shamans are the actions that enable conversations and exchanges between humans and other-than-humans. It is such acts and exchanges that bring about bio-cultural regeneration. Often the work of shamans is referred to as healing. However, this tends

to conjure an action directed at humans only. Rather, shamans make it possible to hear the voice of the non-human world through their conversations with the spirits.

In stark contrast, the world in which industrial agriculture and factory production have their existence is one that leads to what is more usually spoken of as cultural and natural erosion, what here I call bio-cultural erosion. In other words what is today recognized as a major ecological crisis cannot be separated from a major erosion of cultural diversity. The two cannot be separated out, as the term bio-cultural makes clear.

I would conclude by saying that the health and sustainability of both humans and non-humans require their working together. This working together is accomplished through the rituals and other conversations that take place between the humans and the other-than-humans in the ceremonies and rituals led by shamans. The other-than-humans embody this very entanglement between humans and non-humans without which regeneration cannot take place. In the particular case of the Kichwa-Lamistas, the basic and most wellknown other-than-humans are the forest spirit (called Sachamama) and plant spirits, as well as the land spirit (called Pachamama) and the water spirit (called Yacumama). Thus it is only when a sustainable livelihood can be assured for the poorest farmers that they can stay on their ancestral inspirited lands, in their communities, and continue to converse and exchange with the spirits, the other-than-humans of their world. As argued in this essay, it is through such shamanic conversations and such exchanges that the bio-cultural world can be regenerated and thereby preserved from cultural/natural depredation and erosion.

End Notes

[1] I have published with Stephen A. Marglin two books critiquing development, (1990 and 1996) and with Tariq Banuri a third one (1993). Another important critique of development is that of Arturo Escobar (1995) and of Wolfgang Sachs (1992).

[2] [3] Charles Mann's book *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* digests this as well as other scholarship, into a readable and widely accessible work.

[3] Even though the terms 'sustainable development' are meant to include the non-human environment, separation between the two aspects, namely the economic one and the environmental one, is maintained and taken for granted.

[4] This concept is the result of a reflection on the necessity of an intimate relationship between the human and the machine at the time of the beginnings of outer space exploration. The idea of cyborg deconstructs dualisms about mastery and lack of mastery over the body, object and subject, nature and culture, in a manner that is useful to postmodernist feminist thought. Haraway (1989) shows through the use of this term that things that seem natural, such as the human body, are not: they are constructed by our ideas about them.

[5] On the history of the birth of modernity and the term 'other-than-human' see my book *Subversive Spiritualities and Science: Beyond Anthropocentrism* (Forthcoming)

[6] The epigraph from Gopinath Kaviraj is taken from the book by Medard Boss *A Psychiatrist Discovers India*, Calcutta, 1965. Boss never names his interlocutor, referring to him simply as 'the master' or 'the sage'. The late Giri Deshinkar of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi communicated his identity to me, asserting that this was common knowledge in India.

[7] For a brilliant argument that such a view is also a vernacular village one in India, see the scholarship of Gillian Goslinga *Assisted Conception in Two Worlds: Village shamanism and Hinduism in South India*, PhD dissertation, Dpt of History of Consciousness, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2006., as well as my book *Rhythms of Life: Enacting the world with the goddesses of India*, Delhi, Oxford U. Pr. 2008.

- [8] I use the term 'modernist' (rather than 'modernism' which refers to a 19th and 20th cent. trend in the arts in Europe) to refer to the worldview created and legitimized in 17th century Europe after the birth of modern Western science.
- [9] I do not wish to imply that only non-Western so-called 'super-naturals' have been considered unreal. The Christian 'super-naturals' were, in 17th century Europe, taken to be very much real even though there were bloody disputes between Protestants and Catholics as to which ones legitimately belonged there and which ones did not. However, as is well known, their reality slowly began to be more and more questioned, leading to the situation that Nietzsche, toward the end of the 19th century, famously captured by declaring that "God is dead."
- [10] For an insightful discussion of the absolutism of the Judeo-Christian spiritual realm versus the built-in affirmation of diversity in the spirituality of an indigenous group in Chad, Africa, see Jean Pouillon's article "Remarks on the Verb 'to believe'", 1982:1-8. The mystical traditions in the three monotheist faiths tend in general to be non-absolutist
- [11] This list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. There are many other such entities with many different names recognized in the various existing bio-cultural collectivities.
- [12] The uprising of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, led by Sub-comandante Marcos, was timed to coincide with the day of this signing. The major cash crop in Chiapas is coffee. (Enelow 2006)
- [13] Perhaps it is worth noting that some of these maquiladoras actually pay higher wages than the farmers were previously receiving in agriculture. In these cases, it is the disruption of livelihoods and communities, and the attendant social ills that accompany such disruptions, which is the core of the problem. The pure economic argument for free trade is logically true and yet utterly blind to lived experience. The issue of the worker's physical safety is a corollary to this point – not only in the plant itself, but in the newly created and hence often-chaotic community surrounding the plant. Finally, there is the empirical question of whether the maquiladoras actually do offer better wages than the farmers had earned pre-NAFTA. That too may be false (Enelow, personal communication, 10-1-06)
- [14] Vanderhoff coins an acronym, MAM in Spanish (*Muy Alta Marginalidad*), VEM in English: Very Elevated Marginality to refer to those excluded from the market system who are expendable throw-aways since they are inefficient.
- [15] For a discussion of the birth of such a view in 16th-17th Europe and its class base in the wealthy noble and merchant enclosers as well as its hard won victory through numerous class wars including the witch hunts, see my unpublished essay "The trouble with natural resources."
- [16] I am well aware of the many critiques leveled against Fair Trade from the left. In this short essay I am not able to review these. I have done so in a forthcoming book manuscript.
- [17] There are many other categories of other-than-humans such as mountains, lakes, the forest itself, etc...
- [18] The Colombian anthropologist Eduardo Luna writes that the shaman he visited in his youth had given up his practice due to the disappearance of the plants' habitats when he returned 20 years later: Luis Eduardo Luna & Pablo Amaringo *Ayahwasca Visions: The religious iconography of a Peruvian shaman*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, 1999..

- [19] Native shamans are usually referred to as *curandero/a* while mestizo ones are called *vegetalista*, namely plant specialist (from the word *vegetal* meaning 'plant').
- [20] S. P. as the youngest son (38 years) lived with his aged parents as per custom and took care of them. He has tragically passed away in 2008. His father is also a shaman. They worked together in their common fields. The household consisted of 9 persons.
- [21] Besides Luna and Amaringo's book, for ayahuasca one can also consult (among others) Richard Evans Schultes *et al* : *Plants of the Gods: Their sacred, healing, and hallucinogenic powers*, Revised and expanded edition, Healing Arts Press, Rochester, VT, 2001; Jeremy Narby *The Cosmic Serpent*, 1998 and Luna & White *Ayahuasca Reader* (2000).
- [22] See Jeremy Narby *The Cosmic Serpent: DNA and the origins of knowledge*, Putnam, 1998.
- [23] For another anthropological reference that takes the statements of informants literally, rather than metaphorically, see David E. Young & Jean-Guy Goulet eds. *Being Changed by Cross-Cultural Encounters: the anthropology of extraordinary experience*. Broadview Press, 1994 . For publications by an MD on ayahuasca see Jacques Mabit (1993; 2002)
- [24] On Hylozoism (lit. 'living matter') see especially Elizabeth Potter's book *Gender and Boyle's Law of Gases* (2001).
- [25] F. Apffel-Marglin "The invention of natural resources and the great European Witch Hunt" ms. 2007.
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The Politics of Spirituality: Dissident Spiritual Practice of Poykayil Appachan and the Shared Legacy of Kerala Renaissance

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In India spirituality is a complex and dynamic paradigm with plural dimensions. There are dominant and hegemonic streams of spirituality as well as divergent and counter hegemonic expressions of dissent and resistance based spiritual enquiries. The deviant and de-centered forms of spiritual pursuits that resist and counter the hegemonic worldview, ordering and spiritual canons could be termed as dissident spirituality in this context. Political dissent, resistance/ rebellion against hegemony, and cultural difference could be identified as the key elements of this dissident tradition of practical and material spirituality. It is a down to earth spirituality that is ethical and political and an inextricable part of material life and struggles of the people. Foregrounding dissent and emphasizing difference are expressions of the

ethical and political dimension of thought and praxes and inevitable part of the democratic way of life.

These political or practical spiritualities across languages and cultures in India have also contributed immensely to our composite culture, secularism and democracy at large in the modern era. In this sense numerous minor streams of counter hegemonic and dissent based indigenous ascetic traditions could be traced from early Vedic period onwards. The Kapila and Charvaka traditions, the Lokayata legacy, Ajivaka sects, Jain and Buddhist traditions and also later Sufi traditions could be identified as a people's or Bahujan tradition of spiritual dissent and political resistance against the hegemonic Vedic spirituality, as they were attempts to probe the material

misery of human life rather than the mystery of gods, and were aimed at the greater common good and welfare of the people (“Bahujana Hitaya, Bahujana Sukhaya”) in Buddha’s own words. In this context the whole history of India could be read as an epistemological, ethical and cultural conflict and struggle between the dominant Vedic or Brahmanical spirituality and the dissident Sramana critiques and Bahujan resistance of the hegemonic spirituality of Hindu imperialism.

This ethical conflict and political struggle are all the more evident and significant in the cultural contexts of Kerala renaissance that changed society, culture and polity in a drastic way in the first half of 20th century. As Buddhism that paved the foundations of egalitarianism and literacy in South India in BC third century itself, which was unfortunately obliterated and erased by the Brahmanic conquest by the seventh or eighth century, Kerala renaissance was also a challenge to caste and Brahmanism. It was also an ethical struggle against caste oppression, exclusion and internal imperialism. The hegemony of caste and Brahmanism was challenged and egalitarian social change was initiated by dissident spiritual leaders like Ayya Vaikundhan and Narayana Guru in late 19th century itself.¹ Both of them used the religious and spiritual traditions as a platform to float radical and subversive democratic ideals.

While Vaikundha Swamy used popular and rustic forms of Vaishnavism and Hindu spirituality to introduce his radical ideas of human equality and brotherhood among the

Bahujans of south Travancore (Nanjinad) by establishing an egalitarian sect called Samatva Sangham; Narayana Guru initiated a new secular and democratic practical spirituality encompassing the ethical teachings of all religions and emphasized the importance of the betterment of the human and the social. Both of them questioned caste and priestly mediation in spiritual practice and effected humane and democratic transformations in society. It is also important to note that both the sages came from untouchable Avarna communities in Travancore and attacked caste and Brahmanism through peaceful and ascetic ways. Soul force and spiritual power of indigenous Indian ascetic traditions, especially that of the Sramana tradition were their chief defenses against the internal empire of caste and the practice of untouchability.

We see politics and ethics prompting a spiritual revolution or rupture to provide a break in the struggles of the people against the dominant ideology and discourse of caste and Varna here. We could also identify the empowering of people and their politics by practical spirituality as well. So in these contexts it is significant to note that practical spirituality and politics are two sides of the same coin. This radical and subversive spiritual tradition that arose with Vaikundha Swamy in early 19th c. South Kerala was specifically anti caste, spiritually rebellious and counter hegemonic. It also gave rise to skeptics and alternative spiritual explorers like Thaikad Ayyavu who in turn recharged Chattambi Swamikal and Narayana Guru for spiritually strategic and culturally iconic attacks on Brahmanism and

¹ Vaikundha Swamy or Ayya Vaikundhan was an early 19th century social reformer and spiritual leader from south Travancore called Nanjinad. He emerged from the untouchable Nadar (then Channar) community and organized the untouchable people under Samatva Sangham. He was tortured by Maharaja Swati Thirunal for breaking the laws of Varna and caste but the sage survived the brutal persecution in tiger chamber. Ayya was the first sage in modern times in south India to proclaim that all humans are equal and siblings. He was also the first ascetic to install a mirror as a deity in Swamithopu, his retreat in Kanyakumari district. Narayana Guru was a late 19th and early 20th century social reformer and spiritual leader in Kerala. He could also be seen as the grand disciple of Vaikundha Swamy as Thaikadu Ayyavu the direct disciple of Vaikundha Swamy taught Narayana Guru and Chattambi Swamikal for some time. The point is that the south Indian non Brahmanical ascetic tradition could be identified in all these spiritual masters who paved the foundations of Kerala renaissance and they had some kind of dialogue and exchange in their inter subjective relationships.

its knowledge / power monopolies, hegemonic textuality or semiotics.²

The same nexus of political and spiritual could be seen in the spiritual dissent of Poykayil Appachan or Sri Kumara Gurudevan (1879-1939). He was an early 20th century Dalit leader and social reformer of central Travancore who established a spiritual sect of his own called Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha (PRDS) in 1910. As a slave child he learned letters and spread the message of equity and justice among fellow outcastes. He strategically used the Christian façade for spreading the word of salvation and liberation among the excluded. He broke the stereotype of Dalit Christian identity by rationally critiquing the very foundations of the teachings of the church and burning the Bible. But Poykayil Yohannan also strategically and practically used the opportunities opened up by Western missionary intervention and evangelism for the liberation of the people at the bottom. His body of work maintains a practical and critical dialogicity with colonial textuality, modernity and evangelism.

Appachan established serious epistemological and theological debates and dialogues with the mainstream Christian churches. He

worked with the Marthoma Church, Brethren Church and Verpatu Sabha. He also came out of these conformist spiritual institutions after expressing dissent and critiquing the social and political inequality that were lingering in them. He identified caste and Brahmanism at the heart of the evangelical discourse and Syrian Christian establishments in Kerala and attacked and critiqued it through his dissident speeches and songs that addressed the spiritual and material margins in society.³ Preacher Yohannan⁴ also used secret meetings and travel-meetings or camouflaged road shows of the untouchables in the wilderness to impart the message of brotherhood and liberty like the African American slaves in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. Like Morrison he also reminded his people about the dehumanizing experience of internal imperialism and caste slavery that degenerated and de-spiritualized the people or subaltern classes. He was called Appachan or father by his followers as a spiritual master, guardian and savior amidst the past and present of extreme oppression, violence and all sorts of marginalization.

Appachan used his spiritual movement for the propagation of ethical and micro political ideas and discourses. He effectively materialized the democratic dissolving of

² Thaikad Ayyavu as an early spiritual explorer learned the ancient knowledge of Tamil and its Siddha tradition from Ayya Vaikundhan and passed it on to Narayana Guru and Chattambi Swamikal. Chattambi Swamikal who came from the fourth Varna of Sudras later called Nair community, defiantly questioned the Brahmanic monopoly over the Vedas through his Vedadhikara Nirupanam. He also traced the ancestry of Nairs to the pre Brahmanic era in Kerala and established their indigenous claims obliterated by Brahmanic texts like Keralolpathi and Bhargavacharitham. As a contemporary of Narayana Guru he also mixed with Avarna intellectuals and cultural activists and broke the taboos of caste and Varna towards an egalitarian future. Narayana Guru continued and effectively materialized this iconoclastic tradition to its secular humanist dimensions. He delegitimized the moral authority and spiritual hegemony of Brahmanism in matters of worship and religion through the Aruvipuram installation of 1888 and proclaimed the oneness of humanity. He also established a series of schools, libraries, factories and spiritual worshiping centers for the people all across Kerala that radically transformed society, culture and polity in early 20th c. Kerala.

³ A Song of Poykayil Appachan (Appachan 24):

Remembering the suffering of our ancestors
Who can abstain from sobbing?
Native Travancore was invaded
And conquered by the infiltrators from other lands
They have enslaved us as Paraya and Pulaya
And we were pushed down to the bottom of things

⁴ Appachan had more than twenty names during his life time. Kumaran, Komaran, Yohannan, Preacher Yohannan, Lohannan, Poyka, Kumara Guru, Sri Kumara Gurudevan etc. were some of his popular names. The range of names shows his multiple transformative identities in a caste society. He used the openings and dialogic possibilities everywhere.

various sub caste groups within the Dalit brotherhood of PRDS. Through his songs he addressed the excluded and suppressed subjects in history across the world and time. He effectively utilized the practical dimensions of dissent based spirituality to pursue the art of the possible. In this sense he resembles Dr Ambedkar who radically reinterpreted Neo Buddhism along with his democratic politics of inclusion and representation. Appachan democratically represented the people in Srimulam Prajasabha or the early legislative assembly of Travancore (1921-39).

His spiritual dissident practice was actually a social cover and moral legitimization for his democratic politics of inclusion, reform and representation. Addressing the marginalized and educating them to regain their lost human spirit, rights and social mobility were the real ethical and social agendas behind his spiritual pretext. This strategically liberating and practically social use of spirituality (first from within Christianity and then as an autonomous subaltern spiritual movement) links his life and efforts with that of Ayya Vaikundhan or Narayana Guru. These historic experiences from Kerala renaissance and the pan Indian Buddhist critique of caste Brahmanism reveal that spiritual dissidence is one of the most powerful forces of political activism, social change and cultural politics in Kerala and all across India. The counter hegemonic or specifically anti caste/Brahmanic thrust is a shared lineage and legacy among all the dissident spiritual movements and voices in Kerala renaissance, the Sramana critique and other minor dissident spiritual traditions of India.

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Practical Spirituality and Developmental Challenges among Tibetan Communities in India

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Introduction

This article discusses how and for what reasons the Western¹ assistance to Tibetan refugees is a paradigmatic case of spirituality in action, and the challenges it creates.

Giving the nature of Tibet in the Western mind, the evolution of spiritual needs in the West, and the own success of the Tibetan refugees to answer Western's expectations, I will show how the Tibetans installed in South Asia are still able to attract political, material, or even symbolic² Western assistance after almost fifty years of exile and an unsettled problem.

Moreover, this Western assistance takes the characteristics of a practical spirituality, as

discussed in the present volume, and this article will engage on its challenges. The Tibetan example is certainly unique, as I will show, in the way that there is a real exchange between the donors and the receivers. The practical spirituality takes all its sense in such an exchange but that ideal situation does not solve all the issues induced by the interaction between two populations. I will analyse these issues further to understand what can be the possibilities and the limits of a practical spirituality.

After a description of the history of the installation in the settlements and of the foreign assistance, I will show the reasons and the conditions of the success of the help

¹ By 'West', I intend either the Euro-American cultural apparatus, or the Euro-American organizations from different nature that are helping the Tibetans depending upon the context.

² For example, in the representations of the 'Tibet issue' as a paradigmatic oppression of a people by an alien power.

to Tibetans and how it is a kind of spirituality in action. Finally, I will show the challenges it creates in the Tibetan context.

Context

History

In 1959, ten years after the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, Tibet's temporal and spiritual leader, sought refuge in India to safeguard his endangered culture. About 80,000 Tibetans who settled mostly in India, Nepal, and Bhutan followed him in the ensuing years. A census carried out in 1998 stated that there were 127,000 Tibetan refugees living throughout the world. The biggest communities are settled in India (around 80,000) and Nepal (around 20,000) (Planning Council 2000). There is every year around 2 – 3,000 Tibetans who cross the Himalayas to seek asylum in India. In parallel, more and more refugees leave South India to settle, legally or illegally, in a Western country. This trend, which I will describe further below, resembles a second migration.

When the Dalai Lama understood that the Tibetan exile could last much longer than expected, he asked Jawaharlal Nehru, then India's Prime Minister, to open settlements for the refugees where they could develop – in a new Tibetan environment – the prime objectives of the exile, that is to safeguard their religion and culture. There are at present 35 such settlements in India, 12 in Nepal, and 7 in Bhutan (*ibid.*), all of which are placed under the responsibility of the so-called 'Tibetan Government-in-Exile' (TGIE) installed by the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India. The TGIE has also responsibility of different 'scattered communities', that is Tibetan communities living outside the organized settlements, found throughout the Himalayan regions in India and Nepal.

The settlements in India are registered as charities (under the patronage of the Dalai Lama himself), enjoying hence a kind of relative autonomy in the management of their

decisions. The situation is quite similar in Nepal and Bhutan, even if the juridical context is slightly different.

The TGIE, itself a registered charity under Indians laws, runs and provides welfare to these settlements and 'scattered communities'. The foreign assistance, which represents as much as 80 per cent of the TGIE expenditures (Planning Commission, personal communication 2006), is channeled through the TGIE which is itself considered as a local organization by the foreign organizations.

One can observe two phases in the installation of the refugees in India. The first one, the 'rehabilitation phase' is the period where the refugees had to organize their settlements and recreate a Tibetan setting. This period ended at the beginning of the 1980s. The second one is the 'development phase' where the Tibetans had the opportunity to flourish and launch development programs thanks to the Western assistance.

The Rehabilitation Phase

In April 1959, the Indian government launched the Central Relief Committee for Tibetans (CRCT) which would channel and control the aid of various international organizations to the two transit camps opened for the Tibetans (Central Relief Committee for Tibetans 1960: 17). These organizations were mostly American Christian organizations such as the Church World Service, the Lutheran World Federation, the Catholic Relief Service, or the Young Men Christian Association (*ibid.*). This was already a form of spirituality in action and one has to think that the religious nature and characterisation of Tibet in the West was an attracting factor for these agencies.

After the conflict that opposed it with China in 1962, the Indian government was seeking permanent solutions to settle the Tibetans in a culturally viable environment. Thus it launched the creation of big settlements that could give works to the refugees, many of whom were still employed on the harassing

and deadly roads construction sites in the Himalayas. Nehru asked the Indian states to give some land for the new refugees, who were arriving as many as 1,500 per week in the first years (Holborn 1975: 718). Different states answered positively, giving mostly poor-value land to install the settlements.

The first agricultural settlements were built up at the beginning of the 1960s in the South Indian³ plains on poor, unexploited lands (often jungles or forests). The climatic conditions there were nevertheless more than trying for the refugees, and many died. Furthermore, few exiles knew about agriculture suitable to the environment and the Tibetan farmers did not initially know how to handle these low-altitude lands. The Tibetans themselves executed all the works of land clearing: they had to cut trees, remove their trunks and roots, and prepare the soil (De Voe 1979). Many died due to such work, either killed by the work itself or by wild animals living on these lands. In addition, new deadly diseases, unknown in Tibet, developed throughout the settlements.

The refugees' situation improved rapidly however, after the terrible conditions at the beginning of the exile (see Central Relief Committee for Tibetans 1960 and 1961). At the end of the 1960s, many settlements were self-sufficient in the sense that their inhabitants were not dependant anymore on external resources for their daily survival. This was, and still is, a new success story in the world history of refugee rehabilitation.

At the end of the 1970s the refugees had been able to recreate in exile not only viable settlements, but Tibetan cultural environments in a foreign setting. Some writers were even talking of a "renaissance of the Tibetan civilization" (Fürer-Haimendorf and Kvaerne 1990). They did so by re-establishing in their settlements their religious institutions, developing the teaching of the central

Tibetan language, culture, and history, and increasing their socio-economic conditions which could perpetuate their survival in exile and the safeguarding of their identity. These achievements were made possible by the help of the Indian government and the international organizations that provided them unbroken help during these years.

The end of the 1970s marks the end of the 'rehabilitation phase' and the beginning of the 'development phase'. Many organizations made the assessment that their help was no longer needed and ceased giving it. Some made this evaluation much earlier, in the 1960s, and of all the Christian organizations working in 1960 with the Tibetans, only the Catholic Relief Service remains involved today. Nevertheless, these Christian organizations were replaced by new ones, who had different agendas.

The Development Phase

In 1972, the U.S.A., one of the Western countries that helped the most the Tibetans during the 1950s and 1960s, made official its reconciliation with the Chinese regime, signified by President Nixon's visit to China. This marked a shift in the strategic and political importance of the Tibetans for the U.S. government. The former no longer had an instrumental position in the anti-communist strategy of the latter and its direct support to the Tibetans ended.

The Tibetan leadership became aware of the danger of this new situation. The Dalai Lama consequently changed his strategy and began to carry in the West a political message, although he was ostensibly only a religious leader. He redirected also the contents of his message from "[the] arena of geopolitical national interests to the sphere of core U.S. values – to the U.S. ideological commitment to freedom and human rights. The goal was to create a momentum that would lead the

³ One in Bylakuppe (in the state of Mysore, now Karnataka) created in 1961, one in Mundgod (same State as Bylakuppe) created in 1963, one in Chandragiri (in the state of Orissa) created in 1963, and one in Mainpat (in the state of Madhya Pradesh) created in 1962.

United States to support Tibet because it was the just and right thing for freedom-loving Americans to do" (Goldstein 1997: 76).

Later, in the middle of the 1980s, to strengthen this goal, an 'international campaign' was launched with the help of Western supporters and donors. In 1988, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) was created. It is now one of the most important support groups in the world. Even if the organization is claiming that it is independent from the TGIE, it is often considered to be one of its extensions, as its Executive Chair of the Board of Directors is also titled as the 'Special Envoy to the Dalai Lama for North America'.

Since that time, many Tibetan support groups have been and continue to be created throughout the world. They keep the 'Tibetan cause' and the refugees' plight alive in the West. This movement was fuelled further by major key events at the end of the 1980s.

The Dalai Lama presented before the U.S. Congress a "Five-Point Peace Plan" in September 1987. This Peace Plan was the Dalai Lama's first step towards the abandonment of the independence claim in profit of the autonomy claim. The Dalai Lama would formally present this autonomy claim one year later, in June 1988, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

The Chinese government began allowing foreign tourists into Tibet in the beginning of the 1980s as part of its effort to open the country towards the international community. Western tourists then began to flow freely into Tibet for the first time in Tibetan history. For the first time, large numbers of Westerners could see the situation in the country and become aware of the Tibetans' claims.

The Dalai Lama's reception by the U.S. Congress in 1987 was regarded inside Tibet (as well as in exile) as a great opportunity to make official such claims and to win the political support of the American nation. In Lhasa, a group of Tibetan monks began in October of

the same year, to shout anti-Chinese and pro-independence slogans in order to show their support to the Dalai Lama. This began a series of riots in Tibet that were severely repressed by the police (among whom many Tibetans were). These tensions lasted until at least 1989 and the Chinese government quickly closed the country and imposed martial law. But it was too late as many Westerners had witnessed the riots and documented them. Some involved themselves or were caught in the middle of the demonstrations, and later recount what they saw. Amongst them was Robbie Barnett who, as a direct consequence, created the Tibet Information Network; and John Ackerly, now director of the ICT. Later in 1989, the Chinese students' demonstrations and their repression in Tiananmen Square were reported on television programs throughout the world, all of which strengthened the Western feeling that a kind of genocide was happening in Tibet.

In 1989, the Dalai Lama received the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent fight for freedom. While clearly showing a kind of Western support, it was not, however, translated into political action on the part of Western governments.

Later, in 1997, two popular Hollywood films relaunched and strengthened the world awareness and support for the Tibetans. "Seven Years in Tibet" (directed by Jean-Jacques Annaud) and "Kundun" (directed by Martin Scorsese) both present a vision of a lost paradise invaded and 'raped' by the evil Chinese forces. These films were huge successes and helped catalyzed support for the Tibetan cause.

All of these events created in the West vast movements of support and in the decade between 1985 and 1995, Tibetan support groups and NGOs helping Tibetans were literally mushrooming. ICT, for example, increased its members from 5,000 in 1995 to 80,000 in 2000 (Pike 2001: 30).

Moreover, the increasing success in the West of Tibetan Buddhism, particularly support

for the figure of the Dalai Lama as a spiritual leader, participated in the attraction of support for Tibetans.

Many organizations are working now with the Tibetans in exile, and even if they are very different in nature, goals, and agendas, they are in agreement in their main objective of keeping Tibetan culture (as they see it), and especially its religion,⁴ alive.

Nature of the organizations:

The organizations assisting Tibetans can be categorized in four distinct groups:

Intergovernmental and governmental organizations⁵ : These organizations are working with the refugees through their different types of projects.

The Tibetan administration⁶ gets their resources from direct sources (through fundraising) or most often through an intermediate organization.⁷

These organizations do not officially recognize the TGIE and they finance only its politically 'neutral' projects.⁸

These organizations are political organizations and do not take any position on the Tibet issue. Nevertheless, in my own fieldwork, I observed that the individuals working for these organizations on the projects with Tibetans are really aware of the Tibetan refugees' plight and are quite empathetic.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): These are international or national agencies. Some are working with the Tibetans along with other populations and some were created to help only the Tibetans.

The term NGO summarizes a variety of organizations. I use it to mean the organizations managing developmental projects with the Tibetans and which do not engage in 'political activism' (organizations that do are listed in the next category).

NGOs that work with other populations were present during the rehabilitation phase but most of them do not work with the Tibetan refugees anymore. These NGOs are more willing to work inside Tibet now (like the Swiss Red Cross or Save the Children).

The NGOs that only work with Tibetans are well represented in exile but most of them do not have a local office and work through the CTA.⁹

Like governmental organizations, the NGOs avoid any political commitments but their employees and donors are aware of the Tibetan issue and have chosen specifically to work with Tibetans.

'Friends of Tibet' or 'Tibet Support Groups' (TSGs) organizations: These are organizations of political militants for the "Tibet cause". Most of them are regrouped under the International Tibet Support Network (ITSN). This network gathers 300 organizations from

⁴ Tibet's "religion" is mostly Vajrayana Buddhism, subdivided in four schools. There is also another belief system called Bon (bon) which was mostly a shamanistic cult and which through the course of time came to resemble to Buddhism (Blondeau 1976). If Bon was under-recognized by the leadership at the time when the refugees arrived in exile, it is now increasingly popular amongst Western followers who see in it a more "authentic" cult than Buddhism. However, the vast majority of Tibetans are Buddhists.

⁵ Like, for example, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), or the UK Department for International Development (DFID)

⁶ The 'Central Tibetan Administration' (CTA), is the TGIE's administration.

⁷ For example, the Canadian International Development Agency finances the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society for its projects in the settlements in India and Nepal and even in Tibet.

⁸ The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is thus working in close collaboration with the TGIE in its office in Kathmandu: the Tibetan Refugees' Welfare Office (reception centre for all new refugee arriving from Tibet via Nepal), managed by the CTA and which director is also the Dalai Lama's representative in Nepal, is the UNHCR "implement partner" (UNHCR project manager, personal communication 2005).

⁹ For example The Tibet Foundation, based in London, or the French organization, Solhimal.

52 countries throughout the world and claims to have more than 100,000 members (Reynolds 2003: 447).

They create and manage development projects together with activist projects like demonstrations, petitions, and targeted protest activities. They are the most active – and certainly the most influential group among the four – in the creation and perpetuation of the discourse on the Tibet issue in the West.

Many of these types of organizations have however a very short lifespan; they are founded by enthusiastic amateurs in the world of formal political intervention, and it is not surprising that they are sometimes unable to measure¹⁰ the implications of a viable organization. Many of these organizations thus disappear as fast as they are created.

The TSGs' network is very structured and they have had international meetings every four years since 1990. The first conference was organized in Dharamsala by the CTA.

Most of these organizations integrate to varying degrees the religious nature of their help. If they are not always 'Dharma'¹¹ followers', they mix their political activism with some sort of religious agenda.

The Dharma followers: They are important patrons of the religious institutions. As the traditional economic system of support to the clergy collapsed when it arrived in exile, new ways of subsistence had to be found. A Western interest in the Dharma provided a good opportunity to find new sponsors. Many lamas, monks and nuns have built 'Dharma Centres' and other religious institutions in Western countries (as well as in Taiwan or Japan) creating thus new sources of incomes.

There is however a fifth informal category of helpers composed by the different individuals

who are sporadically volunteering in the Tibetan settlements. They organize language courses for the population or fit into the various volunteer's organizations that can be found in the settlements. It is quite an important group as it motivates and creates a sense of vocation in these individuals that may lead them to create or work for a settled organization.

Reasons of this success

Three main reasons explain how the Western assistance to Tibetans could take the shape of a practical spirituality: an old Western 'Myth' of Tibet; the evolution of spiritual needs in the West; and the orientation of the Tibetan voices towards Western expectations.

'The East' or 'the Orient' (an indefinite space just like 'the West') has always been an object of fascination for the Western world. The latter saw in the former its negative mirrored image. The East is a space into which the dreams, the fantasies, but also the frustrations of the West are projected (see Said 1979).

Because of its relative isolation, Tibet has always excited the Western imagination and one could argue that it epitomizes the whole tendency of Orientalism (see, amongst others, Bishop 1989 and 2000; Lopez 1998). Tibet became a lost paradise where the Westerner could go back to his supposed origins. This 'Myth' of Tibet (or rather, as it should be said, the myths of Tibet) has been developed in the West over a long time. At present it is articulated in the form, or rather 'the formlessness', of 'New Age' spiritualist notions of Tibet: a vague spirituality developed to meet the needs of the Western spiritual markets (Korom 2001; McMillin 2002).¹² Jamyang Norbu talks rightly of a "New Age colonialism" (Jamyang Norbu 1998: 21). These myths of the East were extremely strong in the 19th century and have stayed in the Western consciousness until today.¹³

¹⁰ Who are coming back from a visit to some Tibetan settlements in South Asia, or who heard about the 'Tibet cause' and want to do something for it.

¹¹ In very short, the 'Dharma', in Buddhism, is the teaching of Buddha. By extension, and this is the way I use the word, it is identified with Buddhism.

¹² On the Western spiritual market see Hervieu-Léger (1993) (Translated in English as *Religion as a Chain of Memory*, 2000, Cambridge, Polity Press).

¹³ For the history of these fantasies in the West, see Lopez (1998), Lenoir (1999) and Obadia (1999).

The 'Myth' of Tibet evolved through time and is not fixed and unitary. Bishop proposes a very relevant diachronic analysis. He details the inversion of the West's interest in Tibet: from a sublime and magnificent landscape with, in addition, an exotic religion, Tibet became after the Second World War a country with a fascinating religion brighten up with an exotic landscape (Bishop 1989: 244). In a later article, Bishop remarks that Shangri-La is now morphing into a "cyber-la" (Bishop 2000). Tibetan culture, and especially Tibetan religion, is now entering the high-tech Western imagination: it is regularly compared with modern science and with the new technologies.¹⁴ The Western people are thus able to project their own desires and fantasies in the ever-evolving 'Myth' of Tibet.

In addition, the first Tibetans arrived in the West in the 1960s and their plight became known by Westerners at a time of a redefinition of belief in the West, and the development of a modern or post-modern secularization. In this "re-enchantment of the world" (Hervieu-Léger 1993), spiritual beliefs are not disappearing but are being reorganized. They are reorganized not in the traditional patterns of the Christian beliefs but in a patchwork of different spiritual elements from all over the world's beliefs and traditions. And in this new 'marketplace of religions', Buddhism in general, and Tibetan Buddhism in particular, have a very important place. The leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, is held up as the embodiment of the ideal person in this new spiritual trend: having the ability to link politics and religion in a non-violent, engaged, and modern-compatible fight for a cause. Of course, Tibetan Buddhism – as a particular

form of Buddhism and a part of 'New Age' – is also popular in the West for different reasons, especially like a way for increasing one's mundane life health and pleasures.

When the Tibetans arrived in exile they had two main goals: to regain the independence of their country and to safeguard their endangered culture. The strongest marker of this culture is the religion,¹⁵ and as historical habitus, the Tibetans continue to use it to reach their goals. In Tibet, politics and religion were indeed closely connected and the tenant of one of this power was most of the time controlling the second one, in a close relation called *chod*¹⁶ -*srid zung-'brel'*.¹⁷

To reach their goals in exile, the Tibetan leadership had to look for support which they found in the West. The Dalai Lama chose to turn his discourse and his community towards the Western world (and not the non-aligned countries, which could have been another option). However, to keep this foreign interest in their culture, the Tibetans had to adopt different voices. In order to satisfy and compensate their donors, the Tibetan refugees have developed different discourses that articulate and instrumentalize their religion.¹⁸ These discourses constitute a type of agency and are shaped following what Goffman has called the "impression management" (1959). Using these self-identities and discourses, the Tibetans operated something that I would call the 'spiritualization' or the 'religiou-sation' of the international assistance provided to them. As a result, the Western 'friends of Tibet' have integrated into the traditional Tibetan patron – priest relation (*mchod-yon*) in their help, as I will show below.

¹⁴ In his version of the "Book of the Dead", Robert Thurman says that the meditation is "like you are using Word Perfect and you are in the chip. And you're self aware of being in the chip" (Bishop 2000: 64 quoting Mackenzie). See also the advertisements for computers where Tibetan monks appear (IBM, Apple) (*ibid*: 61 ff).

¹⁵ This religion is perceived in the world mainly as being Buddhism. Bon religion has weak recognition at present even if an interest in it is growing in the West. When the Tibetan leaders talk about their religion they generally do not mention if they think about Buddhism, Bon, or both. Actually, given the fact that the political bodies in Dharamsala include a representation of the Bon, it is assumed that the Tibetan religion is officially understood as both Buddhism and Bon. Bon practices and rituals can however be mixed with Buddhism and considered to be a fifth school of Buddhism.

¹⁶ I use Wylie transliteration for the Tibetan terms.

¹⁷ Literally: religion and politics combined. See Ruegg (1995).

¹⁸ See Kauffmann (Forthcoming) for a detailed analysis of these two discourses.

Thus, the Tibetan opening to the West, through the refugees, liberated ancient fantasies and fuelled the development of new spiritual needs: for the first time, Westerners could freely and easily meet Tibetans, and, moreover, help them to safeguard their culture.

Practical Spirituality

The wide ranging assistance to Tibetans is a form of practical spirituality that owes its efficacy and success to different pre-existing conditions and contexts.

First, the Tibetans are directing the assistance they receive in accordance with the historical relation of *mchod-yon* or 'patron – priest' relation. When the Mongols ruled almost all Asia in the 13th century, a Tibetan religious leader, the *Sa-skya* lama, went to meet in 1247 the younger brother of Mongol ruler *Güyük Khan*, to propose that a new kind of relation be made between themselves and their people: a material and political protection on one part for a spiritual protection on the other (see Ruegg 1995). In this instrumentalization of his religion, the Tibetan leader avoided a Mongolian invasion of his country. In the present context, many scholars have showed that the relation between the Westerners and the Tibetans is quite similar. I showed elsewhere (Kauffmann Forthcoming), that Westerners integrated this relation in their assistance by conceiving of their material and political assistance as a means of gaining spiritual merit. In their discourses for Westerners, the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan leaders always link Tibetan religion with such assistance and use a religious language to describe the help they receive. An example amongst many others is this quotation from Tenzin Takla, secretary of the TGIE's Department of Information and International Relations:

"His Holiness the Dalai-Lama once said that when we Tibetans prayed, we prayed to the

three refuges: the Buddha, his teachings, and the community of monks... Now, because of Tibet's tragic political fate and our non-violent struggle, we pray to a fourth refuge, that of the international community." (Departement of Information and International Relations and Friedrich-Neumann Stiftung 2001: 52, emphasis added).

Moreover, the Tibetans shape their discourses in order to please their donors and re-orientate their religion in these awaited directions.¹⁹ The donors are not always consciously aware of this *mchod-yon* relation, but they are also complicit in linking their help to safeguarding Tibetan culture, and moreover, religion. Such discourse is prevalent in the assistance to Tibetans.

Second, the refugees 'arrived' at a time in which belief in the West was being reshaped in extra-Christian ways. The arrival of Tibetan Buddhists was seen by many Westerners as a great opportunity to discover this religion through its followers. They acquired the impression that the religion they were already interested in or practicing, was endangered in its actual country of origin and began to sponsor religious institutions in exile and advocating the Tibetan cause. Robert Thurman, a former Buddhist monk and professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies wrote:

"I thought Tibet had done me the kindness of preserving the dharma from ancient times in India and handing it to me ... I woke up to how callous that was about 15 years ago and decided that I could try to repay their kindness by helping to get the world's attention focused on this massive injustice." (Kamenetz 1996)

A new concept arose from this trend that scholars and activists call "engaged Buddhism" (Queen 2000).

Finally, from the 1970s onwards, a crisis touched the Western development sector. This

¹⁹ See Frechette (1997) and her "entitlement model", Huber (1997) on "Green Tibetans" and Kauffmann (Forthcoming) on the Tibetan leaders' political-religious discourses.

sector was accused of having moved away from its ethical and charitable roots. Many critics therefore appealed to the rejuvenation of morality in development and the developers' realisation of "self-development" (Quarles van Ufford, Giri et al. 2003; Giri, Harskamp et al. 2004, amongst others). The Tibetan mchod-yon relation, with its articulation of explicit links between religion and politics, was the perfect setting for a return to a meaningful and fruitful development and this attracted a lot of agencies willing to work with Tibetans. These days, the spiritual character of the Tibetans is very often praised amongst the organizations, not only from a religious regard, but because it is seen as the main reason for the refugees' success.

These amenable conditions which initiated spirituality in action can explain why the Tibetan refugees are still helped after almost fifty years in exile, why their plight is still present on the international stage, and why the refugees are often cited as a success-story, a model of rehabilitation in the development world. Moreover, the Tibetan case is a unique example where the assistance organizations integrate the spirituality of the culture they help.

The challenges

Practical spirituality, at least in the Tibetan case, involves a process of commitment from the helpers that is much more important than in any other development experiences. The agencies and individuals working with Tibetan refugees are thus committed to the different cultural markers of the Tibetan culture. Moreover, the Tibetan community in exile has yet to really experience secularization and religion is still a basis for their culture. Hence the development of practical spirituality can change the entire society's setting. It is the more important induced changes that I will now describe.

The Tibetans are in a way "prisoners of Shangri-La"²⁰ (Lopez 1998) in that they have to remain very religious and answer to the spiritual expectations of their helpers on behalf of their religion. In this case, as the Westerners put their spirituality into action they are also expecting much more than they would in other, more classical development contexts. Here, the Westerners require contact with the personal ethos of the receivers. The Tibetans are thus prisoners of stereotypes: they are constructed or shaped by these stereotypes²¹ and have to adhere to them if they want to survive materially and politically.

Indeed they have already partly begun to succumb to these fantasies.²² By using their discourses towards the West as weapons of the weak during almost fifty years, the Tibetans subordinated themselves to these discourses. Now, as the primary memory of Tibet as a free country is fading away in exile, the refugees are coming more and more to see their country as the lost paradise, the mythical land, that the foreigners present them.

Owing to foreign support, the Tibetans were able to recreate a flourishing religious life in exile and some of these recreated monasteries and religious institutions have a real financial power. These monasteries regained their pre-1950 social and political status and they now have lands and own businesses (hotels, guest-houses, and restaurants), lend money, influence local communities, represent for some a gateway to go to the West, and more. The return of power to the monastic and religious institutions after they had been almost or totally dismantled is maybe for the refugees their most important success.

The leaders of these monasteries are now managing and raising funds through monasteries and Dharma centres in Western countries. Ström has called them "Dharma brokers" (Ström 2001: 70) as they live between their monasteries in exile and their centres in

²⁰ The main Western myth on Tibet.

²¹ They are seen in the West as peace-loving people, very spiritual, friendly, etc.: only very positive stereotypes and prejudices.

the West. Going further, Obadia (1999) sees this phenomenon as a planned proselytising by the Tibetan clergy. The Tibetans, clergy or lay people, are also travelling around the World and performing their traditional arts in order to make financial gain.²³

The foreign sponsors, especially the Dharma followers, have thus an influence on the religious apparatus, like in the Shugden²⁴ controversy or the support of the Bon tradition by the Vatican in the 1960s²⁵ when the Tibetan leaders did not support it. Likewise, some institutions take the architectural shape of their benefactors as the Gyutö monastery, reconstructed near Dharamsala and which resemble a Japanese Buddhist temple. In most of the cases, however, the patrons are more interested by the spiritual merit they can gain through their acts than the practical and worldly attribution of their support.

The monasteries, financially prosperous, attract both Tibetans from Tibet and ethnically Tibetan populations from the Himalayas. In these institutions, these two groups outnumber now the Tibetans born in exile. In fact, the latter do not tend to send their children to monasteries anymore thanks to their access to other opportunities (created by their material success). Nevertheless, the religious institutions are until now at the

core of the Tibetan society, both because the Tibetans are still very religious and because the Westerners are very interested in them (the two being linked as I have shown).

The Tibetan leadership is increasingly claiming that saving the Tibetan culture means saving the Tibetan religion,²⁶ the culture is essentialized through the religion, with the risk of excluding every other cultural marker. In the West, this message is received very positively and often linked to a Tibetan prophecy of unclear origins:

“When iron birds fly and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will scatter like ants and the dharma will spread to the land of the red man” (Tashi Rabgey 1997)

The creation of a Tibetan diaspora is hence identified with the spread of Buddhism to the West. However, crystallisation around the Tibetan religion can obscure the Tibetan political agenda, and many Tibetans express their frustrations by shouting “we are not monks!”: By emphasizing the religious character of the Tibetan identity, Westerners can raise frustrations amongst the lay Tibetans who feel thus less “authentically Tibetan” as a consequence (McLagan 1996: 415).

Moreover, the current trend in the Tibetan diaspora is to follow the Buddhism (and the

²² This will increase now as even the Chinese are adopting these myths.

²³ The monks are creating sand *mandala*, performing religious dances (*cham*); and lay Tibetans are performing traditional music, songs or opera. Calkowski, McLagan and Schrepf have studied, in the same volume (*Tibetan Culture in the Diaspora*, Korom 1997), the method of staging these art forms in foreign countries. They suggest that these performed arts have become “secularized” and have lost their religious meanings. One author asks what the significations of such performance are: “art, religion, or entertainment?” (McLagan 1997: 82).

Hutnik analyses the same fact at the Womad music festival in Reading in 1994. He describes the cultural “fusion” that operates on such stages:

“No one seemed too embarrassed at the irregular dancing of the waif-like hippie woman spiralling trance-circle-ly in sexy rapture in front of the devotional Islamic Qawwals of Hussain and Party...I am particularly interested, and anxious, about the appropriations, and questions of appropriate behaviour, in such a scene where authenticity operates through incomprehension and fracture of context.” (in Werbner and Modood 1997: 110; emphasis added).

²⁴ Dorje Shugden is a Tibetan divinity who protects since the 15th century the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism (the Dalai Lama’s school). He is now considered by the Tibetan leadership as a threat to the religious homogeneous identity wanted for the community. The Dalai Lama banned his cult, provoking the fury of Shugden’s followers. Amongst them are many Western centres who denounce the Dalai Lama as being a dictator. This fuelled a lot of controversy and violence in the settlements, leading to the murders of three people (see Gruschke 1998).

²⁵ The Bon were not really recognized and assisted by the CTA when they arrived in exile. They were left without resources and the head of the school even died on the roads construction sites in India. They turned to the Vatican, asking for help, and received its assistance.

²⁶ If he is including the Bon tradition in his conception of religion is however not clear.

money), by going to the West. The main reasons are economic and this can be considered a second migration. The phenomenon is an increasing issue for the Tibetan leadership who observes a disintegration of the community in exile and hence a danger to the safeguarding of the Tibetan identity in exile.

In parallel, the settlements in exile have to display what their sponsors are looking for: a pure and authentic 'Tibetan-ness'. The society in exile tends to be thus "museum-ized" and strong conservatism is observed not only in religion but also in the displayed arts.²⁷ The Tibetan society, in its helpers' eyes, is not allowed to evolve or modernize.

Moreover, the Tibetans have had to present a unified identity in order to create and maintain legitimacy on the international stage. All the differences that marked the Tibetan culture before 1950 have had to be erased or swept under the rug. The Tibetan leadership in exile works hard to iron out the regional, linguistic, and even religious differences in order to create a common 'Tibetan-ness', for both endogenous and exogenous reasons: endogenous because erasing these differences is the sine-qua-non condition for creating a community, and exogenous because this community is necessary to highlight the plight of Tibetans to the international community. Therefore in exile, that which can endanger this homogeneity is dismissed or banned.

This effort began by standardizing the education and the way it presents the history, culture, religion, and language of Tibet. The Tibetan schools teach an official version of the 'nation's' history and culture, that revolves around certain symbols. Every morning in the Tibetan schools in India, Indian and Tibetan national songs are sung, the Tibetan flag is raised, and prayers are given for the long life

of the Dalai Lama and the Tibet cause. These schools teach the language of Lhasa (Lha-sa skad), the new lingua franca for all Tibetan refugees and ethnic Tibetans.

Jamyang Norbu remarks that even the official history is rewritten to suit the new Tibetan discourses: the early violent resistance to the Chinese is taught at school less and less, because it could give an impression of the Tibetans as being other than the non-violent, spiritual, and socially elevated people that they now wish to portray (Jamyang Norbu 2004: 129).

On a religious level, the Tibetan Buddhism counts different schools and another religion still practiced by a minority: Bon (bon). The Dalai Lama's intention has been to erase or limit the dissensions that could happen between these schools²⁸ although historically there has been dissent between them. The banishment of Shugden worship is such an example but so is the democracy installed in exile that claims to recognize all dimensions of the Tibetan culture including religion: the three regions of Tibet, the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism, and the adherents of Bon.

On the political side, the Tibetan authorities in exile, and specifically their leader, the Dalai Lama, understood that they couldn't just transfer the 'traditional' Tibetan system to Tibetans in exile. In any case, such a choice would not have been tolerated by India, which was at this time a proud new parliamentary democracy, freed from its colonial power and by Western agencies.²⁹

A fundamental point to note is that the introduction of democracy into the Tibetan political system leads to a break with the past. The Tibetans are facing a dilemma: to be democratic, they have to elect the Head of

²⁷ See Harris (1999) and Gonkar Gyatso (2003) for the story of Gonkar Gyatso, a painter who had to return to Tibet after having spent some time in exile because his avant-gardiste paintings were very badly perceived in the refugees' community.

²⁸ See, amongst others Goldstein (1989 and 1997) or Dawa Norbu (1987).

²⁹ The U.S. government helped quite importantly the installation of a democracy in exile. The U.S. organization "The National Endowment for Democracy" (NED), financed by the U.S. Congress and created "to channel millions of Federal dollars into anti-Communist "private diplomacy"" (Franklin 1985), is still developing projects in exile

their State, but to do so is to reject their past – where the Head of the State is a reincarnated religious leader identified in his youth by a circle of religious specialists – a past that is exactly what they want to safeguard. There is actually an ontological incompatibility between the Tibetan Buddhism and the democracy. As the Dalai Lama stated:

“When we see this word “secularism” in any constitution, it sounds very appropriate and good. In our case, also, it is something which we should seriously consider. But some people take secularism to mean the absence of religion. This definition goes against our tradition and the present reality of our situation. Even now, in Tibet, many people have been sacrificing their lives in the struggle for Tibetan independence which, in their minds, is associated with the Buddhist Dharma.” (Dalai Lama 1995: 138)

Another issue is about authority: a Tibetan democratic system should be built by every Tibetan in the world which is obviously not possible due to the political context in Tibet (see Sangay Forthcoming).

The Dalai Lama, certainly aware of these issues, declared in his 1992, 10th of March statement, that should he return to Tibet, he would hand over all of his responsibilities to a new Tibetan leadership (Dalai Lama 2005: 101). He has also declared³⁰ that the next Dalai Lama could be elected by a college of high ranking monks, hence reconciling, in a limited way, the Tibetan Buddhism with Democracy.³¹

Conclusion

I showed in this paper how the Tibetan refugees are still helped by foreign organizations after almost fifty years in exile, thanks to specific conditions that induced a practical spirituality. I showed that this practical spirituality is unique in the sense that it is developed following the spirituality of the helped

population. I also showed how spiritually-oriented help can provoke contradictory consequences that may endanger its most precious objectives.

Although I would agree that the notions of spirituality-in-action and self development are absolutely essential in the modern development area, in the case of assistance to Tibetans, however – where these notions are already present and the historical links with the West are very particular – they can create some conflicts or counteractive results. As Ananta Kumar Giri writes in the present volume:

“We need not close our eyes to the fact that there is a problem of entrenched authoritarianism in spirituality as well, and practical spirituality has to transform this authoritarianism by taking part simultaneously in political, moral and spiritual struggle in a new poetics and politics of transformation”.

As the Tibetan refugees become increasingly aware of their dependency on foreign influential resources that have the power to shape their society, they try to draw different “exit policies” (Planning Commission 2004: 17) in their development plans and try to negotiate more freedom from their donors. One can thus assume that the exchanges between the latter and the Tibetans will take in the future other characteristics. It will be worth studying them to understand the inner strength of a practical spirituality.

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³⁰ In an interview to the daily Japanese newspaper “The Sankei Shimibun”, on November, 20th 2007 (Philip 2007)

³¹ The Dalai Lama is actually more trying now to propose different ideas to observe the reactions as taking formal decisions. In the same interview he said that he could also himself choose his successor (ibid).

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Practical Spirituality and Engaged Shinto: Ecology, Peace and the Critique of Modernity in Reformed Japanese Religion

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The current, belated but very welcome, attempt to find sources for social and ecological relevance in the major world religions has now swept through all of the major traditions. Perhaps the mother of them all – liberation theology arising from within Roman Catholicism – has inspired new movements within Christianity, including feminist and Black theologies and has undoubtedly been the source that has stimulated the appearance of Jewish theologies of liberation (e.g. Ellis 1988) and the many forms of “Engaged” Buddhism that have so fruitfully emerged in the last decade and a half (e.g. Queen, Prebish and Keown 2003). Parallel to these have been new socially activist forms of Islam, many of them grappling with the issues of the possibility of an Islamic economics, of Muslim feminism and with the place of Islam in a pluralist and

globalized world system, and the tentative emergence of new forms of engaged Hinduism (and it should not be forgotten that Hinduism has a very long history of generating social movements for reform both of itself and of the social and cultural conditions under which it was practiced (e.g. Lorenzen 2005). In the last decade what has emerged as a common platform for all of them has been the rapidly escalating ecological crisis in which we all, regardless of religion or culture, now find ourselves engulfed (Gottlieb 2006). This in turn raises afresh issues of environmental and social justice, of the fair distribution of scarce natural resources and of the frightening possibility that it may be religions themselves that have set the ideological agenda for the destruction and neglect of nature, a realization that is now forcing many of them to review critically and

creatively their own possible theological and textual resources for addressing these urgent and unavoidable questions (for a general survey see Gottlieb 2004 and from a specific religious point of view – in this case Hinduism, see Naganathan 2004).

But most neglected in all this stimulation of ideas, debate and action, has been a religious tradition which while, like Hinduism, is specific to a particular place and culture, nevertheless has potentially a major contribution to make in promoting a spirituality appropriate to the current world situation, and in particular to the environmental problems that now top the agenda. This tradition is Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan where, in close symbiosis with Buddhism, it represents the belief system of 125 million people in that country and many more spread throughout the Japanese diaspora in Latin America, Southeast Asia and elsewhere. As Japan has risen to be the world's second largest economy as measured in conventional terms and the first non-colonized example of successful Asian capitalism, we should also be alert to the issue that so exercised Max Weber as to the connections between religion and particular patterns of development and economic success. Shinto is in fact a deeply interesting form of religious expression and one seriously neglected in the literature on world religions. Compromised by its associations with pre-war fascism and the emperor system, sectors within the Japanese Shinto community have now begun to explore its potentially socially relevant aspects and in particular its relationship to ecology, an issue towards which, like Japanese traditional culture in general, it has always claimed a close affinity and which now provides it with a theme that can potentially help convert its teachings and ritual practices into a form of practical spirituality with a very direct bearing on contemporary problems.

Shinto and Ecology

Japan prides itself on having a culture closely connected with nature – in its aesthetics (as

revealed in painting and perhaps preeminently in the art of the Japanese garden), in the seasonality of its foods and fashions, in its passion for cherry-blossom and autumn foliage viewing. Any visitor to Japan will have noticed that Shinto shrines are almost always located in natural settings and are often sites of great beauty in themselves. Indeed for many there seems to be a fundamental dissonance between the historical association of Shinto with nationalism, war and the imperial institution and the deep emphasis on nature that is inherent in the religion. Many recent scholars of Shinto now argue that the historical association with militarism and fascism was an aberration resulting from the late Nineteenth Century attempts to establish Shinto as the state religion with its effects of bureaucratizing what had originally been a decentralized and localized collection of essentially agricultural and animistic cults which did not even have a common name and which had many local and regional variations. The contemporary response to this has been to mine the practices and theory of Shinto as a project to explore the possible contributions of this interesting form of religion for addressing the contemporary world crisis, especially in its ecological aspects.

The main outcome of this has been the attempt to reestablish Shinto as an ecological religion, with teachings of universal validity in the face of world-wide environmental catastrophe. Evidence of this can be seen in the foundation of an International Shinto Foundation, the inaugural international symposium of which was held in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies (International Shinto Foundation 1995). The keynote address at that symposium, delivered by the distinguished Cambridge University scholar of Japanese religion Carmen Blacker, was indeed on the theme of "Shinto and the Sacred Dimension of Nature", and other papers included presentations on holy mountains in Shinto religiosity, Shinto and the natural environment, holy places of Shinto (inevitably places of great natural beauty),

the comparative study of Shinto and Celtic religions and the relationships between Shinto and local cults of healing centered on the very sacred Mount Iwaki in Aomori prefecture at the very northern tip of Japan's main island of Honshu. These topics manifest in fact what are seen as being the main aspects of non-nationalistic Shinto – the perception of natural sites, and especially mountains, waterfalls, rocks and forests (and certainly spectacular trees within a forest) – as having a sacred quality. The Japanese scholar of religion Sonoda Minoru has described Shinto as “The ritual means by which early Japanese transformed their natural surroundings into a cultural landscape infused with religious and historical meaning” (Sonoda 2000:32).

This self-conscious positioning of Shinto as an ecologically sensitive religion does indeed have its basis in the characteristics of the religion. Japanese society in general has a relational view of the self – as being not a unique and individualistic essence, but as being the outcome of many forces, relationships and circumstances that shape any particular identity which is in itself dynamic and impermanent. This idea, which arises largely from Buddhism, is shared by Shinto which has as a central notion the permeability of identity. Thus the boundary between human and “nature” is not fixed – animals can be transformed into humans or humans into animals and humans certainly have the potentiality to become *kami* or gods/spirits. *Kami* themselves need not be “animate” in the usual Western sense, as in Shinto there are no “inanimate” entities – thunder can be a *kami* (*naru kami* or “sounding kami”), as can foxes (the basis of the common *Inari* shrines in which foxes are the tutelary deities), or trees, especially large and conspicuous ones, waterfalls and certainly mountains, of which Mount Fuji is only the largest and best known example. Fertility cults are also common as evidenced by the phallic symbols and festivals that occur at a number of well-known shrines. Nature in Shinto is thus not separate from humans as in many forms of Western religion

and social science and philosophical thinking and Shinto has been variously described as form of symbolic immanentism (as opposed to transcendentalism), a religious expression of vitalism, as a nature religion well aware of the impermanence of all things, as a sophisticated form of animism and as a deeply world affirming religion or perhaps set of intuitions (there being no fixed scriptures or absolutely defined ceremonial).

In these respects Shinto shares many formal characteristics with Hinduism and has also given rise to many celebrated aspects of Japanese culture (although here too it is hard to determine the exact boundaries between the influence of Shinto and of the later adoption of Buddhism) including a cyclical conception of time, a strong sense of what in Japanese aesthetics is called *mono no aware* or an acute sensitivity to things, an equally strong sense of impermanence (hence the bitter-sweet experience of cherry blossom viewing in the knowledge that the blossoms last only between a few days and perhaps a week) symbolized perhaps best by the most holy site of formal Shinto, the Grand Shrine at Ise, which is totally rebuilt every twenty years in identical form on a site next to the existing shrine buildings: the site is very ancient, the actual buildings never more than two decades. In Japanese culture Buddhism is most often associated with death – funerals and death rituals being (except for Christians) more or less a monopoly of the Buddhist priesthood, and Shinto with weddings, life-cycle rituals such as coming-of-age day, baby blessings and good luck and protection charms for cars, examination success, health and travel. Yet in Shinto too there is an understanding of death in which continuity or indwelling are stressed on the basis of a belief not in reincarnation so much as “recycling” in which one returns to nature from which one emerged and becomes a source of nourishment for that larger creation.

I have elsewhere (Clammer 2004) characterized Shinto as a radical personalization of the

universe: all is animate and the earth-as-mother is the central motif, and as such is the food-giver, leading at least one Japanese anthropologist to argue that rice itself is the principle *kami* of Japanese life as the chief sustainer of that life (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993). The Shinto cosmology then is certainly not anthropomorphic – *kami* may indeed be deified humans or the spirits of enemies, but are also spirits of place, of the moon and the sun, the five elements, the sea, rivers, wells and mountains, of harvest, of badgers, and include the mythical founding parents of the Japanese race *Izanagi* and *Izanami*, as well as more human affairs concerned spirits, including the *kami* of trades, of privies, and protectors of ships and sailors. One of the regional aspects of this is the erection of *somokuto* or memorial stones (literally meaning “grass and tree monument”) especially in the northern province of Yamagata as expressions of gratitude to the spirits of vegetation cut for food, firewood or construction materials. Recent years have seen the revival of this ancient practice in places where trees and vegetation have been cut to build cottages or cabins in mountainous and forested areas.

Rather Shinto should be seen as vitalistic or animistic – as conceiving of the universe not as inert matter, but as thickly populated by spirits or devas, not so much eco-centered but as holistic in its recognition of the whole universe as alive and mutually permeable as all things become or become recycled as everything else and where humans, animals, plants, minerals, mountains form a continuum. The very nature-oriented characteristics of many of the Mahayana schools of Japanese Buddhism with their emphasis on the potential Buddhahood of all things, ceremonies for the ritual burial of objects that have been useful to human beings such as used needles, and their strong aesthetic of natural beauty expressed in Zen art, architecture and gardens (LaFleur 1974), have their roots in native Shinto as much as in ideas derived from Chinese or Korean Buddhism. Shinto then both lies at the basis of much of Japanese culture and potentially

provides a means by which the life-affirming and eco-centric nature of that culture might creatively address the current global crisis, and especially its environmental aspects.

This proves to be significant both inside and outside of Japan. Within Japan many social movements and examples of the so-called “New Religions” (*Shin Shukyo*) have emerged based on Shinto. An example of the former is the Yamagishi movement, an organic farming and communal movement that began in Mie Prefecture in south-western Japan after the end of the Pacific war and has since spread to multiple communes all over Japan, to adjacent parts of Asia and as far as Switzerland. The Yamagishi movement is based economically on organic farming, the produce of which is sold in urban and suburban areas of Japan from their trucks that park at designated places according to a fixed weekly schedule, socially on a form of spiritually based communism in which on joining the movement personal property is turned over to the commune and thereafter all physical and other needs are met by one’s residential community in which members live a common life, based spiritually on Shinto. An example of the latter (and there are many others) is the large New Religion *Tenrikyo* with a large following in Japan and branches overseas especially in places where there are substantial Japanese expatriate communities such as Singapore (Hamrin 2000). Almost all of these socio-religious movements in Japan are also peace movements and the promotion of peace world-wide is a major motif in these social movements in the only Atomic bombed society in history. This has led to the emergence in Japan of the idea that Japan is now a spiritual center for the world – a place where peace, ecology, anti-militarization (Japan has the world’s only specifically war-renouncing constitution) and a sense of natural beauty and art abound. The message here is that the lessons of war and militarism have been well learned and that Japan almost alone amongst the nations of the world is committed to a path of peace and environmentalism,

although this ideology does not always quite coincide with Japanese industry's own record of environmental destruction and pollution and the fact that Japan's "Self Defense Forces" actually constitutes one of the largest military forces in Asia despite their social invisibility.

But an obvious parallel with Shinto, although one not yet attracting much notice, is deep ecology, and also to other movements reemerging in the West such as Paganism (De Angeles, Orr and van Dooren 2005), Celtic Christianity, Creation Spirituality of the kind promoted by Matthew Fox (1991), eco-feminism, and an recent interest amongst anthropologists in animism, not as an historically extinct form of belief, but as a living tradition of eco-centered being widespread amongst many "tribal" cultures (Bird-David 1999).

Deep Ecology is particular is worthy of comment here: its ecocentrism (as opposed to anthropocentrism), its understanding of the unity and mutual interdependence of all life forms that constitute the total biosphere and its implicit recognition of what some are calling the "ecological self" – a notion of personal identity that is highly inclusive and which acknowledges the kinship between different species and the porous boundaries between human identity and a sense of oneness with nature (something long noted by the mystics of all major religious traditions) – has strong parallels with the ancient teachings of Shinto. Reading any major work on the basic ideas of deep ecology suggests fundamental parallels with both Shinto and many aspects of Japanese Buddhism (Sessions 1995, Kaza and Kraft 2000). The personalism and vitalism of Shinto can be seen in this light as a vocabulary or language for describing the sacredness of nature and the unity of humans and the rest of the biosphere. Although this language takes a particular cultural form, the essential ideas are of one piece with deep ecological thinking, and indeed perhaps add to it by containing an explicitly spiritual dimension, something perhaps inherent in, but not fully named, in deep ecological thinking.

The problem however is that the very lack of institutionalization in Shinto (especially in its popular varieties), gives it a weak basis for acting on the world except on a very local basis. Whereas Buddhism has provided itself with a strong institutional framework and has generated what is now a very large literature on the range of issues encapsulated in the idea of "engaged Buddhism" – including ecology, human rights, social justice questions, charitable activities, attitudes to globalization and to corporations (Queen, Prebish and Keown 2003, Keown, Prebish and Husted 1998, Jones 2003) – Shinto still lags on all these fronts. But as to some extent with Buddhism, in the Japanese context the carriers of the social message of the religion prove not to be so much the establishment forms as the so-called "New Religions". In Buddhism, movements such as Soka Gakkai and Rissho-Koseikai have developed strong programs of environmental activities, development work, youth programs and inter-religious dialogue, and in Shinto-based new religions and social movements a currently weaker but parallel set of activities are beginning to emerge. Indeed in some cases movements themselves have arisen from such motivations. Omoto, one of the large Shinto-based new religions, was founded as far back as 1892 by a destitute widow, Deguchi Nao who believed herself to be possessed by the *kami* Ushitora no Konjin of fearful aspect and became the mouthpiece of his demands that humanity could only avert frightful coming catastrophes by reconstructing itself around the themes of reverence for nature, social justice and mutual compassion (Franck 1991:138). In describing an occasion on which he attended a Omoto "high mass" Franck (a Dutch artist who has lived in and worked on Japan) noted that "It is a rite so deeply rooted in timeless, intuitive perceptions of the interrelatedness of the human, the divine, and nature, that it fits the end phase of the twentieth century with almost chilling poignancy" (ibid. 138). Many of these movements have social platforms which are expressed in peace activism, volunteerism, organic farming, charitable and health work and environmentalism – not only

Omoto itself but many of its offspring and parallel organizations too, including the new religions Mahikari, Shuyodan Hoseikai, and Shoroku Shinto Yamatoyama (for a discussion of the peace activism of these movements see Kisala 1999) and the previously mentioned Yamagishi organic farming and commune movement. Their collective self-image is indeed one of peace-promoting, interreligious dialogue, pacifism, ecological awareness and a new internationalism based not on Japan's military or economic power, but as a new spiritual center of natural beauty and culture.

The ecological aspects in particular have been behind the revival or invention of a number of practices within Japan, including reforestation projects and a new movement called *Jumokuso* which promotes forest burials (the burying of the ashes of the deceased in a forest with a small tree rather than a tombstone planted at the site of the burial) and also holds occasional seminars and retreats to popularize the idea (Boret 2006). Internationally too there has been a discovery of Shinto as a basis for an ecological way of life and as the source of rituals and meditations affirming nature and the unity of creation and the last few years have seen an expanding scholarly interest in Shinto by both Japanese researchers (e.g. Yamakage 2006) and foreign ones (e.g. Kasulis 2004). Perhaps most interesting has been the discovery by non-Japanese of Shinto as the basis for Earth meditations (Picken and Yamamoto 2002) and as a source of insight for eco-psychology and as a theory of cosmic vitalism entirely compatible with Buddhism, especially its Japanese Zen variety. As Fujisawa puts it (Fujisawa 1977:27) "Shinto means the Way (Tao in Chinese) of kami, deifying the cosmic vitality generative of all beings, animate and inanimate. We understand by the Way a permanent center of the universe to be apprehended with incessant mutations. Kami is taken to mean the productive power of Taiichi – the Great Ultimate or great Void".

Ecology and Beyond

In the current world situation, this emphasis on ecology is of course very timely, although

it does not exhaust the potential practical implications of Shinto. For in addition to the forms of Shinto primarily expressed through the shrines, there are others as suggested above – notably the *Shin Shukyo* or "New Religions" which have proved to be a major part of the post-war religious landscape of Japan (Reader 1991). While the majority of these religious movements have their roots in Buddhism, in particular the large and now international New Religions *Soka Gakkai* and *Rissho Koseikai*, others such as *Tenrikyo* or *Yamatoyama* have their roots in Shinto. In addition to their ecological aspects these Shinto movements collectively have multiple implications other than the purely environmental one, aspects that they share with local forms of Buddhism with which they in practice interpenetrate and overlap. Perhaps first amongst these is that of providing an ideological basis for the rapidly expanding organic food movement in Japan with more and more farmers going organic, shops, cooperatives and other outlets for such produce proliferating, organic, vegetarian or vegan cafes and restaurants appearing in large numbers and a substantial volume of books and magazines have become available promoting or extolling the virtues of organic produce - a message that resonates with many as Japan has experienced a large number of food scandals in the last few years involving food relabeled and sold long after its "eat-by" date, foods contaminated with heavy doses of toxic pesticides and imported foods containing dangerously toxic ingredients.

Likewise, in a society with very few psychiatrists and in which major Western forms of psychotherapy such as psychoanalysis are virtually unknown, the New Religions in practice provide counseling, family support and a whole range of services that in the West would be thought of as therapy. They have in fact (particularly the Buddhist based ones) given rise to wholly indigenous forms of psychotherapy and what might be termed spiritual counseling – most conspicuously *Naikan* and *Morita* therapies that blend meditation and intensive discussion with a

psycho-spiritual advisor, complete separation from society during the periods of meditation and an entirely drug-free regime of treatment based on introspection leading to moral rehabilitation rather than a psychological “cure” (Ozawa-de Silva 2006). It is in fact this psycho-spiritual aspect that may prove to be one of the most enduring legacies of the New Religions, since it provides not only individual therapy, but what might be thought of as a kind of collective therapy as well. This has several aspects – a means of forming a sense of identity out of the traumas of defeat, Atomic bombing and the widespread destruction of much of the old (pre-war) social and political order, and latterly out of the challenges of globalization which have radically decentered the sense of Japan as a relatively closed society culturally and sociologically while yet somehow culturally and perhaps spiritually superior to the rest of the world.

Amongst the various Japanese religions, Shinto, as wholly indigenous plays an ambiguous role – on the one hand as the basis for ultra-nationalism, emperor worship and militarization based on that very sense of uniqueness and superiority, and on the other as the basis for the deep appreciation of nature felt by the Japanese and its profound impact on Japanese aesthetics, foods, fashion, architecture and literature. What has perhaps been very psychologically necessary in Japan has been the attempt to find links between the desire to maintain and preserve and carry into a globalized future a very rich and elaborate traditional culture and the set of sociological attitudes and practices that accompany it. Buddhism of course has its origins outside of Japan – ultimately in India and filtered through China and Korea. Shinto however is entirely Japanese and its recent revival suggests that it is the vehicle for a number of cultural processes – conferring a sense of identity, allowing Shinto like its Buddhist sisters to link itself closely to peace promoting activities, to keep both ecology and aesthetics at the center of cultural politics and to represent itself as a social movement concerned with

cultural regeneration rather than the corrupt and rather despised formal politics of Japan. This is in itself important as social movements are relatively weak in Japan and civil society (especially when understood as the NGO/NPO sector) is underdeveloped in comparison with other major industrialized countries (Schwartz and Pharr 2003). Shinto suggests an alternative politics and mode of social transformation, undermining the materialistic premises of conventional politics and its links to the urban/industrial sector. Here we see in fact an alternative politics of nature: an attempt, mining the deep sources of Japanese culture and history, to root the identity of the human self in the larger context of nature. This allows three simultaneous cultural moves to be made – the “naturing” (or “Greening” if you prefer) of conventional politics and social movements, the aestheticization of politics as a source of meaning congruent with the deep structures of Japanese culture (Iida 2002) and the “overcoming of modernity” (*kindai no chokoku*), an old trope of Japanese culture suggesting a deep if inarticulate rejection of the rationalism, technogism, industrialism and managerialism of Western style modernity (Clammer 2001). The period of the decline of individualism that Michel Maffesoli sees as characteristic of the contemporary West which he sees as heralding a new era in the Occident has never occurred in Japan. Hence his thesis about the West that “There is no longer a separation between the cosmos and society, nor within the social whole. On the contrary we are witness to what might be deemed the *culturalization of nature and the naturalization of culture*” (Maffesoli 1996: 66) based sociologically on “a sort of tribalism which is based at the same time on the spirit of religion (*religare*) and on localism (proxemics, nature)” (Maffesoli 1996:40). While his theory as a whole is debatable in its application to the West, it does resonate closely with the nature of Japan and the sociological consequences of the re-emergence of Shinto as a socially engaged religion. In particular its ability to cross or dissolve boundaries (between the human and nature, nature and the divine, the

divine and the human) positions it as a kind of quintessentially “postmodern” religion, one poised as a result to challenge the essentialisms of the older established text-based religions and one which already embodies the emerging idea of the “ecological self” – a cosmocentric rather than anthropocentric view of reality that locates people as part of nature and as one (perhaps not even essential) aspect of Gaia – a self-emergent and self-regulating Earth. The socio-political implications of this are obvious: cooperation with nature will bring about abundant livelihoods for both humans and the other species that share the total biosphere with us; its violation will bring about catastrophe for the entire globe.

Future Shinto?

It is significant that in all the surveys of religion and ecology known to me, there is no discussion at all of Shinto. This essay suggests that it is however worthy of close attention as it attempts to reinvent itself as a religion of ecology. To do this effectively it will certainly have to distance itself more from its associations with fascism and militarism (and the links between forms of nature-worship and fascism are quite close as evidenced by the history of the Nazi movement), will have to strengthen its application to a wider range of social issues and in particular will have to better theorize the relationship between ecological and social justice, and will need to better develop its own theological and theoretical underpinnings, perhaps in dialogue with the ecological thinking that has emerged in Buddhism with which it has such an intimate historical relationship, and with deep ecology and other strands of internationalized environmental thinking. The “social” teaching of Shinto in the past has tended towards nationalism and the ethnocentrism and even racism that is characteristic of such politically narrow perspectives (for a general survey see Ono 1990). What is encouraging is the new thinking within Shinto that is attempting to purge itself of these associations and to rethink itself both in relation to ecology and to

its place within the family of world religions, with which it is entering into increasingly promising dialogues. With the revival of interest in native American and other forms of nature based spiritualities, Shinto too should be accorded the attention that it deserves as it too falls within this general category. Its potentiality is great in not only encouraging ecological-mindedness amongst the Japanese (currently still the world’s second biggest economy) but through its links to the peace movement, in promoting a much wider awareness of the connections between ecology, peace, responsible development and social justice.

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Light Development in an Age of Climate Change

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In today's professional development sector, social, ecological, and economic values are rarely integrated from the very first stages of project design, let alone in religion-sensitive ways. At the same time, many development workers and people in local communities appreciate the urgency to do so. Local resilience in the face of the linked social, ecological, and economic dimensions of the current global crisis and its underlying moral and spiritual perversions requires local answers that are designed to be integrally sustainable.

Such resilience-building is especially needed in the South, where low income communities are most at risk. However, local neighborhoods and towns in the North need to develop in a similar, integrally sustainable manner for a global transition to a fair and green civilization to take place. Southern and Northern starting points differ, but similar steps promise healing and health across our planet.

Today's challenge of climate change mitigation is already bringing together grassroots

resilience movements in the South and in the North. The resulting convergence offers new opportunities for just and sustainable development that promises sufficiency with contentment.

A certain design pattern for integrally sustainable practices characterizes many of these converging resilience movements. I shall refer to this pattern of practices as '*light development*'. It combines social, ecological, and economic values in religion-sensitive ways. At the Knowledge Centre Religion and Development, we have been gathering examples from around the world that exhibit the integral sustainability of light development.

While the term '*light development*' is new, the pattern to which it refers is already evident in today's exemplary development practices. As a knowledge center, we have coined the term to make this evolving pattern of integral, sustainable development more visible. This visibility can help to focus and

further facilitate the emergence of global 3P development cultures, including projects and programs, networks, funding, and advocacy. At the project level, the light development design concept can operationalize 3P development—although the interpretations given to ‘People’, ‘Planet’, and ‘Profit’ would differ from the definitions commonly used in a business context. At the organizational and network level, light development can provide a symbolic value anchor for 3P development cooperation alliances in the South and in the North.

The Practical Spirituality of Light Development

In everyday life, light development takes the form of human engagement in *light practices*: cultural activities that are meaningful and sustainable from the inside out (i.e., not just profit-directed activities with social and ecological risk management at the margin). Many light practices are woven into the regular responsibilities and routines of the household, involving home maintenance, small-scale food production, cuisine, child care and education, health care, shop keeping, artisanship and cottage industry.

While this sounds rather mundane, a phenomenological description of religious experience would characterize the everyday human practices of light development as a ‘spiritual’ way of being and doing. As an integral pattern in time, these practices constitute a *pilgrimage* on which the travelers’ destination is called forth in and by the awareness with which they take their steps together. The outward sign of light development as a spiritual way is the pilgrims’ carefree generosity to living and future generations of people, animals, and plants, to ecosystems, and to the great cycles of the Earth’s elements. The inward sign of light development as a spiritual way is the light-like quality of the pilgrims’ relational experiences.

Three Principles of Light Development

When households engage in light practices, their members consume and produce in a

‘cradle-to-cradle’ manner, while personally and socially flourishing in integral and resilient ways. This constructive as well as intrinsically valuable participation in the larger systems of the Earth can be expressed in terms of the three Ps of sustainable living:

- *People*: residents find that participating in light practices tends to realize and reveal *light-like, relational qualities* of the good life;
- *Planet*: the processes and products of light practices are *lightly digestible* by the biological and technical metabolisms of planet Earth;
- *Profit*: residents find that participating in light practices reliably generates goods and services that support a more *light-weight quality of life* in their households and communities.

In short, light development refers to cultural processes and products (artefacts) that can be described as *light-like, lightly digestible, and light-weight*.

A South African Example

Basa Magogo is a South African development project in which low income residents learn how to build a cooking fire in a way that protects their health and the environment, saves them time and money, and allows them to stay connected as families. Basa Magogo is an initiative of NOVA, a development organization that focuses on sustainable wellbeing at the household level. The Basa Magogo project illustrates well what the principles of light development can mean in practice².

Many residents of low-income South-African townships value cooking on fire for reasons rooted in their religion and cultural traditions. The light and warmth of a fire draw the residents of the household together. It also allows people to engage in the religious practice of connecting with their ancestors. However, the traditional method of bottom-up coal ignition also causes significant air

pollution. In the Vaal Triangle, 65% of air pollution is caused by the combustion of coal in households.³

Drawing on years of dialogue with residents, NOVA took the use of an open coal fire for cooking as a culturally and religiously embedded starting point for technological innovation. Engineers of the University of Pretoria were set to work to design improvements within the parameter of open fire usage. Together with the residents of the village of eMbalenhle, they developed Basa Magogo, a fuel stacking technique that causes coal fires to emit significantly less smoke. Traditionally, people in eMbalenhle would start a cooking fire by putting paper and wood in a large, empty paint can and then adding coal on top. Basa Magogo involves placing the paper and wood on top of the coal. Smoke emitted from the coal is then further combusted by the fire on top. This simple but surprisingly effective adaptation of a daily household routine reduces smoke, carbon dioxide emissions, and fuel usage all at once.

The Basa Magogo method of making fire has all three elements of a light development practice:

- *Light-like relationships (People)*

- In low-income South African households, people traditionally gather and bond around the household fire. Such bonding is further facilitated by fires that emit little smoke.
- Through the household fire, family members feel connected with their ancestors—a religious value they would have lost in a switch to electrical appliances.
- Basa Magogo especially gives low income women a sense of empowerment. Female residents have played a key role in developing the Basa Magogo way of cooking. Many of the method's demonstrators are previously unemployed black women.⁴

- *Lightly digestible processes and products (Planet)*

- Reduced CO₂ emission relieves pressure on the over-burdened carbon cycle of the Earth. With the Basa Magogo method, less coal is used to build a fire that is warm enough for cooking. Consequently, greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by one ton of CO₂ per household annually.⁵
- Reduced smoke emission relieves local ecosystem stress from particulates and acid rain. Burning coal the Basa Magogo way reduces emitted smoke by as much as 50%.⁶
- Reduced coal use relieves mining pressure on local ecosystems as well as air pollution due to coal processing and transportation. When using the Basa Magogo method, households reduce their coal consumption by more than 50% annually.⁷

- *Light-weight living (Profit)*

- A household fire provides heat for cooking, which helps to produce tasty and digestible food and to kill food-borne pathogens. It also heats the home in Winter.⁸
- The Basa Magogo method reduces food preparation time. The traditional method requires up to an hour of waiting before the fire is warm enough and smoke has sufficiently subsided to allow for cooking. This unproductive hour requires approximately two kilograms of fuel. With Basa Magogo, the fire is ready for cooking within ten minutes and requires only one kilogram of fuel to get to this point.⁹ This is especially helpful for women who also work outside the home.¹⁰
- The primary fuel in the Basa Magogo method of making fire is coal. This is cheap and easy to obtain for low income South African households through a well-established network of distributors.¹¹
- Making a household fire the Basa Magogo way reduces the amount of coal needed for

cooking and heating. Households can save up to 300 kilograms of coal annually.¹² This translates into more household budget for other goods and services.

- In South Africa, two thousand children die annually due to respiratory infections caused by air pollution and smoke emissions.¹³ Health improvements thanks to smoke reduction in households translate into more time and energy for school and play.
- Significant savings in health care costs also relieve household budgets.¹⁴
- When all households in a certain area use coal the Basa Magogo method, air quality in the area can improve by as much as 38%.¹⁵

While the Basa Magogo way of building a cooking fire still relies on a fossil fuel, it requires significantly less coal than the traditional low-income way of making a fire. Even so, given that any routine coal burning shall continue to be a problematic from a climate change perspective, NOVA is currently investigating the possibility of using biogas digester to keep household fires going in low income areas.

Scaling Up: A Light Development Franchise

In an age of climate change, projects like Basa Magogo not only bring light to low income residents, but they also show the potential of light development for climate change mitigation. Given the need for timely, global action on climate change, it makes good strategic sense to look for ways to scale up such light development practices to a global level.

Embedding local light development practices in a cooperative franchise structure can do this. In a franchise, local people independently undertake activities characterized by common standards (known as the franchise's formula). Many franchises also feature a shared support

system for financing, knowledge sharing, personnel training, marketing, and IT services. Franchises are usually for profit (e.g., McDonalds). However, non-profit alliances of incorporated local groups can also have a franchise structure (e.g, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Transition Town movement).

Under the umbrella of a franchise, non-profit light development programs in the South and in the North can be aligned for locally rooted, yet globally balanced responses to climate change and to material as well as immaterial human poverty. For example, a franchise can link the light development that takes place in a Dutch Transition Town with the light development that goes on in a South African NOVA program. The franchise infrastructure itself can also be kept light, thanks to the subsidiarity principle that is built into the idea of a franchise. Delegates from local light development programs can periodically review overall standards and policies, while support services can be arranged through national branch organizations of the development sector (e.g., Partos in the Netherlands). Meanwhile, Northern and Southern development NGO's and alliances can continue to use their own support and expertise systems to build up franchised light development programs within their own networks and focus regions.

Linking light development programs in the South and in the North through a global franchise structure provides significant benefits for the relatively little effort needed beyond the self-organizing work that already takes place at the grassroots level. The bulk of the benefits will occur spontaneously, through leveraging. By integrating Southern integral development initiatives with Northern local resilience initiatives, a franchise will unleash unique potential for light development that remains hidden as long as these initiatives remain isolated from each other (comparable to the leveraging benefits of Global Action Networks [GANs]¹⁶). A franchise structure

also offers various benefits that pertain to franchises in general, which I will not discuss here.

Benefits of a Light Development Franchise

A low threshold for mutual support, based on a network structure that makes an obvious and balanced, but not yet existing match between Northern and Southern needs and experiences within a shared visionary and operational framework, will be the specific leveraging benefit of a light development franchise. In such a franchise, opposite points of departure, often perceived either as problematic culture gaps or as invitations for one-way outreach, can become mutually valuable under the right conditions. In particular:

- In the North, local ecological and economic resilience initiatives tend to face a bottleneck when it comes to transforming personal daily routines. Changing from consumerist habits to low-carbon habits not only requires the development of green products and services, but also the development of matching personal virtues, social rhythms, and everyday rituals. In other words, *local resilience in the North requires more focus on precisely the sort of immaterial aspects of integral development that development partners in the South have identified as important in their own contexts*. In the secularized North, however, fewer cultural resources remain to help people cultivate the immaterial aspects of local resilience.¹⁷ In a light development franchise, Southern experiences with virtue cultivation and social trust building can be matched with this Northern need. For example, through low-budget, interactive internet contact (e.g., wiki's as a Web 2.0 tool), Indian urban women involved in the Saahasee credit and thrift program could share their insights in learning how to cultivate personal courage with Transition Towners in Los Angeles.¹⁸ And church members in a slum in the Western Cape, South Africa, who are accustomed to building social trust through religious

rituals, could share their experience in this area with FairTrade church members in Delft, The Netherlands.

- The North also needs to supplement its innovations in green technology with cultural practices that match and support the material dimension of local ecological and economic resilience. Technology can only be operationalized through practices in which people acquire, fine tune and adjust specialized knowledge and skill patterns. In the industrialized North, however, relatively few cultural resources remain to help people build and sustain practices that match the technologies of local resilience. In a light development franchise, Southern experiences with local culture-embedded technological development, such as in the South African NOVA projects, can be matched with this Northern need.
- The South, in turn, particularly needs appropriate technological innovations from the North to facilitate the outer dimension of light development. In a franchise of local Northern and Southern development initiatives, Northern experiences with sustainable technologies can be matched with this Southern need. For example, in a light development franchise, the kind of knowledge sharing that takes place in ICCO's Fair Climate projects could be expanded through a Northern grassroots experience base.
- The South also needs protection and support from the North for the immaterial dimension of light development. In the context of neo-colonialist globalization and ill-conceived aid and development programs, the South needs Northern partners who recognize and value the immaterial aspects of integral development, and who are able to muster the right sort of restoration assistance when conflict has damaged its boundary conditions. In a light development franchise, Northern solidarity and resources can be matched with this Southern need. For

example, a global franchise would provide a grassroots power structure to support the use of Religious Impact Reports by Southern partners in towns and regions faced with commercial development proposals.¹⁹

By leveraging their differences in need and experience, Northern and Southern partners in a light development franchise will both reap benefits that largely go unrealized or remain ad hoc without such a franchise structure. At the same time, the mutuality of these local exchanges will support justice in North-South relationships.

By implication, a light development franchise also supports relationships within the development cooperation sector. Trust between Northern donors and Southern partners tends to be low these days. (This is partially a manifestation of the larger trust deficit between populations in the North and in the South.) A shared Northern and Southern focus on light development, with mutual in-reach and outreach, replaces mostly one-way funding and knowledge transfer from the North to the South with two-way wisdom sharing, involving heads, hearts, and hands. Celia Deane-Drummond has underscored the importance of supporting such wisdom in an age of climate change.²⁰ In terms of integral human development, it would give Southern partners more opportunities to show generosity and confidence and Northern partners to show gratitude and humility, allowing for a restoration of development virtues and social trust in the sector.

Because of the religious dimension—implicit or explicit—of light development, a good bit of this wisdom exchange will spontaneously occur through religious language, music and imagery. This means that the internal culture of a light development franchise will likely be highly metaphorical, a feature that would enhance social representation within the franchise network.²¹ At the same time, many partners will experience the exchange of wisdom as a religious event in its own

right: in a broad, spiritual sense, wisdom sharing combines self-emptying (*kenosis*) with fulfilment. This does not mean that religion can be reduced to a communication tool, a “resource” for light development. Genuine religion is beyond such instrumentalization, just as travelling the way is, *qua* phenomenon, not the same as following a road map. But the perception of mutual, local sharing as a religious event will support the sense that the restoration of justice in North-South relationships more fundamentally reveals the restoration of an ultimately relational reality.²²

Requirements for a Light Development Franchise

In order for these benefits to materialize, partners in a light development franchise would do well to attend to four general requirements for a healthy international franchise: (1) a franchise culture that freely ‘speaks’ from shared experiences; (2) a franchise organization that ‘breathes’ subsidiarity; (3) international and national regulatory infrastructures that dovetail with the values of the franchise; and (4) funding and trading systems that directly support the project level.

Any international franchise stands or falls by virtue of good communication between its participants, who need not only to understand each other across cultures and locations, but also to feel that ‘there is a connection’. As a minimum requirement for such good communication, partners need to have the sense that in their interactions they can experience, at least once in a while, a ‘fusion of horizons’.²³ This creates and sustains personal goodwill and, equally important, the perception of goodwill in others. In combination with the standards and supports for competence that belong to a franchise formula, such goodwill produces social trust within a franchise.²⁴

Shared experiences provide fertile ground for a fusion of horizons. An effective franchise

culture deliberately nurtures and 'speaks' from shared experiences, thus becoming like a familiar sphere to its diverse participants. Given that a light development franchise culture would belong to grassroots networks, its participants will want to focus on highlighting and sharing the sorts of experiences that already have roots in their existing grassroots *praxis*. Both in Southern integral development circles and in Northern local resilience circles, many of these experiences are very practical (i.e., at the level of growing cucumbers and hay box cooking). When communicating about these experiences, however, people in these grassroots circles tend to refer not only to the nuts and bolts of practical tasks, but also to their deeper layers of significance. To use an expression favored by the social theorist Ananta Kumar Giri, the language of *practical spirituality* will likely characterize a light development franchise culture—if allowed to be expressed.²⁵ When speaking this language, people are often able to understand each other surprisingly well, even across large cultural differences. At the same time, the language of practical spirituality does not tend to bring along the heavy baggage of more dogmatic forms of religious language. Participants in a light development franchise would therefore be justified in welcoming the language of practical spirituality in their cultural sphere. Their franchise code could also protect this spontaneous lingua franca, which tends to make people open and hence vulnerable, by including the principle that expressions of practical spirituality will be treated with respect.

Second, a healthy international franchise also depends on an organizational structure that 'breathes' subsidiarity. Participants need to have the courage and responsibility to do their local things well, as well as the wisdom and humility to recognize when their projects require more infrastructural support (in Latin: *subsidium*). This requires not only clear franchise guidelines and procedures, but also personal virtues.²⁶ Virtues are essential for any self-regulating human system. As good

habits resulting from years of conditioning, they allow individuals to adjust their 'heads, hearts, and hands' quickly and effortlessly to assure appropriate fine-tuning to dynamic local situations. Such micro-processing through virtue cultivation is already going on, albeit often implicitly, in Southern integral development circles as well as in Northern local resilience circles. In order to ensure that the organizational structure of a light development franchise continues to 'breathe' subsidiarity, the franchise formula could highlight and support those 'light development virtues' that are particularly pertinent to local independence within a shared support network (e.g., courage, responsibility, humility, and wisdom).²⁷ Moreover, because of the religious dimension of light development, much of this virtue cultivation can also be expected to take place in a context of religious stories, examples, rituals, music and imagery.

Third, a healthy global franchise also depends on international and national regulatory infrastructures that dovetail with the values of the franchise. By way of an international infrastructure, the Greenhouse Development Rights Framework would match well with a light development franchise. This framework is constructed on similar principles and has been endorsed by development organizations in the APRODEV network, including ICCO. Specifically, the GDRs Framework embodies a vision of climate equity and provides a principle-based approach to differentiating national obligations.²⁸ It goes a crucial step beyond the better known contraction and convergence model by accounting for differences in the capacities and responsibilities of rich and poor groups *within* nations.²⁹ Rooted in current development practice, the GDRs Framework could supply a light development franchise based on North-South solidarity with fitting regulatory support at the level of multilateral agreements.

The GHDs Framework is not, however, designed as a mechanism to implement its

own formula for burden-sharing between rich and poor citizens within nations. This requires additional, national-level regulatory and financial infrastructures. Various models are currently being considered, which tend to fall into two categories: taxation of household carbon emission or energy use and rationing of personal or household energy use (parallel to the commercial quota's that already fuel the carbon trading system). A light development franchise would benefit from both models. However, a rationing model with tradable energy quotas (TEQs) provides the better fit. While taxation discourages undesirable individual activities, TEQs stimulate the creativity of people to "descend the energy staircase" together, an anthropological starting point that matches well with the notion of integral development.³⁰

Finally, a light development franchise would also benefit from funding and trading systems that directly boost the project level. Such infrastructural support would complement the GDRs Framework (an international infrastructure aimed at shaping a just context for transformation to a low-carbon economy at the national level) and TEQ rationing (a national infrastructure aimed at supporting transformation to a low-carbon lifestyle at the individual level). In the remainder of this paper I explore in some detail the possibility of linking the sort of local climate change mitigation program that would characterize a light development franchise with the system of carbon trading that has been set up under the Kyoto protocol.³¹

The Carbon Credit Potential of Light Development Projects

Under the Kyoto protocol, the Clean Development Mechanism is a trading system through which development projects can receive so-called carbon financing for achieving permanent and verifiable greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions above and beyond reductions that would be achieved in the absence of the proposed

projects. Funds for carbon financing are obtained through the sale of 'carbon credits' to the 'carbon buyers' of companies and other parties that would otherwise exceed legal emission limits.

Like many regulatory tools, CDM is generally fit for purpose with much room for improvement. ICCO is able to use the system at a modest scale to facilitate financing for sustainable technology projects of partner NGOs (e.g., a NOVA project involving improved fuel stacking³²). For the purpose of financing light development programs, the CDM is currently not well aligned, but with some adjustment a fruitful match could be made.

Projects that have been successful under the current interpretation and methodologies of the CDM typically focus on energy generation and on energy conservation and emissions reduction in mining, municipal services and basic industries (petrochemical, chemical, metallurgical, and cement). Within these areas of material development, the CDM currently favors high-volume, high-tech options (e.g., dam construction). The World Bank, which is involved in approving projects for CDM funding, suggests that "the minimum worthwhile project size is around 50,000 tCO₂e per year."³³ Hence it is not typical to see carbon credits issued to, say, small farmers who opt for land-use change, even if this translates into verifiable GHG emission reductions.³⁴ Moreover, speed is of the essence in the CDM system. Projects are evaluated on the basis of annual carbon reductions, and even very high volume projects do not qualify if the *rate* at which the development process produces carbon savings is not high enough to meet annual targets. No-tech projects, such as cultural development programs that would effectively engage groups of people in low-carbon social routines, such as dancing and making music, instead of the increased moped riding and TV watching correlated with business-as-usual development,

currently cannot be accommodated by CDM methodologies.

Nevertheless, according to a carbon credits potential scan carried out by TNO for ICCO,

[s]mall-scale, pro-poor projects that generate carbon credits have large potential under the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), especially in Africa and South Asia. They are considered to contribute more effectively to sustainable development, especially its social dimension, compared to large industrial projects.

Obstacles to participation turn out to be mostly of a practical nature:

[T]hese projects are unattractive to carbon buyers because of their small size, the difficulty to obtain proper hosting countries and the time consuming CDM procedures.³⁵

Still, such obstacles do not present inherent reasons why light development, considered as an alternative to the business-as-usual development, could not be seen as a GHG emission reduction methodology and rewarded with tradable carbon credits.

Let me at this point take a step back, however, and address a possible objection. Would participants in light development programs not 'sell their souls' by hooking up with a carbon trading system biased for high volume, fast development of technologies with often questionable sustainability potential besides GHG emission reduction?

I submit that this would be a valid concern if generating a bit of extra cash for a light development program were the only reason for considering participation in the CDM. However, at least two broader reasons can also be adduced, which could tip the balance. First, if you want to be taken seriously, you should be seen where the big party is held. Participating in the CDM would bring the concept of light development on par with the material development methodologies that

now dominate the arena of carbon trading. This would be analogous to the way in which Fair Trade standards gained visibility in global markets, putting the question of fairness squarely out there for all players to address in one way or another. Second, a realistic strategy for constructing a global low-carbon economy would be to let the existing economy not only adapt to low-carbon limits, which is time-consuming and only partially feasible, but also *finance the gestation of new economic structures*. When old and new structures have converged sufficiently, breakthrough connections can significantly speed up change. This would be analogous to the corporate change strategy in which cash generated by unsustainable bulk production is used to finance R&D for sustainable production. By participating in the CDM, light development programs could take R&D for the low-carbon economy to the next level of culturally embedded technology.

If, indeed, this is good social change strategy, what conditions would then make it possible for light development programs to qualify for carbon financing? Although the CDM system favors large, high-tech projects, the reasons for this do not lie in the chemistry of GHG emissions reduction. The great chemical cycles of the Earth do not discriminate between point sources, and in principle GHG emission reduction can be achieved just fine through many small-scale, low-tech projects. The CDM system currently favors large, high-tech projects because the costs involved in establishing methodologies and carrying out verification procedures sift out small, stand-alone projects. These costs need to be offset by expected returns from the sale of carbon credits, or else participating in the CDM system is not economically viable. Consequently, light development programs first of all need to bridge a gap of scale.

A franchise of light development programs would make this possible. A franchise structure facilitates bundling local efforts (which already bundle individual efforts) for global trading. Moreover, membership

requirement for operating under the franchise formula provide a low-budget, yet highly reliable mechanism to complement external assurance.³⁶

Once scaled up, a second step can be to apply for the acceptance of methodologies to reduce GHG emission through light development. This already falls within the broader purview of World Bank policy, which states:

[T]he Bank considers that all renewable energy projects should be eligible for carbon trade, regardless of the scale and size, provided that such projects meet eligibility criteria, are environmentally and socially sustainable, and are consistent with applicable domestic policies and regulations.³⁷

In fact, a particularly good case can be made for the social sustainability of light development programs, given that integral human development would be a key component of the light development franchise formula.

A Thought Experiment

If, indeed, appropriate scale and methodology could allow light development programs to qualify for carbon financing under the CDM system or a similar sequel, how might this work in actual practice? Let me attempt a thought experiment. Imagine a global light development franchise with local program units at the municipal level, structured to link easily to the Transition Town movement. The franchise connects villages, towns, and city neighborhoods that have become effective platforms for light development, answering to Transition Town standards with an explicit emphasis on integral human development. These municipalities and neighborhoods are known by the trademark *Light Towns*. In a particular developing country, say Ethiopia, three Light Towns with around 50,000 combined inhabitants together apply for CDM carbon project status. At the start of the project period of three years, all three Light Towns (including an Addis Ababa

neighborhood) are all on the verge of reaching the GDRs Framework development line. The Light Towns apply for carbon project status on the basis of their "Light Energy Plans". Under these plans, which have been accepted as municipal policy, townspeople are committed and organized to follow a path of light development through a combination of material and immaterial efforts:

They are ready to increase local power production through low-tech solar energy applications, to facilitate local energy saving through the production and distribution of affordable, energy-efficient stoves and hayboxes and through training in low-carbon methods of innovative-traditional cooking and food preservation.

In addition, the townspeople are committed and organized to keep their dependence on fossil fuels low through local organic food production. Compared to a business-as-usual development course for their region, this will prevent projected increases in oil-based agricultural chemical use and food transportation.

All of these GHG emission-reducing activities are embedded in tradition-linked practices (including appropriately adapted rituals), which allow the townspeople to grow integrally as persons.

As part of the carbon project application, the three Ethiopian Light Towns have calculated how much energy will be saved annually by inhabitants spending time in cultural Light Town activities (e.g., iddir gatherings³⁸, dance festivals, meditation sessions in the participating Ethiopian Orthodox churches, and dinners where the traditional injera pancake serves as tablecloth, crockery, and cutlery) compared to a projected business-as-usual development trajectory of more TV watching, moped riding, mercato shopping, and Western-style dining.

The local authorities have estimated the total GHG emissions reductions that will be realized annually through their Light

Town activities by using a climate footprint scan for municipalities. In the first year of the project, as the towns' energy use grows to the GDRs Framework development line, emission reductions compared to a business-as-usual development course will be modest. In subsequent years, as the emerging middle class in these towns gets more discretionary income, the difference realized through Transition Town activities keeping emissions around the GDRs Framework development line will become more substantial. If we express this difference in tCO₂e and multiply it by the projected average carbon price for the three project years, the three municipalities can expect to earn over half a million dollar annually from carbon funding.³⁹ More importantly, however, these towns will be well-positioned to operate in the low-carbon economy of the future.

Let me pause once more, however, to address an objection. Would it not be grossly unfair if three Southern municipalities go out of their way not to develop beyond sustainable climate footprints while much wealthier, Northern municipalities do very little to 'envelop' their outsized climate footprints? Even if the Southern Light Towns can get carbon funding for their efforts, the mismatch of goodwill remains morally abhorrent and erosive to trust in North-South relationships.

I submit that this would be a significant moral problem, at a material as well as immaterial level. It would begin to be addressed if, in a multilateral policy context, the sequel to the Kyoto Protocol would be modeled on the GDRs Framework. Additionally, smart matching between Southern and Northern Light Towns within a global franchise structure could support a sense of fairness at the human scale of town-to-town interactions. In a variant of the thought experiment above, for example, a consortium of Dutch Light Towns with around 50,000 inhabitants could team up with the three Ethiopian towns in a joint carbon project under the CDM. Credits for GHG emission reductions in all six towns

would be granted to the Southern towns, as a way to structure systemic fairness under the GDRs Framework. Moreover, teaming up towns of comparable size would support a sense of citizen-to-citizen goodwill. Such praxis-based, mutual solidarity would go a long way in giving all participants the sense that their efforts, though very different for poor and rich, are acknowledged and valued. This personal-level encouragement would carry a small price tag, but go a long way in allowing townspeople to feel happy rather than resentful on their paths of change.⁴⁰

What does this thought experiment show us about the feasibility of linking light development to the carbon trading system? Under the umbrella of a franchise structure with local program units at the municipal level, light development projects can conceivably jump leap to the scale required for participation in the CDM system under the Kyoto Protocol (or a similar sequel). This jump would be further facilitated by linking the franchise to the Transition Town movement, allowing light development to ride on the crest of an existing grassroots wave with considerable momentum and effective internal quality controls. All in all, North-South partnerships within a franchise structure could offset the cost of entry into the CDM trading system by leveraging the under-utilized potential of large numbers of people with diverse needs and experiences participating in light development. In fact, the larger the numbers, the less the pressure to produce impossibly fast results to offset CDM annual operating costs. Through the solidarity facilitated by the franchise, light development could proceed at its own, humane pace.

At the same time, linking light development to the carbon trading system could also support and improve the CDM in the areas of additionality assurance, Northern vigilance assurance, and quality assurance. As the authors of the GDRs Framework observe, the effectiveness and fairness of the CDM are currently by no means guaranteed:

Not only have too many of its resources gone toward activities that generate no additional mitigation, but even the legitimate fraction has served only as an offset, allowing the North to slacken its own domestic efforts.⁴¹

By contrast, Light Town programs would be designed to generate genuine additional mitigation, as this is a major *raison d'être* for a light development franchise, and no ulterior business objectives get in the way. Furthermore, North-South partnerships in a light development franchise would not only socially confirm Northern Light Towns in their resolve to become carbon-neutral themselves, but also allow them to contribute in a structural, clever, easy, and fun way to light development in the South. And with regard to quality assurance, franchise standards can be used in an innovative way to undergird a highly effective, yet low-cost compliance system for light development methodologies, analogous to the use of a 'living code' in organizational integrity management.⁴²

Conclusion

More than a century of utility-minded emphasis on the material aspects of human development has yielded a global economic system fixated on the bottom line of quarterly earnings, matched by a development sector fixated on the bottom levels of Maslow's pyramid of human needs. This system is now running into the limits of its materialistic fixations. The fall-out from the approaching system crash, including extensive human suffering due to climate change, is already showing up in vulnerable low-income regions in the South. At the same time, grassroots movements across the globe are responding to the urgent need for a systemic transformation by building up local resilience. In the convergence of these trends around an integrally sustainable pattern of practices lies the promise of a viable transition, a path I have called light development.⁴³

As a strategy for swift, yet unforced change on a global scale, I propose to support nascent and new light development initiatives in the South and in the North through a franchise structure linked to the Transition Town movement. The internal momentum of such a franchise could be supported and accelerated by a combination of national and international policies, in particular by a sequel to the Kyoto Protocol along the lines of the GDRs Framework, by TEQs for individual citizens within nations, and by the addition of light development methodologies to the CDM trading system. Meanwhile, the development sector could catalyze the change process by lobbying for these infrastructural adjustments and by helping Southern villages, towns, and city neighborhoods to qualify for membership in the light development franchise. Last but not least, mainstream religions, inter-religious movements, and the ecumenical movement could help to level the way for a light development franchise by continuing their prophetic work, especially through the Earth Charter movement, the Poverty, Wealth, and Ecology program of the World Council of Churches, and the latest Roman Catholic social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*.

Beyond the level of strategy, however, lies the perception of fairness in the sense of getting one's due, both materially and immaterially. On the one hand, those who walk in the ways of light development, whether in the South or in the North, will certainly themselves reap the benefits of becoming better adjusted to a low-carbon economy and feeling the satisfaction of effective personal change and action. Perhaps this is enough, in the sense that "virtue is its own reward." On the other hand, those who walk in the ways of light development, whether in the South or in the North, also deserve credit for their efforts, for they will benefit all of life on earth: material credit in the form of carbon funding, and immaterial credit in the form of recognition. By making the path of light development in North and South more visible to the world, a

light development franchise structure could help to do both.

1. The Knowledge Centre Religion and Development (KCRD) is an initiative of Cordaid, ICCO, Seva Network Foundation, Islamic University Rotterdam, and Stichting Oikos. The Institute of Social Studies is involved through Dr. Gerrie ter Haar.
2. I am indebted to Mariske Westendorp, my student assistant, for collecting information about NOVA's Basa Magogo project.
3. N.J. Wagner, P. Schoonraad, P. Swanepoel, et al., "Results of Domestic Smoke Reduction Programmes at eMbalenhle (Mpumalanga) and Zamdela (Free State)," NACA Conference Presentation (2005): 2.
4. Kerk in Actie, "NOVA: Milieuvriendelijker koken en stoken" (2008): 2.
5. See www.nova.org.za/energy.htm.
6. M. Wentzel, "Granny Shows the Way: Results from Implementing an Alternative Fire-Lighting Method in Orange Farm," *Journal of energy in Southern Africa* 17.2 (2006): 19.
7. NOVA Institute, "Demonstrations of an Improved Top-down Ignition Method in the eMfuleni Municipality: Phase 1," Baseline Report (2009): 30.
8. Wentzel, "Granny Shows the Way," 17. However, burnt food is proven carcinogenic. Cooking techniques should also be taken into account when considering the health effects of using an open fire for food preparation.
9. L.J. Le Roux, M. Zuckel, and S.G. McCormick, "Laboratory Controlled Quantitative Information about Reduction in Air Pollution Using the 'Basa njenge Magogo' Methodology and Applicability to Low-Smoke Fuels," (revised: 2005) : 16.
10. Wentzel, "Granny Shows the Way," 10.
11. NOVA, "Demonstrations of a Top-down Ignition Method," 27.
12. See www.nova.org.za/energy.html.
13. Wentzel, "Granny Shows the Way," 18.
14. See www.nova.org.za/energy.html.
15. Kerk in Actie, "NOVA: Milieuvriendelijker koken en stoken," 2.
16. On Global Action Networks, see P. Glasbergen et al., ed., *Partnerships, Governance and Sustainable Development: Reflections on Theory and Practice* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publ., 2007).
17. Monastic leaders like Thich Nhat Hanh and Anselm Grün are addressing this cultural vacuum. In the Transition Town movement, Joanna Macy addresses the inner dimension of resilience through a combination of Buddhist teachings with depth psychology.
18. See www.saahasee.org.
19. The use of Religious Impact Reports, analogous to the use of Environmental Impact Reports, has been proposed by Hielke Wolters during his tenure as director of Stichting Oikos.
20. Celia Deane-Drummond, *The Ethics of Nature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
21. See Louke van Wensveen, "Religion and Sustainable Development: A Typological Analysis," in Gerrie ter Haar, ed., [title] (forthcoming, 2010).
22. The idea that reality is fundamentally relational is a core element of the metaphysics of many religious traditions. In Buddhism, for example, it is expressed as 'dependent arising'. In Christianity, the trinitarian understanding of the divine also points to the fundamentally relational character of the created world, which in this respect reflects the divine.
23. For the metaphor of a fusion of horizons, see Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).
24. On competence and goodwill as essential elements for social trust, see, for example, B. Nooteboom, *Trust*, in Irene van Staveren, ed., *Handbook of Economics and Ethics* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2009).
25. Cf. Ananta Kumar Giri, "The Calling of Practical Spirituality," paper presented at the International Seminar, "Science and Religion in Modern India," (New Delhi, January 2006).
26. Cf. Eduard Kimman, presentation to VNO-NCW Rotterdam (November 19, 2008).
27. On the need for virtues to support a 'living code' in organizations, see Muel Kaptein, *Trust Rules* (KPMG Whitepaper, 2009). On ways to cultivate virtues in organizations, see Wil Derkse, *Gezegend Leven: Benedictijnse Richtlijnen voor wie naar goede dagen verlangt* (Tiel: Lannoo, 2007). In India, Saahasee provides an example of a faith-based development NGO that explicitly recognizes the importance of cultivating personal courage for local projects. See www.saahasee.org.
28. Baer et al., *The Greenhouse Development Rights Framework*: 6 and 19.
29. The burden-sharing framework of GDRs is "based on a straightforward accounting of national responsibility and capacity that requires those who consume and emit more to carry a larger share of the global cost of an emergency climate program." www.sei-us.org/climate-and-energy/GDR.html (July 8, 2009).
30. David Fleming, *Energy and the Common Purpose: Descending the Energy Staircase with Tradable Energy Quotas (TEQs)* (London: The Lean Economy Connection, 2005).

31. Including both TEQs and the CDM in the suite of infrastructure support would allow for double benefits without double dipping. Light development projects could benefit from incentives targeted both at the individual level and at the project level. Because TEQs are not a tax and are not expressed in regular currency, this does not technically constitute double taxation for carbon buyers.
32. NOVA generates VERs through its Basa Magogo project, a large-scale program to improve the burning process in traditional 'ovens'. As a result, household fires produce less smoke, use less fuel and emit less carbon dioxide. Earnings from the sale of VERs finance the extension of the Basa Magogo project to more households.
33. World Bank, "Albania Primer," 6.
34. "Assets from land use, land-use change, and forestry account for 1.0 percent of volumes transacted." World Bank, "Albania Primer," 5.
35. TNO-ICCO, "Carbon Credits Potential Scan – ADATS/ Global" (February 2008).
36. Cf. Kaptein, Trust Rules. In order for this to work, the franchise formula should function like a 'living code' in an organization, supported by an appropriate franchise culture and membership virtues.
37. See web.worldbank.org > Topics > Environment > Carbon Finance > Frequently Asked Questions.
38. Iddirs are informal, multi-ethnic groups, organized to help members in case of bereavement. In practice, they tend to contribute much more broadly to social capital formation. Cf. Alula Pankhurst and Damen Haile Mariam, "The Iddir in Ethiopia: Historical Development, Social Function, and Potential Role in HIV / AIDS Prevention and Control" *Northeast African Studies* 7.2 (2000): 35-57.
39. In this thought experiment, I assume that the 50,000 Ethiopian citizens in these dynamic municipalities can together meet the World Bank's minimum viable project target of 50,000 tCO₂e emission reductions per year. Carbon traded on July 6 around 13 euro per ton. At this price, 50,000 tCO₂e emission reductions translates into annual earnings from carbon credits of roughly 650,000 euro. The costs of participating in the CDM would have to be subtracted from these earnings. (To compare: Somalian piracy generated roughly 150 million dollar in 2008. It would take 15 million ordinary Ethiopian citizens to generate equal earnings through carbon trading.)
40. Teaming up municipalities under a light development franchise would be an extension of the existing system of partner towns. Haarlem (the Netherlands) and Mutare (Zimbabwe) have already formulated the insight that they want to work towards the same footprint goals, albeit from radically different starting points. (Cf. Naar een Grenzeloos Duurzame Gemeente [Boxtel: De Kleine Aarde, 2001]: p. 25.) In partnerships of Southern and Northern Light Towns, activities would benefit from the wisdom exchange facilitated by a light development franchise formula. In the application for becoming a carbon project, such 'knowledge transfer' could be presented as an integral part of the project, which is expected to contribute to its success.
41. Baer et al., *The Greenhouse Development Rights Framework*: 85.
42. Cf. Muel Kaptein, *The Living Code: Embedding Ethics into the Corporate DNA* (Greenleaf, 2008).
43. For the strategic need to complement top-down policy interventions with bottom-up change processes in sustainable development, see Hans Opschoor, "Sustainable Development and a Dwindling Carbon Space," ISS Public Lecture Series 2009, No. 1 (The Hague): 32-37.





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Spirituality As A Bride Between The Secular and The Religious: A Holistic Approach To Social Harmony and Dignity

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Speaking of Indian religion and spirituality to a modern Western audience at once implies caution and insight. Through what generally transpires through the media and the tourism literature, Indian religion and spirituality often evokes a set of ready-made clichés and stereotypes to the Western mind. Needless to say that, if this is part of the showcase of the religion and spirituality of India, one should try to avoid to be misled by such external demonstrations when searching a more intimate and more profound understanding of the spirituality of the people of India. There is much more depth to it, and it is by living close to the simple people of rural India and their existential difficulties, with their traditional spiritual wisdom helping them to cope, to share and resolve these hardships, that we can discover it, live it and understand it *from inside*.

It is by being amidst the most underprivileged men and women and helping them to undertake an uphill task to restore the broken pieces of their life that I have discovered and understood for myself the essence of spirituality. This essence is revealed to oneself when the perennial virtues, which all religions prescribe, become the very vital and psychological instruments of our day-to-day life. These virtues are compassion, generosity, equanimity, patience, forbearance, temperance, justice and, of course, love. They are the energy of harmony and peace in this world. And they grew within me as the fruit of my interaction with those people who were discarded, humiliated, marginalized and forgotten by society, by governments and even by the official religious establishment.

Several years ago, while studying in the Philippines, I had a very intriguing yet

significant dream. In that dream I was sitting in a rowing boat. At the beginning the surrounding was very dark, so dark that there was no way for me to figure out any specific environment. Slowly, I could feel the presence of another person in the boat, opposite to me. A man perhaps. As I started rowing, gradually the man disappeared and I became aware that I was struggling all alone in the midst of nowhere. The struggle intensified as it became clear that I was rowing against the stream. As the force of the stream kept increasing, my efforts too increased. I was determined to overcome the obstacle, seen or unseen. It was as if something inescapable called me from the other side. A call of the beyond that, since that day, has ever been my guide.

In that dream, the stream I was struggling against was not the natural stream of life, that of the harmonious succession of the seasons, the generous stream of the running rivers and their meeting all into the ocean. The God-ordained stream in which all living creatures harmoniously *follow the flow*.

I am speaking of another stream, which has dramatically gained an irretrievable momentum during the recent centuries. A "man-made" unnatural and offensive stream, prompted by domination and greed, disharmony and hatred, encroaching and invading every parcel of the first original stream. From the industrial revolution till the recent tide of economic and cultural globalization, this "man-made" stream rules and regulates almost all aspects of life, mostly for the profit of a minority of wealthy and over-developed nations and at the tragic expense of millions of people around the world who have hardly a meal a day. Reflecting on the global situation today, is it not ironic to think that, during the inception of the industrial revolution, a handful of enlightened citizens penned down what was to become the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights?

The Human Rights and man's obstinacy to reverse the natural flow of life by industrially converting every gift of nature into

commodities for the exclusive satisfaction of man have the same age. Of these two major products of man, let's just ask which of these two has made significant progress in spreading to nearly every forgotten corner of the planet. Looking around or reading the daily news the answer looms obviously with a disproportionate advantage to the rumbling stream of industrial and technological progress at the cost of the moral and spiritual upliftment of humankind.

Based on the revolutionary mantra *liberty, fraternity and equality* which was on the lips of millions of people, have the Human Rights really introduced a sense of wisdom and justice in the mind of mankind who would in no time change the face of the Earth and endanger the very foundation of life? About five thousand years ago, on Mount Sinai, Moses received the revelation of the Ten Commandments from God. One of these is *thou shall not steal*. During more than five hundred years man has plundered shamelessly nearly whatever was available in that endless natural stream of elemental wealth. Since the early 19th century, 250,000 botanical and animal species disappeared for ever from our planet. In spite of God's injunction to Moses "*thou shall not kill*", are man's created laws sufficiently large and enlightened to make him accountable for these innumerable irresponsible crimes against the original stream of life?

Regulations, constitutions, amendments and charters tend to structure, organize and harmonize human inter-relations the best they can, still a disproportionate number of men and women continue desperately to struggle against unpredictable man-made streams. But what about many other forms of life besides humankind? What about the right to exist of many innocent species? Unless there is a radical transformation in the collective consciousness of modern civilization, man's laws will always be partial. This transformation can only proceed from a broadening of humankind's vision of the mutual interdependence not only of men and women but also of all living

beings sharing the variegated environment of our mother Earth.

Let us now turn towards a religious perspective of the Human Rights.

Besides establishing moral codes, many religions – almost all of them - can objectively be accused of social injustices, discriminations or even genocides. These unacceptable contradictions of religions are not merely limited to wars opposing two rival religions, they happen also, and sometimes mercilessly, in the very fold of a single religion itself. In each codified religious system, for instance, injunctions and dogmas are often detrimental to the spiritual freedom and to the psychological and social justice of women and underprivileged sections of society, as in the Indian context tribals and Dalits. Additionally, when the dogmas start to address the growth of religious elite based on arbitrary notions of purity and superiority, the spiritual origin tends to be lost and the initial virtues that pertain to the essence fall in oblivion. Persecutions, marginalization and untouchability are the tragic result of such theological loopholes.

In India, the caste system and the practice of untouchability are products of elitist deviations of the pristine source of true spirituality. Compassion, truthfulness, generosity, justice, equanimity, forbearance, and universal love are often discarded as religion gets systematized. Although these spiritual virtues are the “morally correct” injunctions of most religions, yet it is always at the very bottom of life, where men and women are struggling with the harshness and injustices of existence, that their active and transformative purport will be put to test.

To a certain extent, the Human Rights can be imagined as the secular dogmas of a social religion called democracy. In many cases they appear to remain inapplicable in traditional contexts where a strong divisive dogmatic system rules over the various layers of the society. Dogmatic mentalities

still remain an obstacle when it comes to introduce secular values meant to transform and liberate those traditionally oppressed by such mentalities. Women for instance, and the majority of the Dalit and tribal populations in India, find it extremely difficult even to voice their rights in a traditional social setup in which they continue to face injustice and oppression. In a certain sense, the Human Rights are praiseworthy accomplishments of democratically-minded lawmakers, but they still have to be implemented skillfully and almost heroically by those intrepid activists who fight for Truth, Equality and Justice at the grass root level where repressive and divisive mentalities are still the rule.

One of the misconceptions when trying to understand Indian Spirituality is to limit it exclusively to influences coming from Hinduism and the Vedas. There is a huge pristine spiritual tradition that traversed the people and the country for several millenniums, to which all the religions existing today in India, inclusive of vernacular folk traditions, contributed immensely. For several centuries, mystics, saints and poets from different religions – Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Sufism, and Christianity – shared together their concern, not only for spiritual experiences, but also for justice, dignity and responsibility towards all living beings. Many of them were rebellious against the conservative establishment and quite a number of them were great social reformers. The names of some of those are still living in the memories of local communities, and for the common people repeating their name is still a source of hope and solace.

The Buddha has been one of the greatest spiritual rebels of India. His spiritual quest started when he was for the first time exposed to human suffering and injustice. He understood that the religion of his time had gone out of its peaceful and harmonious course. The natural order was corrupted and the wheel it symbolized had stopped. The Buddha made the wheel turn again. The Wheel of Dharma.

India's religious and spiritual magic word is Dharma. Dharma is universally accepted by the people of India, irrespective of their economical, social or religious background, as the very warp and woof of both the material and the spiritual world. Literally Dharma means, *"that which holds everything together"*. But it is important to add "in peace and harmony". Unfortunately, even this beautiful concept of Dharma has been distorted in course of history for the sake of religious control by theocratic elite over the masses. During certain periods in India, Dharma has really been hijacked and considerably adulterated by patriarchal religious authorities. The initial holistic vision of Dharma became fragmented into categories of duties ascribed to different communities. In this narrowing process of Dharma, women were considered as inferior creatures, and in many cases reduced to the condition of objects, gradually losing their dignity as subjects.

Considering that such a portent concept like Dharma could have been manipulated by the priestly theologians of Hinduism, having myself been directly exposed to the calamities poor and marginalized people are facing daily, what then does spirituality mean to me?

Spirit is not an abstract word. It is an all-pervasive energy that carries and propagates the enthusiasm to be alive and the overwhelming joy to share it with other living beings. I was blessed for having witnessed the presence of spirit and its transformative action in the most desperate situations humankind can be confronted with. And it is not limited to human beings. Spirit is acting everywhere in nature, where it often takes the form of rejuvenation; often when the combined energies of nature are brought to flow over the brim and suddenly burst into a devastating disaster annihilating in no time many forms of life, after there arises a miraculous counterforce which recreates life from the very remnants of destruction, with such a new vigor, such a decisive willingness, like the Phoenix resurrecting from his own ashes. In nature as well as among people, I have seen

this power of renewal acting very often. In my own inner-journey as well as in my social action I have always tried to cultivate this awareness of the presence of a spiritual force that could be tapped whenever life demands it. Therefore, to me spirituality starts by being responsible towards this spiritual force cast in various forms of life, in struggle and celebration. More we become aware that this spiritual force exists within us and all around us more spontaneously we become capable of receiving and sharing it. This is where the transformation takes place. Transformation within, transformation without.

Regarding Dharma, truth, justice and responsibility are major aspects for me. The person who claims to uphold the Dharma should necessarily be a truthful, just and responsible person, which means that he or she should be able to fully respond by thought and action to the natural requirements of life.

Dharma is therefore the most ancient version of a holistic understanding of life. The notions of interdependence and interconnectedness are inseparable from Dharma. From these the principle of unity in multiplicity is derived. The symbolic image often given of Dharma is the "wheel". The wheel itself, because of its perfect shape, is a dynamic symbol of harmony. Inside of the wheel all the spokes are interdependent, and by their regular distribution they interconnect the tire to the hub. Because there is no inequality whatsoever between any part.

The Buddha, Mahavira, Basava, Kabir, Swami Vivekananda, Narayana Guru and Gandhi are some of the illustrious responsible individuals who were epoch-makers in reaffirming the perennial spiritual values during confused historical times. Yet, many people whose name will never appear in any history book are humble upholders of the Dharma in their own right, and quite surprisingly they can be found among the most underprivileged and illiterate men and women who remain as precious examples

of an ageless wisdom streaming through the most basic realities of life.

To summarize, four interactive principles are regulating the original order of the universe: *Interdependence, interconnectedness, inter-existence and inter-being*. These four principles apply in different proportions to the various realms of manifestation such as the biological, the social, the psychological, the moral, the religious and the spiritual.

The two principles of interdependence and interconnectedness can be seen everywhere from the very basic texture of life to the social interplay of men and women. The notion of inter-existence and inter-being are more related to moral and religious consideration for the former and spiritual openness and transformation for the latter. Inter-existence implies a dialectical approach in which similarities and differences interact on an equal basis. Inter-existence becomes meaningful and enters into activity when human beings start to be fully conscious that what they share in common and also the differences that are part of their respective identities, contribute vitally and psychologically to their personal transformation.

Inter-being is the spiritual fruition of this entire process. Spiritual progress and the transformation that results from it ultimately reach the center of the person, the heart of everyone involved actively in the process of mutual growth. Inter-being happens when there is a deep perception that the sharing has left an imprint in the soul. The outward social solidarity and the efforts combined to solve and reach beyond the harshness and obstacles of life led us to the experience that inside, within our intimate being, we are one.

This awareness and the corresponding observations in the course of my interactions with the men and women, their respective tragedies and their environment situation have taken me gradually to a vision and its application in several meaningful diverse actions. For instance:

Re-interpretation of cultural festivals for co-responsibility towards societal and ecological harmony.

The major causes of inter-religious conflicts and unsustainable development (which obviously includes environmental degradation) is our inability to give the right or appropriate interpretation to our deepest beliefs, whether these are religious or secular. In India, most of these beliefs are integrated in religion and therefore it is necessary to re-interpret religion and culture on a continuous basis to give direction to people's lives. Only then can notions like democracy, participation, pluralism, compassion and human responsibility begin to come alive on a day-to-day basis.

It is in this context that the need for celebrating the festivals with people of all religious persuasions and socio-economic-educational backgrounds becomes of paramount importance for us. At this juncture I would like to share with you glimpses of these reinterpretations of some of the festivals.

An important festival in India celebrates the elephant-headed god Ganesha. Clay effigies of this god will be prepared before the festival, which extends on several days. To conclude this festival it is a custom to immerse the clay effigies of the god into ponds, lakes or rivers. Ganesha is also called Vigneshvara, the remover of obstacles. Another important aspect in the symbolism of Ganesh is the resolving of contradictions: the elephant is the biggest of all the animals, yet Ganesh is riding on a rat as his vehicle without crushing it. Here, in spite of being huge and powerful, Ganesha can also be light and delicate to his tiny and vulnerable companion. There is an additional meaning in this complementarity: Ganesh has a big belly, which symbolizes prosperity and the joyful appreciation of life; yet the rat represents the tendency to store food, to be endowed with economic foresight.

Among hundreds of people are present at the festival, discussions are being held as to the

meaning of the Festival. Several questions are raised.

- If Ganesh is the god of knowledge, what is the common perception of knowledge? What is our vision of society? How do we see religious tolerance and pluralism?
- If Ganesh is the remover of obstacles, what are the social, political and religious obstacles that are dividing us and preventing meaningful development, and what can we do about it?
- If Ganesh is partly from the natural world (the elephant head) partly from the human world (the lower half) does he not symbolize the spiritual link between Nature and Human Beings? If so, then what is our co-responsibility towards humankind and the environment?

The holistic reinterpretation of the concept of Ganesh became a democratic people's process. People realized that they would have to respect all human beings regardless of their religious background. They averred that development could only take place in the context of a vibrant civil society, where the local democratic institutions and development efforts were respected. It was also felt that protecting the environment could be a simple spontaneous way to honour Ganesh. The people also decided not to use painted Ganesh statues. They realized that when the painted statues were immersed at the end of the festival, (a tradition considered to be sacrosanct) the waters were getting polluted because of the lead and other chemicals in the paints.

Another important festival in India is Navaratri, nine nights dedicated to the Mother Goddess. I have discovered that it is largely connected with women empowerment in psychological, social and spiritual perspectives. The nine nights form ten days, which constitute the duration of the entire festival. During these ten days ten archetypal aspects of the feminine are honored. These are called the

“Ten Supreme Knowledges”, *mahavidyas*. Among these aspects are contemplative and active, compassionate and rebellious, tender and heroic forms of the feminine personality. In all of these aspects it is shown that woman has equal status with man that she has an exclusive spiritual power and dignity that is able to respond most excellently to the difficult challenges of life. The reinterpretation of this important Navaratri Festival in the context of Women's Rights today contains portentous lessons which womenfolk of various social origins can understand and mutually make their own.

Besides these important common festivals there are minor local folk festivals which have a deep symbolic significance for the vernaculars, but which contain precious meanings even to enquiring academics. Let me explain one of these folk festivals.

The Maleraya (Rain-god) Festival is oriented towards both invoking and honoring the rain-god, It is celebrated just before the monsoon when the land is parched and the lakes are dried out. In the villages, people implore the rain to come and bless the earth in its entirety. The image of this rain-god is made by the villagers with the soil of the lakebed, and then carried from house to house while people follow in procession singing devotional folk songs. At each house where the procession stops, householders worship the god while pouring abundant quantities of water, drenching the carriers who are delighted. This festival generates much joy among the people.

For us this festival was an ideal subject for a reinterpretation on the lines of eco-spirituality. When the celebration took place, thousands of people gathered in the middle of the dried lake. We suggested that the invocations addressed to the rain god should not remain unilateral; instead every devotee should reciprocate by assuming the responsibility of taking care of the conservation of water and reforestation. All the people who were present took an oath to plant at least two saplings near their

house. Some were so enthusiastic that they spontaneously formed a committee to protect the lakes.

The holistic reinterpretation of cultural and religious festivals is only a first step to exploring new means to the inter-religious dialogue. This approach could be extended to other areas where human groups encounter conflicting situations such as issues of cultural identity, justice and dignity. There is a need of shifting paradigms at various levels of human understanding, a need of reconsidering nearly all the parameters of humankind's interaction with its planetary environment on the basis of a thorough holistic analysis.

Cultural Identity, Justice and Dignity

Now let us also look into the emerging challenges in India created by pro-globalization and liberalization policies. The market reforms in India have taken different shapes and shades through its philosophy of globalization. There are many who sing songs of praise to the market deity. In the magical world where the market economy has opened up boundless opportunities for unfettered growth has made life easier for millions. Why has such a dawn not yet come for the other millions of the impoverished and marginalized?

As one of the answers to this question, in recent times, the government's policies are instrumental for disrupting the livelihoods of the rural communities and pushing them to cities for mere survival, in a new environment inauspicious to their cultural identity. Additionally, the unjust disparities, at all levels, are conducive to various forms of conflicts and violence.

In the name of urban development and beautification of the various cities in India, many slum-dwellers, on whose labour development itself depends, are being evicted to the outskirts of the cities, affecting their economic, social and emotional stabilities. No politicians, nor bureaucrats or policy-

makers are genuinely concerned about the rehabilitation and the importance of a safe environment in which the displaced communities need to rebuild their lives.

At this point, I would like to share my experience of working with the victims of communal riots and beautification of the city who were displaced to Ullalu Upanagara, on the outskirts of Bangalore city. We started a NGO, called Grama Swaraj Samithi, GSS (Village Self governance Council) based on Gandhian philosophy, for the sake of addressing concretely the problems of such communities inhabiting urban and rural areas.

Affected by one of the worst communal riots that took place in 1994 in Bangalore, a section of the dwellers of a large slum mainly Muslims, shifted to a piece of bare land on the other side of Bangalore City and tried to rebuild their homes and their lives there. Two years later, they were once again summarily picked up one Saturday evening in trucks and forcefully taken to yet another piece of barren land 30 kms outside Bangalore and dumped there, with just the sky for a roof and no civic amenities. The purpose of this eviction, like many others at that time, was to beautify Bangalore.

The area where 550 poor families found themselves was Ullalu, where already more than 1000 families had been living with bare facilities, but on the other side of the road which ran through the barren area where the evicted were dropped. The displaced population – including Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Dalits - thus segregated, was expected to fend for itself here on all fronts, from fetching water and finding places for toilet functions to putting up huts and finding jobs.

Initially, the people found it difficult to connect with the new environment because of the fear, the insecurity and the constant rumour of violence. By the end of the year, they were joined by 500 Dalit families who were also evicted as part of the beautification

plan of the city. Finally, due to displacement and lack of rehabilitation the livelihoods of more than 2500 families have been disrupted, resulting in broken families, unemployment, child labour, chronic health problem etc.

The women in Ullalu have been the perpetual victims of exploitation. The broken families have made women and young girls also vulnerable to sexual abuse. Lack of basic amenities pushed the men to the city for livelihoods, which in turn increased the number of single mothers. Neglecting their own health in order to feed the family has made these women prone to many diseases. "The week-end or month-end husbands", instead of bringing home some money and food with them, brought sexually transmitted diseases.

The day-to-day survival had compelled these people engrossed within their own individual pursuit, without any consideration for their surroundings. But when their deeper consciousness was stimulated by our meaningful intervention they would be awakened to the vibrations and responses of their latent positive strength. Their hearts are still filled with love and compassion though their bodies are being worn out.

Work in Ullalu Upanagara began by engaging with every member of the household who was psychologically in the grip of feelings, anxiety and helplessness, in a continuous process of dialogue so that the change arises spontaneously from within. Though these people came from different backgrounds, something in them responded to our holistic approach to challenges, regardless of their diversities, recognizing that their poverty and their helplessness was the real enemy, not their different religions. Whenever it was relevant, we never missed to make references to progressive dimensions that are found in all religions, as they appealed to their common sense.

To highlight this holistic concept of upholding the dignity and practical means of ensuring

the rights and responsibilities of all, here are a few examples of the participative-actions of the people in the context of self-empowerment.

Running as a thread holding all the programs together is women's empowerment. We believe in asserting women's rights with a view to achieving a positive relationship with men, rather than in promoting a combative feminism that cannot sustain them in their particular social environment. Women have been emboldened with the confidence to tackle issues like domestic violence and alcoholism. They have been encouraged to express themselves and dialogue not only with their men but also with the community and institutions. About 400 women drawn from varied backgrounds of religion, caste and language have been organized into self-help groups to address the economic, social, environmental and political concerns.

These women's groups do not restrict themselves only to find economical and social solutions, they also generate within their inner development a collective intelligence and capacity to find immediate practical responses to unforeseen issues.

Most of the shelters in the settlement were mud-huts of a very rudimentary kind. However, the women did feel a need for proper housing. This was an intimate part of rebuilding collectively the sense of dignity. The process of empowerment undertaken by us as a basic issue relevant to all aspects was brought into play here too. Strengthened by this process the women were able to find the means to construct houses of their likings. The material achievement of this was only secondary compared to the joy and the pride of celebrating the warming of the hearth, by reciting the Koran and simultaneously lighting an oil-lamp.

Dignity has always the force behind the necessity to bring proper sanitation facilities, of which they were so far dramatically deprived. The result was the successful setting up of unique community multi-

purpose sanitation complexes. To promote a sense of ownership, self-reliance, dignity of labour, these sanitation complexes are being maintained and managed by women, irrespective of religion and caste. As a self-supportive and interdependent mechanism within the community the material required for the maintenance are supplied by other women groups.

Understanding the need for a holistic approach while tackling a multi-dimensional issue such as HIV/AIDS, which is by definition very personal in nature, we have to address every individual case on the basis of those spiritual virtues such as compassion, generosity, openness, etc. The local women and men trained by us adopted different methods in educating the communities by discussing openly while concentrating on removing the stigma and discrimination faced by HIV positive people. The efforts of this initiative are to make families and communities understand that the ultimate responsibility is theirs.

HIV positive people are connected to positive peoples' networks to raise their level of confidence and by being part of such networks they become conscious of a human solidarity and regain self-esteem and the necessary dignity to affirm their rights.

The role of religious leaders is extremely vital in talking to the common people without prejudices about HIV / AIDS and against gender violence, child marriages and sex selective abortions. In Ullalu, the local Mullah and priest actively participated in sensitizing the people.

The collective struggles of these people lead them to secure most of the basic amenities and their dream was fulfilled when they finally obtained the title deeds of their houses. Two women - a Muslim and a Dalit - were elected to the local self-government as a political result of the empowerment process.

Today, nearly 20,000 forgotten people of Ullalu have regained their identity and recognition

through their own struggles, their courage and above all through the mutual compassion shared in their quest to social harmony. The struggle for dignity is an ongoing process. That struggle, which is too often unknown, ridiculed or even annihilated, still goes on whether in Ullalu or anywhere as long as there is exclusion and marginalization, any form of inequality and injustice.

Nobel laureate professor Borough's said, *"plants do speak but they speak only In whisper Unless you go near them, you cannot hear"*. The same is true of the farmer with the broken plough, a rural mother who treks mile after mile to collect a few twigs to cook food for her family or another mother who scavenges the garbage for a morsel of food for her children. If we are near them, we can listen to their whisper.

Even though I consider this as a humble attempt this was for me an extraordinary opportunity to put into practice a dialectical method where spirituality and social considerations contribute to transform harmoniously the life of people. This human-cum-spiritual experience strengthened also in me as well as in most of the people of Ullalu the importance of dignity, individual responsibility and primarily the positive force derived by assuming firmly one's responsibilities towards the human community, towards the environment, towards life as a whole. An active holistic reinterpretation of the sense of responsibility has been at work there also.

Reviewing the several instances of the complexity of various issues I have been unraveling with you, it becomes more evident that the Human Rights, in spite of contributing efficiently in the administrative and political domains of law and justice, have nevertheless their own limitations in areas which are still controlled by archaic religious and cultural divisive mentalities, especially in the realm of the oppression of women, Dalits and indigenous people. There is a call for a holistic redefinition of the parameters regulating the interactions of men and women, of the human

being with a society of his or her aspirations, of humanity as a whole with every aspects of life. To this a conscious and dedicated acceptance of the sense of responsibility, both in a moral as well as a spiritual sense, has a significant role to play in enlarging the scope of the Human Rights 'reach.

Whether we want it or not, whether we understand it or not, whether we accept it or not, each one of us is responsible for most of the irresponsible wrongdoings in the world. If we earnestly ponder on our conditionings, our unconscious patterns of behavior, our ingrained prejudices, we will discover that most of the time we are disconnected from the interdependent laws that rule the harmony of the planet. Very easily we adhere to comfortable systems of progress, not seeing that in many cases the exercise of progress goes against the harmonious original stream of life, while still innumerable people, with their breath and sweat, struggle against that manmade stream for the survival of what is dear to them, their intimacy with the spirituality of Mother Earth.

It is our responsibility to care for all those "small things" that make God so great, so infinite indeed. All these wonderfully interconnected "little-nothings" which we have irreverently pushed in the oubliettes of our specialized world. Paradoxically our single vision of a uniform world has created a very narrow world in which spirituality seems to be more and more of a highly priced commodity of well-to-do elite. A message of responsible solidarity and responsible compassion is the need of the hour if we expect peace, harmony and justice to prevail in all human affairs. This should become the vital texture behind the Declaration of the Human Rights

Many people who are daily confronted with the worst issues of inequality and injustice feel that unless the notion of human responsibilities is not emphasized both at the highest level of International conferences and

at the level where urgent issues have to be given a practical and relevant solution, there is little hope to enter a transformative process. This is why as a subjective addition to the objective part of the Declaration of the Human Rights; a Charter of Human Responsibilities, an initiative of The Charles Leopold Mayer Foundation for the Progress of Humankind (FPH), is being contemplated by like-minded people in several corners of the world. Our spiritual responsibility starts when we relate to those who are in dire difficulties as subjects instead of anonymous objects. This attitude extends also to nature at large: to animals, plants, and the environment as a whole. All are subjects in God. One of our old wisdom scripture says, *"Everything in this world is enveloped by God"*.

When one becomes fully aware of that, one cannot escape being spiritually and socially responsible. When we relate to all the little things of this world as subjects we discover what inter-existence really means. This is the beginning of spiritual transformation, the inner and outer journey to inter-being.

It is heartening to see more and more international debates about the gravity of the issues confronting humanity with unprecedented global social, political and ecological dangers. There are very few places on the planet, which are not in a state of emergency in one way or the other. The need of the hour is to gather all the spiritual forces of compassion and non-violence we can, of whatever origin, whatever nature, and to nurture them, enrich them and propagate them like luminous seeds of hope. There lies our responsibility as conscious human beings who still believe that life is precious and is a wonderful thing to preserve and revere. And with this regained enthusiasm let's also go to the common man and woman, to share with them that power which can still move mountains.





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BOOK REVIEW

New Mantras in Corporate Corridors: From Ancient Roots to Global Routes, Subhash Sharma, New Age International Publishers, New Delhi, 2009

Reviewed by Ipshita Bansal

*Professor, Women's Institute for Studies in Development Oriented Management (WISDOM),
Banasthali University, Banasthali*

For me it was a pleasure reading this book. This book is the most integrative offering of the author on his New Age Management principles and concepts. It emerges as a path breaking contribution to the development of 'Indian Management Thought' as a mature and evolved school of management thought in a highly comprehensive, systematic and client friendly style, the clients here being academicians, practitioners as well as students.

This book is divided in to four parts, each part dealing with an important aspect of management, all four together forming a complete treatise on New Age Management Paradigm.

The first part titled as *Social Setting and Ancient Texts in New Context* deals with the Indian social setting in which the management and leadership operates and the new context of ancient texts. Chapter 1 *India as a Matrix society* needs a special mention as it provides the background for developing specific Indian management perspectives appreciating the complexities of Indian context. Concept of 'Holistic Globalization' suggested in Chapter 2 takes us beyond the currently popular concept of Globalization that focuses on economic aspects. Summary descriptions of the Foundations of an Indian Model and An Indian model for Corporate Development in Chapter 4 have very nicely integrated

the concepts of Indian Psycho-Philosophic thoughts and how they are relevant for contemporary management systems. Detailed discussion on management ideas in Arthashastra and Gita in Chapter 5 and 6, bring out the rich reservoir of management concepts and practices initiated and practiced in India since dawn of civilization.

The second part entitled *Enlightened Leadership and Human Quality Development (HQD)* focuses our attention on the 'Self' and provides new models of enlightened leadership and human quality development. Various concepts presented in this part, discuss how self development, management and transformation leads to holistic corporate as well as social development. In particular, Theory K, OSHA-OSHE model, Energy Systems model of leadership and KTG Yantra presented in this part, constitute the foundations of new models of management and leadership, emerging from India.

This third part entitled *Strategic Gearing and Enterprise Performance Improvement Models* moves to the level of enterprise performance improvement through a detailed description of various tools and techniques. CINE matrix, a model of strategic scanning explained in Chapter 19 very aptly categorizes the factors affecting a situation as internal and external each having the dimensions of being controllable or non controllable thus providing a simple yet very logical basis for analysis of a situation for strategy formulation. The different tools for strategic gearing such as METRIC analysis, SPOT analysis, mind pooling etc explained in the Chapter 20 will be very useful for corporate executives for strategic planning. The ideas on 'Values Chain' superimposing value chain and 'Omnijective theory for New OD' are unique and innovative. Nine dimensional VSP (Vision-Strategy-Purpose) Vectors Yantra suggested in Chapter 24 takes us beyond Mckinsey's 7 S framework. This part of the

book is an important contribution to Strategic Management through integrative models.

The fourth part entitled *Management Thought, Social Discourse & Spiritual concerns: Towards New Corporate Awakening* presents very innovative and thought provoking insights like Sacro-scientific view of the world, Character Competence of the Corporation, Formulation of New Social Vision in the form of 'Sacro-civic society' etc. Chapter 29 on Corporate Rhymes uses a very unique and recently 're-seen' perspective in research i.e. Aesthetic perspective for interpretations and concept development to present fuller totalities of a given situation or an idea. It also presents innovative idea of 'Omega Circle' with roots in Syadvad philosophy of integrating multiple perspectives and multi-dimensional dialectics. The concept of E (Ethics) Yantra is unique as it provides an interesting model to integrate Market, Society and Self through a new vision for the corporate world.

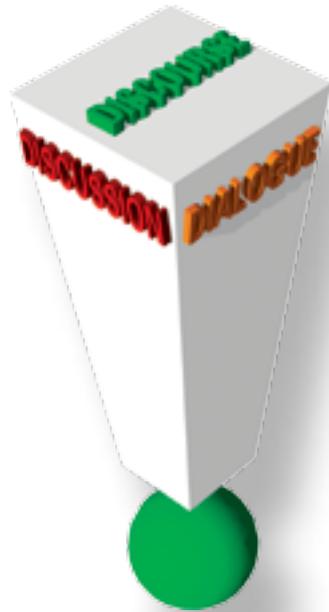
A unique feature of the book is the concept of 'Management Yantras'. Of particular importance are the KTG Yantra (p. 280), VSP Yantra (p. 396) and E (Ethics) Yantra (p. 513). They provide an integrative and holistic vision of Management and Leadership.

The book is both educative as well as inspiring. It contains detailed bibliography of the related literature and index at the end. The various tables and figures supporting the text make the book very interesting and reader friendly.

This book emerges as a totally novel approach towards Indian Management Thought and presents very practical guidelines to practitioners with respect to all aspects of management viz self, others, systems, organization and society. This book is a distinctive Indian contribution to Management thought.

A must read book for management students, teachers and practitioners.





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