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**Religion and Development:  
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## Editorial

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the role of religion in the course of development and its ethics within the context of globalization and the emerging world order. The latest concepts in developmental theories such as self-cultivation, the face of the other, etc., bring the agenda of development close to the question of religion. Some authors think of development itself as quasi-religious. It is against this background that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* seeks to bring both religion and development together for a meaningful dialogue between the two in the global world of today.

There are three articles in this issue which deal with Indian perspectives on religion and development. The first seeks to put forward some Gandhian criteria for authentic development. The author feels that well-being is an experience of integration. He believes that Satya should be the goal of development; that Ahimsa should be its ethos; that Svadeshi offers the resources for development; and that Swaraj creates the right environment for development. The second discusses the relationship between Hinduism and development. After pointing out some of the problems involved in the discussion of this issue, the author tries to clarify the concept of development. To his mind development is the dynamic process of the actualization of a dream, a journey from one situation to another, a transformation of something into something. Development is concerned about transforming the lives of the people, not just transforming economies. Hinduism has made a remarkable contribution to the development of a great civilization. But at a particular point in time a certain degree of closure of mind and its exploration intervened which has adversely affected the growth of human persons and the development of society. The third deals with folk/subaltern religion and development. Folk religions can help to clarify the concept of development and release forces that can promote holistic development. Such religions can function as a subaltern agency to defy the oppressive social order, to negotiate a new egalitarian social identity and restore the human dignity of the oppressed. They can also promote a type of development which is eco-friendly.

Included in this issue are three articles which discuss the ethical dimension of development. The first deals with development in the social

teaching of the Church. The author points out that the Church's understanding of development has undergone change. While the promotion of development in underdeveloped nations is primarily the responsibility of each such nation, the more advanced countries should come to their aid. The Church also calls attention to the need for moral development along with economic and social development. The second deals with the need to cultivate a global mentality in the contemporary world. This is an essay in virtue ethics applied to the phenomenon of globalization and social development, guided by the role and influence of religion. Dialogical pluralism, creative visualization, collaborative solidarity, transnational responsibility and proactive optimism are some of the virtues the article advocates. The third seeks to broaden and deepen development ethics with the thought of Emmanuel Levinas. Responsibility is the basic concept of development ethics. While we should feel responsible for the poor and the marginalized we should see to it that our altruism does not promote egocentrism in the poor. We are responsible for the responsibility of the poor and the marginalized for others.

There is an article in this issue which discusses some of the features of development which make it quasi-religious. It points out that new approaches to development that are emerging today need to be supported by new forms of religious intervention. Liberation theology is an example of the critical intervention of religion in societal transformation. Another article deals with the role of the Christian Church in the development of Goa. There has been a progressive abandonment of the Portuguese legacy. The post-colonial Church in Goa has made a renewed commitment to the promotion of the development of the State and expressed its readiness to be an active partner in the collaborative effort for regeneration. The Church believes that it is her sacred duty towards humanity to help in the integral development of the human person and the human society. This is certainly a progressive step.

Included in this issue are two articles which are not connected with its main theme. The first offers some critical reflections on a recent address of the Pope on Faith, Reason and the University. The second discusses the data from clinical experience on the effects of sexual abuse.

It is our fond hope that this issue of *Jnanadeepa* will promote a serious reflection on religion and development which will lead to new approaches to the process of personal and societal development.

James Ponnaiah & Kuruvilla Pandikattu  
Guest Editors

## **Authentic Development Some Gandhian Criteria**

**Subhash Anand**

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*Abstract:* Though Gandhi was no economist, a deep inner voice told him: “You are on the right track, move neither to your left nor right, but keep to the straight and narrow way” in his understanding of economics and development. Outlining the meaning of four key notions of Gandhi (satya, ahimsa, svadeshi and swaraj), the author outlines a Gandhian idea of development based on freedom and concerned about the marginalized people. Gandhi believed that India can help the world to acquire a different vision of life and development. Thus Gandhi wished to see India developing into a paradigm case where the basic human needs are satisfied.

*Keywords:* Gandhi, satya, ahimsa, svadeshi and swaraj, non-violence, advaita, well-being, freedom.

Of late one hears a lot about “India’s emergence as a fast-growing economic power.”<sup>1</sup> India’s “growth rate is now approaching that of Asia’s other economic juggernaut, China.”<sup>2</sup> This, however, is not the full truth.

Prosperity and progress haven’t touched the 550,000 villages where two-thirds of India’s population live... Millions of women are not getting the education they need. Transportation networks and electrical grids, which are crucial to industrial development and job creation, are so dilapidated [that] it will take many years to modernize them.<sup>3</sup>

Writing in 1908, Gandhi made a statement that today comes across to us as prophetic: “The generally accepted principles of economics are

invalid. If acted upon, they will make individuals and nations unhappy. The poor will become poorer and the rich richer..." (CW 8.371).<sup>4</sup>

The success of a recent movie "Lage Raho Munnabhai", portraying Gandhian ideals, is an indication that Gandhi continues to have an appeal to people even today. Even though all of us may not always follow his advice, he can still challenge us. He may impart to us some wisdom that may guide us in our struggle to become a developed nation. Gandhi was no economist: "I know very little of economics" (EW 93). He was even advised that, given his ignorance, he ought to stop "experimenting in matters of economics at the expense of the public" (EW 93). Yet a deep inner voice tells him: "You are on the right track, move neither to your left nor right, but keep to the straight and narrow way" (EW 93). I believe that our inner wisdom can sometimes give us a deeper understanding of human growth and development than formal studies can do.

## **A. Satya: The Goal of Development**

Gandhi makes clear his purpose in writing his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiment with Truth*: to share with others the insights of his many years of spiritual striving, i.e., "to see God face to face, to attain Moksha" (Au x). For him 'God is Truth' is not merely a theoretical statement, but the driving force of his life, giving it a direction and unity: "I live and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All I do by way of speaking and writing and all my ventures in the political field are directed to this same end" (Au x). The integration he experienced was not merely imposed from outside by the one purpose of his life—satya, but also experienced from within because "truth is the sovereign principle, which includes numerous other principles" (Au xi). "The word *satya* is derived from *sat*, which means that which is. *Satya* means a state of being" (EW 231). Thus truth (*satya*) is above all a mode of being: being what we should be, an experience of wellbeing.<sup>5</sup> Hence satya must be the goal of development. Only then will development be authentic.

## **Advaita: Well-being as an Experience of Integration**

To understand Gandhi's approach to development we need to appreciate the basic presupposition of his thought. Though not an

Advaitin in the traditional sense, Gandhi believes in some kind of *advaita*, “in the essential unity of man and for that matter of all that lives,” and as a consequence, “if one man gains spiritually, the whole world gains with him and, if one man falls, the whole world falls to that extent” (CW 25.390). A contemporary writer puts it more tersely: “Poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere.”<sup>6</sup> Gandhi suggests some kind of symbiotic relation binding the whole of creation, a creation held together by “the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth” (Au 420). Thus, there is a certain oneness, a certain non-duality in all reality, because all reality comes from, is sustained by, and finds its fulfilment in the Real, in Truth. The whole of creation mediates the presence of “the one and the same Creator” (Au 230).

Humans do not have independent goals. “One’s respective *dharma* towards one’s self, family, nation and the world cannot be divided into watertight compartments” (EW 183). Like Gandhi, we too are called to see God face to face, and all our undertakings are to be directed to this goal. What is actually happening is just the opposite. “The predominant character of modern civilization is to dethrone God and enthrone Materialism” (CW 28.127). The deepest dimension of being human—our openness to transcendence—is put aside. “The flesh has taken precedence over the spirit” (CW 48.442). Carried away by the more popular understanding of development we “make bodily welfare the object of life” (HS 23). For Gandhi *advaita*, being an ontological principle, becomes an existential ideal: human life must be an experience of integration. “There must be a return to simplicity and proper proportions” (HS 23).

When we put aside our quest for the supreme Truth, as the ultimate and, therefore, the normative goal of human life, we become victims of materialism,

all the while conveniently forgetting that its greatest achievements are the invention of the most terrible weapons of destruction, the awful growth of anarchism, the frightful disputes between capital and labour and the wanton and diabolical cruelty inflicted on innocent, dumb, living animals in the name of science, ‘falsely so called’” (EW 83).



Development is authentic only when it promotes the total well-being of persons, who constitute a just society and maintain the integrity of creation.

## **The Well-being of Persons**

To be wholesome persons we need to have health of body, peace of mind, and joy in our health. Good health is the greatest wealth. “We must search for wealth not in the bowels of the earth, but in the hearts of men. If this is correct, the true law of economics is that men must be maintained in the best possible health, both of body and mind, and in the highest state of honour” (CW 8.325). Hence “economics that ruins one’s health is false, because money without health has no value. Only that economy is true which enables one to conserve one’s health” (CW 60.268). To be healthy we need to take care of the basics of life. “Every human being has a right to live and therefore to find the wherewithal to feed himself and where necessary [if need be] to clothe and house himself” (EW 94).

Peace of mind is essential for good health. A disturbed mind leads to many psychosomatic diseases. “Ignoring the emotion is to forget that man has feelings” (CW 61.250). Inner joy and peace is much more important than all the forms of pleasure the consumer market promises us. The family is the primary source of our emotional well-being. It provides us with our first experience of belonging, of being wanted and cared for. Yet, sad to say

more than any other institution, it has been affected by the profound and rapid changes witnessed by the world today. Many families are struggling to live in fidelity to authentically human values, while some others have become totally bewildered. Some even doubt if the institution has any purpose at all.<sup>7</sup>

The life-styles that emerge from being part of a developed society tend to minimize our human interactions.

We’ve forgotten the magic of sharing a meal with our family members... it is also important to remember that sharing a meal is not just about eating, but also about strengthening family bonds and making pleasant memories... The more often families eat together,

the less likely that kids are going to smoke, drink, do drugs or get depressed.<sup>8</sup>

Any development that tends to undermine the family in unhealthy.

Many “economists do not take men’s conduct into account but estimate prosperity from the amount of wealth accumulated and so conclude that the happiness of nations depends upon their wealth alone” (CW 8.371). But humans have an ethical dimension. Therefore “True economics must follow ethics. Even if we fail in this we shall have succeeded” (CW 62.241).<sup>9</sup> As long as we continue to be ethical we have not failed. An ethical collapse would mean the end of our humanity. Any development that makes money the primary concern is detrimental to our well-being. “Rome suffered a moral fall when it attained high material affluence. So did Egypt [suffer a moral fall] and so perhaps most countries of which we have any historic record” (EW 95). Moral decadence is suicidal. Yet, this is happening even today “Western nations today are groaning under the heel of the monster-god of materialism. Their moral growth has become stunted” (EW 97). On the other hand moral discipline gives us power. “When we can be certain that once the spirit of discipline comes to pervade our lives, we shall be able to get anything we may want” (EW 103).

If we are not ethical in our personal life, then we cannot claim to have integrity in other areas of life.

I am firmly of the view, and it is my experience too, that, if a person has violated a moral principle in any one sphere of his life, his action will certainly have an effect in other spheres. In other words, the belief generally held that an immoral man may do no harm in the political sphere is quite wrong. And so is the other belief that a person who violates moral principles in his business may be moral in his private life or in his conduct in family affairs” (EW 181-82).

Without morality, development can only be distorted. Morality is not merely avoiding evil. We need to cultivate positive attitudes.

Love is a rare herb... and this herb grows out of non-violence... We should act only through love; thus alone shall we succeed. So long as we do not have unshakable faith in truth, love and non-violence, we can make

no progress. If we give up these... we shall be doomed (CW 14.299-300).

## **The Well-being of the Society**

The development of persons cannot be confined to the well-being of individuals. "Not the good of the few, not even the good of the many, but it is the good of all that we are made [by God] to promote, if we are 'made in His own image'" (CW 61.250). The vast majority of the people of India live in "about half a million villages."<sup>10</sup> Only when the village economy prospers will India prosper. We need to encourage the villagers "to revive their lost industries and arts by assuring them a ready market... If we neglect our duty to our villagers, we shall be courting our own ruin" (CW 60.256).

Wealth has a social function. Gandhi tries to explain this by giving two examples: "The circulation of wealth among a people resembles the circulation of blood in the body... the concentration of blood at one spot is harmful to the body and, similarly, concentration of wealth at one place proves to be a nation's undoing" (CW 8.303). The more the wealth is distributed the better it serves society. On the other hand accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few can be counterproductive:

Most of the rivers run out their course unregulated, their marshy banks poisoning the wind... Similarly the uncontrolled use of wealth will multiply vices among men and cause starvation; in brief, such wealth will act like poison. But the selfsame wealth, if its circulation is regulated and its use controlled, can, like a river whose stream has been properly harnessed, promote prosperity" (CW 8.337).

The rich are the trustees of the wealth they have (EW 389). It is not easy to be a trustee. I need to discipline myself:

My requirements also should be like [that] of the millions. My requirements cannot be greater because I happen to be the son of a rich man. I cannot spend the money [I get from my father] on my pleasures. The man who takes for himself only enough to satisfy the needs customary in his society and spends the rest for social service becomes a trustee (EW 403).

The real test of social development is the deepening of the bonds of fellowship among people, going beyond traditional boundaries of caste, creed, etc.

Brotherhood is just now only a distant aspiration. To me it is a test of true spirituality. All our prayers, fasting and observances are empty nothings so long as we do not feel a live kinship with all life. But we have not even arrived at that intellectual belief, let alone a heart realization. We are still selective. A selective brotherhood is a selfish partnership. Brotherhood requires no consideration or response (*EW* 244).

Hence economic disparities that keep people apart cannot be part of authentic development.

## **The Well-being of the Environment**

As the greater part of India is found in her many villages, Gandhi gave great importance to the development of our villages. He believes that “if the village perishes India will perish too. It will be no more India. Her own mission in the world will get lost (*CW* 63.241). It is not merely a concern for economy. For Gandhi a village has a great potential for human development.

Those whose minds are fresh will find new things to see and to learn in villages. It is not true that your mental development becomes stunned when you go to the villages. My reply to those who say this would be that they must have gone there with closed minds. Actually the village, and not the city, is the place for the development of the mind (*Ibid.* 420).

This explains why both in South Africa and in India, Gandhi located his ashram in a rural setting. “The key to swaraj is not in the cities but in the villages” (*Ibid.* 417). I am inclined to believe that Gandhi’s fondness for life in a village is not merely a concern for the vast majority of Indians who live there. It is also an expression of his desire to be with nature.

Our experience of being human is intimately related to our experience of nature around us. For the vast majority of Indians this is what the villages offer:

Villages are normally recognized as significant social units, which are defined and constituted by relationships among villagers themselves, their local deities, and the land on which they live. There should always be harmony between the deities and the population and territory that they protect and rule over, as well as compatibility between the people and their land, whose qualities are ingested by eating food grown in village fields and drinking water drawn from village wells.

This is true of all primal communities, communities that have not been fundamentally disfigured by the impact of modernisation. My experience convinces me that, by and large, the rural folks are much more integrated persons than urban people, even though the former may claim to be more modern, more cultured, more educated. Gandhi too seems to have had a similar impression. “Forest-dwellers everywhere are less often overcome by evil desires than city-dwellers” (CW 33.435).

The symbiotic relation with nature around us is vital for our total health. “A human being is made of earth. His body springs from the earth and derives its sustenance from the various forms which earth takes” (CW 28.206). We instinctively see life as a continuum: the individual is nurtured by the family constituted by blood relations. This is itself a member of a larger family, the world of life around us, and this in turn is sustained by the complex network of non-living realities that surround us. The evolution of the universe and of life upon planet earth tells us that we are born not merely from the womb of our mother, but also from the womb of the earth, from the womb of the cosmos. Just as people around us affect us emotionally, so too life around us shapes our emotions. Nay, even the non-living creatures that constitute our environment—the soil that nourishes our plants and trees, the hills and the valleys, the winds and the clouds, etc., have a significant role in the formation of our emotional make-up, in the discovery of the symbols we need to communicate more intimately, in the genesis of art forms that embody our deeper experiences. Hence we need to be in touch with nature as much as possible, and hence authentic development will not only avoid distancing us from mother earth, but will also safeguard the integrity of creation and promote a more beautiful environment.

Forests are part of our natural resources. Their presence ensures rain and adds to the fertility of the soil, on the other hand “the rainfall is

low wherever there is no vegetation (CW 28.469). We need to protect our forests and engage in the work of afforestation. Hence in some parts of our country “tree plantation would be... a religious necessity” (CW 28.457).

## **B. Ahimsa: The Ethos of Development**

Gandhi concludes his autobiography with the words: “I can say with assurance, as a result of all my experiments, that a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of Ahimsa” ((*Au* 420). Ahimsa “translated ‘love’, is the supreme law for human beings. It knows no exception” (*EW* 353). For the same reason ahimsa provides the ethos that should guide human development. If ahimsa is understood as love, then it denotes not merely a negative attitude—not hurting others, but a positive task—actively wanting the good of others.

### **Non-violence towards Oneself**

According to popular understanding, industrialization is one essential aspect of development. In an agricultural setup, the farmers need not live together. Their houses can be located on their own land. Even when they do live together, it is in small villages. On the other hand, industrialization means greater concentration of workers. Hence

rapid urbanization is the process that usually accompanies industrialization in the developing countries. There is a mass exodus of peasants, the landless, the destitute and the youth from the villages to the cities... This exodus has created innumerable slums and squatter colonies, which present a pathetic sight of misery and squalor.<sup>12</sup>

What is still more tragic is that “some workplaces are so substandard that people are depersonalized, if not almost dehumanized.”<sup>13</sup> When the worker returns home after a day of hard labour he is less human than when he left his home for work. Thus the villager who leaves his village in search of job in some way inflicts violence to himself.

We put in more hours of work to earn the money we need to be effective in the consumer market—the other side of development. The pace of life in an urban setup is characterized by acceleration. For instance, our mode of travel is much faster, and “this is considered the

height of civilization” (*HS* 23). All this makes the lives of millions very stressful. This causes bodily and mental sickness. To get some idea of the stress people go through, we just need to travel by the Mumbai local trains during the peak hours, when commuters are either rushing to their work-sites or are returning home. They seem to lose all sense of humanity. Gandhi anticipates this when he speaks of modern cities whose

roadways are traversed by rushing engines dragging numerous cars crowded with men mostly who know not what they are after, who are often absent-minded, and whose tempers do not improve by being uncomfortably packed like sardines in boxes and finding themselves in the midst of utter strangers who would oust them if they could and whom they would in their turn oust similarly (*EW* 97-98).

We are victims of the consumer market because we do not have the inner strength needed to swim against the current. Ahimsa comes to our aid:

Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it makes the putting of one’s whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire’s fall or its regeneration (*EW* 238).

Resisting the pressures of our times is an act of true love for oneself. It is also a loving service of others: others can be empowered by what we do.

## **Non-violence towards Others**

Contemporary development promotes competition in all spheres of life. We are once again in the sub-human level of life, where survival of the fittest is the law. “Not killing competition, but life-giving co-operation, is the law of the human beings” (*CW* 61.250). Gandhi rejects the idea that “the Indian population requires to be roused by ‘the lash of competition’ and the other material and sensuous, as well as intellectual, stimuli...” (*EW* 89). Nay, competition leads to unethical tactics: whatever

leads to success is allowed. This leads to the “lowering of standards and regulations governing the interests of labour, consumers and the environment.”<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis on capital generation brings about many forms of injustice, that violate human dignity. Let me give just two examples. Many TNCs are either shifting their factories from the First World to the Third World, or are opening new factories in poorer nations—where labour and raw materials are comparatively cheap, and where labour laws are not so stringent—and then exporting the products to richer countries. “The retail price of goods produced in the Third World is often up to 10 times higher than the prices at which the commodity was imported.”<sup>15</sup> The people who work to produce these items and the country whose raw material is used to produce them get very little. This means “the bulk of the earnings of primary producers is appropriated by merchants, intermediaries, wholesalers, and retailers.”<sup>16</sup> Second, if we can replace humans by machines we can save more money. “Between 1972 and 1992 the 500 largest TNCs... laid off 4.4 million workers.”<sup>17</sup> In poorer countries, “workers are forced to endure inhuman working conditions because their governments want to attract elusive foreign investment.”<sup>18</sup>

International cooperation involves compromises, and the weaker nations have to accept laws that are not quite fair. Gandhi rejects this way of going about. “It happens these days that many things which are legal are not just. The only right way, therefore, to acquire wealth is to do so rightly. And if that is true, we must know what is just” (CW 8.337). What happens between nations, happens within a nation, when poor people have to find jobs. There are so many wanting to work that they are willing to accept the terms of the employer. This too is a form of violence. “It is not enough to live by the laws of demand and supply... God has endowed man with understanding, and with a sense of justice. He must follow these and not think of growing rich by devouring others—by cheating others and reducing them to beggary (CW 8.337).

Our inter-connectedness means that we cannot think of development just for our nation. “Love has no boundary. My nationalism includes the love of all the nations of the earth irrespective of creed” (EW 245). Richer nations must not only avoid benefitting from the helplessness of poorer nations, but also positively help them in their struggle for



development. This is in their own interests. When peoples experience injustice and have no peaceful way of righting the wrong, then they take to violence. This is one explanation of the growing menace of terrorism and conflicts between the nations. “Present-day capitalists are responsible for widespread and unjust wars. Most of the wars of our times spring from greed for money” (CW 8.371). Unfair developmental approaches are forms of violence, and violence always begets violence.

## **Non-violence towards the Environment**

Unbalanced development has lead to a lot of environmental damage. According to the U.S. Worldwatch Institute, “between 1975 and 2000 20 percent of all living species will have disappeared.”<sup>19</sup> In the last fifty years “we have lost a fifth of the cultivable surface and of the tropical rain forests.”<sup>20</sup> Among other problems resulting from our modes of development are acid rains, air and water pollution, destruction of the ozone layer, deforestation and desertification. All these adversely affect human well-being. “Doctors say that 99 per cent of all the diseases are caused by insanitation, by eating things not fit to eat and by lack of proper nutrition... Today pure water, pure earth, and pure air are not available” (CW 85.213). If we wish to be healthy we need to respect the basic laws of life. “Disease springs from a wilful or ignorant breach of the laws of nature” (CW 85.264).

## **C. Svadeshi: The Resources for Development**

In his struggle for India’s independence, Gandhi gave great importance to swadeshi. For many this denotes the use of things—especially cloth—produced in India. For Gandhi, however, this is another way of explaining the unity of human life and the inter-connectedness of all creation. “I would like to apply it [swadeshi] in our religious, political and economic life” (CW 13.251). Swadeshi calls us to bring about harmony in the whole universe, “Swadeshi then means the creation of a most perfect organization in which every part works in perfect harmony with every other” (CW 17.331). This will be possible if we look at the whole of creation as our home. It is an invitation to go beyond narrow boundaries. “In its ultimate and spiritual sense swadeshi stands for the final emancipation of the human soul from its earthly bondage... [which] stands in the way of its realizing its oneness with

other lives. A votary of swadeshi seeks to be emancipated from the bondage of the physical body” (CW 46.254).

Initially swadeshi invites us to take our immediate neighbourhood seriously, to believe that we have within ourselves and within our God-given surroundings the resources we need for development:

*Swadeshi* carries a greater and profound meaning. It does not mean merely the use of what is produced in one’s own country. That meaning is certainly there in swadeshi. But there is another meaning implied in it which is far greater and much more important. Swadeshi means reliance on our own strength. We should also know what we mean by ‘reliance on our own strength’. ‘Our strength’ means the strength of our body, our mind and our soul (EW 362).

Development reaches its height only when we actualize all our potential. “Human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accordance with their needs and interests.”<sup>21</sup>

## Resources from within Persons

For centuries we Indians have been ruled by outsiders. We have developed some kind of national inferiority complex. We think that what comes from the west is always the best. Also, it is not easy to practise swadeshi, because foreign goods appear to be seductively attractive. Hence swadeshi calls for inner discipline. “Those who are not attached to pleasure and personal adornment, I venture to say, can give a great impetus to *swadeshi*” (EW 364). Real development will give us a sense of confidence, and without it development would only further enslave us.

Swadeshi also calls for the promotion of cottage industries, the spinning wheel being one example. “It supplements agriculture and therefore automatically assists materially to solve the problem of growing poverty. Thus swadeshi is our veritable *Kamadhenu* supplying all our wants and solving many of our difficult problems” (CW 17.331). Our farmers have a lot of free time while they wait for their crops to be ready for harvesting. They can make a more fruitful use of this time. Remaining

idle can also lead to moral problems. Swadeshi will prevent a lot of Indian money from going out of the country (CW 17.470). More positively, “it is capable of limitless expansion and of producing, without any capital outlay, new wealth in the country and providing honourable employment to those who are starving for want of it” (CW 58.445).

## Resources from the Society

Swadeshi calls us to be concerned about the people who live in our neighbourhood. “If this interpretation of swadeshi [as oneness with other lives] be correct, then it follows that its votary will as a first duty dedicate himself to the service of his immediate neighbours” (CW 46.254). In doing this he is also reaching out to others. “Pure service of one’s neighbours can never, from its very nature, result in disservice to those who are remotely situated, rather the contrary” (CW 46.354). The resources of a given locality must be used first and foremost to meet the needs of the people of that place. Development enables us to transport our products to places where we can get more money. “Railways have also increased the frequency of famines, because, owing to facility of means of locomotion, people sell out their grain, and it is sent to the dearest markets” (HS 36).<sup>22</sup>

We have a large work force. Any form of mechanisation that will leave these people unemployed will be counterproductive.

How can a country with crores of living machines afford to have a machine which will displace the labour of crores of living machines. It would spell their unemployment and their ruin. We have to employ all these crores of living machines... and unless cities decide to depend for the necessities of life and for most of their other needs on the villages, this can never happen (CW 60.256).

The workers will be encouraged if their products find a good market. Hence we need to patronize them.

A votary of swadeshi will carefully study his environment and try to help his neighbours wherever possible by giving preference to local manufactures even if they are of an inferior grade or dearer in price than things manufactured elsewhere. He will try to remedy their defects but will not give them up be-

cause of their defects and take to foreign manufactures” (CW 46.256).

This patronizing of local products is in the long run for the good of all. When our neighbours have a productive job, they have a sense of dignity, and then peace has a better chance.

It would however be a mistake to think that *swadeshi* is a rejection of machine made items or of machinery. “Pure *swadeshi* is not at all opposed to machinery” (EW 366). Machines would be out of place were they to displace the local resources:

Opposition to mills or machinery is not the point. What suits our country most is the point. I am not opposed to the movement of manufacturing machines in the country, nor to making improvements in machinery. I am only concerned with what these machines are meant for. I may ask, in the words of Ruskin, whether these machines will be such as would blow off a million men in a minute or they will be such as would turn waste lands into arable and fertile land (EW 367).

So too, Gandhi is open to the constructive use of modern forms of power. “If we could have electricity in every village home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity” (EW 401).

Our mother-tongue is one the resources of our society. Hence it “should be given proper importance and its development encouraged” (CW 88.403). This is also true of our culture taken as a whole. So too our ability to rule ourselves. Sad to say, the forces of development are “homogenizing diverse cultural and social sectors and marginalizing the political process.”<sup>23</sup>

## Resources from the Environment

The more the process of development uses local resources, the greater will be the well-being of the locals. Among different ways to utilize local resources to the maximum, Gandhi suggests the use of organic manure,

made from human and animal excreta... We will then be able to save golden manure worth crores of ru-

pees, which is being wasted because of our ignorance. The soil will become fertile and we will get better crops than what we are getting. As a result we will be rid of famines, crores of people will get enough to eat and the surplus can be exported (CW 90.270).

This manure does not “require expenditure but a little labour” (CW 90.306).

Gandhi was not totally opposed to things of foreign origin. “Boycott of all foreign things is neither possible nor proper” (CW 40.374). The emphasis is on the maximum use of local products. Imported goods should not displace local products. This is the reason why Gandhi insists on khadi: “it is our dharma to use those things which can be or are easily made in our country and on which depends the livelihood of poor people; the boycott of such things and deliberate preference of foreign things is adharma” (CW 40.374). For the same reason we need to use home-made dyes (CW 40.23).

## **D. Swaraj: The Environment for Development**

Gandhi gives us a very simple rule for evaluating developmental activity:

Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and yourself melting away (EW 418).

Amartya Sen, who received the Nobel Prize for his work on economics, agrees with Gandhi.

Expansion of freedom is viewed... both as the primary end and as the principal means of development. Development consists of the removal of various types of unfreedoms that leave people with little choice and little opportunity of exercising their reasoned agency.

The removal of substantial unfreedoms... is *constitu-*  
*tive* of development.<sup>24</sup>

## Freedom for Persons

Modern development is very much market-related. If the market does not flourish many multinational corporations will collapse. Hence they invest a lot of capital in promoting the sale of their goods, and for this they employ highly sophisticated advertisements that convince many uncritical moderns that they need many more consumer items to be happy. They are brainwashed by the market mafia. They are not really free. “Formerly, men were made slaves under physical compulsion, now they are enslaved by temptation of money and of the luxuries that money can buy” (*HS* 24). Gandhi, on the hand, rejects this craze for more, for the latest. “Civilization, in the real sense of the term, consists not in the multiplication, but in the deliberate and voluntary reduction of wants. This alone promotes real happiness and contentment, and increases the capacity for service” (*EW* 378). He does not “subscribe to the belief that everything old is bad. Truth is old and difficult” (*EW* 399).

To be able to resist the lure of the consumer market, we need to cultivate a critical approach to life, and nurture inner strength that will enable us to resist the superficial glamour of our times. Then we will be free to fulfil our obligations towards others. “Real swarajya consists in restraint. He alone is capable of this who leads a moral life, does not cheat anyone, does not forsake truth and does his duty to his parents, his wife, his children, his servant and his neighbour (*CW* 8.373). Today so many aged parents feel abandoned by their children, who are doing very well in life. They regularly send money to their parents, but have no time for them. We are so taken up by consumer items that we “have hardly leisure for anything else” (*HS* 25), not even for our loved ones. We lose the aesthetic and creative dimensions of being human.

## Freedom for Society

According to Gandhi, the development of our villages is the development of our nation. “Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus, every village will be a republic or panchayat having full powers” (*EW* 347). For this the village must be

independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity. Thus every village's first concern will be to grow its own food crops and cotton for its cloth. It should have a reserve for its cattle, recreation and playground for adults and children... The village will maintain a village theatre, school and public hall. It will have its own waterworks, ensuring clean water supply... (*EW* 358-59).

Our villages will be autonomous to the extent our nation is truly independent. With globalisation, weaker nations are forced to compromise on their autonomy. When powerful nations bully the weaker ones, then the latter may retaliate in the way they can. This is one explanation for the growth of international terrorism.

This [permanent peace on earth] is clearly impossible without the great Powers of the earth renouncing their imperialistic design. This again seems impossible without great nations ceasing to believe in soul-destroying competition and to desire to multiply wants and therefore increase their material possessions (*EW* 175).

Years ago I heard a professor of economics, who gave us a lecture on Gandhian economics. He concluded by saying: "Gandhi does not teach us a particular brand of economics. He gives us a comprehensive vision for human growth and development. Only within this framework can we understand and appreciate what he says about economics." I fully agree with this insight. If we disregard the overall Gandhian vision, then what he has to say about economic development sounds nonsensical. But any approach to economic development, that ignores the totality of human well-being, will in the long run be detrimental to human happiness. On the other hand if we follow what Gandhi has to offer then we as a nation will blossom and fulfil our mission.

Ours will then be a truly spiritual nation when we shall show more truth than gold, greater fearlessness than pomp of power and wealth, greater charity than love of self. If we will but clean our houses, our palaces and temples of the attributes of wealth, and show in them the attributes of morality, we can offer battle to any combinations of hostile forces without

having to carry the burden of a heavy militia. Let us seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and the irrevocable promise is that everything will be added with us. These are real economics. May you and I treasure them and enforce them in our daily life” (EW 99).

What we need is a different way of looking at life. Gandhi believes India can help the world to acquire this vision. “Many of us believe, and I am one of them, that through our civilization we have a message to deliver to the world” (CW 13.262). I agree with Gandhi.

## Notes

1. Pradeep PILLAI, “India spins its charm”, *The Week*, April 23, 2005, p. 18.
2. Jim ERIKSON, “A Place in the Sun”, *Time*, June 19, 2006, p. 26.
3. *Ibidem*.
4. I shall indicate references to Gandhi’s own writings in the text itself, using an abbreviation, followed by the page number. For *CW*, the volume number will be followed by a point (.) and then the page number. I am basing my study on the following sources:

*Au* *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 14th rep, n.d.

*CW* *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, 90 vols., New Delhi: Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958-84.

*EW* *The Essential Writings of Mahatma Gandhi*, ed. Raghavan IYER, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, 11th rep. 2004.

*HS* *Indian Home Rule or Hind Swaraj*, Madras: G. A. Natesan, 6th rep., 1947.

When quoting from these books, I have kept the spelling of non-English words as it is in the text. There is also no consistency with regard to the italicizing of these words. Hence they will not be italicized when these texts are quoted.

Certain words—*satya*, *ahiṁsā*, *svadēṣa*, *svarāj*, etc.—very frequently used by Gandhi, have become part of the English language. Hence when I use these words, I shall spell them as they are commonly spelt in Gandhi’s writings and not italicize them.



Sometimes the text as it stands appears to have some grammatical error. This could be either because Gandhi himself wrote in a hurry or because the persons who transcribed his talks and speeches did not notice their errors. Whenever possible, I have tried to clarify what Gandhi is saying by supplying some words within square brackets [...].

5. See “Satyagraha: A Theological Model for India”, in Subhash ANAND, *Hindu Inspiration for Christian Reflection: Towards a Hindu-Christian Theology*, Anand (Gujarat): Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 2004, pp. 171-201, here pp. 179-80.
6. Victor L. ANTHUVAN, *The Dynamics and the Impact of Globalisation: A Subaltern Perspective*, Madurai: Amirtham Pb., 2006, p. 276.
7. Catherine B. HALIBURN, “The Family and the Child: The Asian Family’s Struggle for Life”, *FABC Papers*, 72f, Hongkong: FABC, 1995, p. 5.
8. Nona WALIA, “A family that eats together..”, *Ibid.*, November 5, 2006, p. 2.
9. This sentence is a bit prolematic. I suggest the following reading: “Even if we fail [in terms of economics] in this we shall have succeeded [by maintaining our humanness.”
10. Christopher John FULLER, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 128.
11. *Ibidem*.
12. HALIBURN, “The Family and the Child”, p. 13.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
14. ANTHUVAN, *The Dynamics and the Impact of Globalisation*, p. 94.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
16. *Ibidem*.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
19. Leonardo BOFF, *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 1995, p. 15.
20. *Ibidem*.
21. ANTHUVAN, *The Dynamics and the Impact of Globalisation*, p. 285.
22. Gandhi wrote this in 1908. Amartya Sen cites an instance of famine in Wollo (Ethiopia), when food was taken away from Wollo to be sold

elsewhere, “where people had more income to buy food.” Amartya SEN : *Development as Freedom*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 167.

23. ANTHUVAN, *The Dynamics and the Impact of Globalisation*, p. 48.

24. SEN : *Development as Freedom*, p. xii. Emphasis in the original.

## Hinduism and Development

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**Abstract:** The author carries out a brief investigation of Hinduism's resourcefulness to face the challenges of 'development', on the one hand, and how the Hindu ethos is capable of taking a critical stand vis-à-vis the march of development that is a global phenomenon. The human process of planning, deliberation and making decisions need to be guided by a prioritization of values. The supreme value and concern is all that pertains to the nature, dignity and destiny of the human person. Full and all round development of the human person is a non-negotiable priority, and there is almost universal consensus on this. The human person is a body-spirit integral reality. Close on the heels of human development is the need for all that pertains to other needs of the person in society, the person in community, the person in the 'modern city'. Hinduism had made a remarkable contribution to the development of a great civilization. At the same time at a particular point in time certain degree of closure of mind and its exploration intervened that began to affect adversely the human person. Caste system was one major consequence. It impeded the pace of human development. The current society, along with the State, is engaged in pursuing development. The light of the fast growing human sciences could be focused on socio-cultural mores to help them become creative tools for the development of the country.

**Keywords:** Hinduism, development, closure, stagnation, regimentation, untouchability, people's movements, elitism.

## Introduction

Four considerations have to be brought in while treating **Hinduism and Development**. First that India is a country of many religions and so the religious ethos largely determines the socio-economic mores of the people. Second, that there is a cause-effect relationship between the social formation and the economic dynamics and status of the country: both are marked by sharp contrast and distance. The lowest placed in the social structure are also the lowest possessors of economic goods, for centuries. Third, the not yet-properly scrutinized caste system has largely compounded and contributed to this anomaly. Fourth, the system that is operative seems to be marked by certain irreversibility. A bad mix of anthropology and psychology seem to be at work, apart from the callousness of collectivity.

A most distinctive feature of India is that India is proud of and enjoys a unique title and claim to being a land of religions. The recent plunge of this land into the global merge of economic streams now baptized as globalization with visions and values devoid of the ethical and the moral has generated much debate. Faster development is the proclaimed objective. The assumption behind this drive which is not yet scrutinized boldly and ruthlessly is that the western corporate capitalism will remove poverty and distribute well-being evenly and sufficiently for all. On to an already distraught social and economic system the elites of India have attached the economic policy and mode of operation of globalization stamped with inequality. We all have to be in the bandwagon and reach wherever the impersonal dynamics take us. Our collective memory is too short to recall that colonialism was the child of capitalism, and that western capitalistic model of development cannot but behave in the manner in which India was treated by the colonizers. The only difference is that this time it is the internal colonizers and capitalists that are the masters and holders of the keys, in close collaboration and network with the global contenders. We have a western capitalistic culture joined to the Indian caste hierarchical culture, a hard mix that is almost irrefragable. Both are devoid of what some world economists describe as economics with a human face. It may be useful to be forewarned that dive down into the pool by someone with insufficient

skill in swimming from the dive-board can bring either disaster or invite temerity. Will the **Hindu ethos** examine the dynamics of development at work in the country so that the Indian people will critically operate in order to evolve a thrust that will help everyone and help to keep our country on the right track—is the question. The following pages are devoted to a brief investigation of Hinduism's resourcefulness to face the challenges of 'development', on the one hand, and how the Hindu ethos is capable of taking a critical stand vis-à-vis the march of development that is a global phenomenon.

Here are some pace-setting questions. Does India know the roots and dynamics of development in the West that virtually destroyed religiosity in Europe and America and made many nations there disoriented and created "Iraq" as Nazi Germany gifted Spandau and Auschwitz to the world and to history? Will the land of religions survive 'development', if the phenomenon in the West is a lesson for all. One moot question too: is religion capable of contributing to development? or will it be an obstacle to it? Derived from the same: What role can Hinduism play in the realization of the dream India entertains of becoming a developed nation? If India has been developing is it because of religion/HINDUISM? or is it in spite of religion/Hinduism?

Some Christian authors (Christopher Dawson, Arnold Toynbee and others) have claimed that Europe is the creation of Christianity and Hellenism. The assumption is that there is a case of religion contributing to the making of nations. There seems to be much truth in the claim. The first phase of the making of Europe was by monks that fostered and nurtured centres of learning like Bologna, Sorbonne, Florence, etc. But with the birth of the empirical sciences and modern philosophy religion was left behind. Why? Is it because religion could not keep pace with the development brought in by science, technology industry and related developments. Although there is not much evidence of Christianity being practised in the West, yet, it is asserted, that the essence of the Gospel has been the very progenitor of western humanism. Can Hinduism play a role in helping a nation to develop integrally?

Japan is a 'developed' nation. But there is a Japanese stamp, so to speak, about Japanese development. China's partial withdrawal

from the world culture was to preserve and to promote what is the Chinese version of development. Their understanding of 'development' is not a mere copying of the Western patterns. What about India? An intimate link between a sound religious-cultural ethos and development seems to be the answer. India should decide what kind of development we need. Not an uncritical copying of what happens elsewhere but a choice that befits our national ethos and the needs of the people.

Indian religions, with the numerically larger Hinduism, are now faced with a major challenge: to run with the hare pulling the gold-plated cart of globalization and its progeny development. Will Hindu ethos, known the world over for what it is, promote the kind of development that befits humankind and eradicate problems like poverty, equally known the world over? Great Indians like Ashoka, Akbar, and the mythical Janaka of the puranas and the epics, are held out as examples of evolving state policy inspired by ethics and a spiritual vision. The essential core of the Indian religious ethos they tried to inject into political, social and other sectors of the state. Gandhi and Nehru of our times too are credited with such farsightedness and comprehensive vision. Nehru and Gandhi in own times tried to combine the essentials of the Indian ethos with the western and introduced and integrated what the two had drawn from both these streams. They were 'modern' yet Indians.

## **2. Conceptualizing 'Development': What is Development?**

**a. Development was about transforming the lives of people, not just transforming economies'** stated Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz during his lecture in Chennai as reported by the Special Correspondent of *The Hindu* covering the session (*The Hindu*, Friday, January 5, 2007). The report further added that "Professor Stiglitz underlined the importance of India continuing to maintain its programmes for the weaker sections and the poor, for health and education projects and rural development measures and said that the state should not withdraw from these sectors". This warning from this informed economist is actually also the voice of the majority of the Indian people. That was demonstrated by movements and

trends in the country. Mumbai's World Social Forum and New Delhi's Asian Social Forum are crystallizations that illustrate.

Battling vigorously against this trend is a powerful minority that thinks differently and acts accordingly. It is involved in directing the nation in the opposite direction. Thus India is virtually at the crossroads. India is in a state of parting of ways. It is like the mythical scene of Kurukshetra: Duryodhana and his small but powerful holders of ill-gotten power and accumulation of wealth on one side ranged against the larger in their millions who are the losers in an unequal all-out war.

b. Uppsala based Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in its journal *Development Dialogue* ("Another Development," 1981: 1) argues that our understanding of development has to be widened and made comprehensive. The research document demands that authentic development should aim at the greatest improvement in the **quality of life of the people**. This takes place when all the possibilities people have to adequately satisfy their fundamental human needs are met. These refer to areas of a person's being having doing and interacting. Subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creativity, identity, and freedom are a person's fundamental needs and these have to be adequately fulfilled. Development then should address these comprehensive needs of the human person. Religions would add one more to this list: transcendence. Obviously the State's understanding of development falls short of this overarching description of what ought to be the real components of development.

Hence the pertinent question: What then is *development*? And what is the role of Hinduism in the common task of development of India? The following nuances need to be taken into account when we use the term development.

c. Strictly speaking development refers to a dynamic process of actualization of a dream or a project or a potentiality, a journey from one situation to another, a transformation of something into something, an attainment of a stage envisioned, inbuilt and pursued. The best examples are available in abundance from a close observation of development in nature around us: the seed's development into the full grown plant that blooms blossoms and

become laden with fruits brimming with sweet juice and health-promoting nutritives. The journey of the power-charged white powder in the seed that sprouts, passes through the various stages like entry into the wet soil, growth and development of the sapling, maturing unto a plant or a tree, leading to the birth of the bud that blossoms into flowers, then the birth of the fruit with its many seeds within until the maturing and ripening—is a vital organic process of development. Here we observe the **vital/organic** process in developing and blossoming and blooming.

Close analysis of this daily event in all vital organic activities reveals the following elements:

First of all, it is the very nature or essence of the species that is being transmitted, is present in all stages, and manifests as the fruit. The fidelity to the nature or essence of the apple tree is preserved and operative at all stages. Hence continuity of the essence of the journeying subject is the first component in the process. The fruit that is the apple contains ‘appleness’, so to speak, all through the stages of the life-force dynamism at work. This is important for our understanding and critiquing of development and Hinduism.

Secondly, there is a goal or destiny towards which the journey is undertaken by the vital dynamism or impulses imparted to the organic process. The destiny inherent in the seed and which activates the dynamics of the journey is the fully grown tree, and full growth takes place when flowers appear and they blossom and produce fruit. Here is a genuine case of development.

Thirdly, there is the necessary sine-qua non role of the agents and ingredients in the forward and upward journey of the vital process. The moisture from water, the energy from the sun, the chlorophyll responsible for light absorption for generating the energy required for the vital process in the plants, are essential ingredients that contribute to the ‘development’ of the plant. The energy from the sun is also a catalytic agent that facilitates full development.

d. We take next another use of ‘development’. For this we enter the field of education. Those well-versed in the field of education trace the meaning to its Latin root, ‘educere’, i.e. ‘bring forth’ the various potentialities imbedded in the child in order to promote or



‘develop’ them and facilitate the full becoming or ‘development’ of the child as a healthy member of the society. Reference here is to the development of the physical, the mental, the affective, the kinetic, the artistic, the aesthetic, the transcendent and other potentialities and capabilities of every child.

eThe Christian understanding of the development of the human person will underscore all these, and more, because the origin nature and destiny of the human person are all traced to the creative act of God that creates the human being in the image and likeness of God. It is consequently evident that the term development can be applied to the human person, and collectively to the society, when the essential potentialities that constitute human nature is imparted the required stimulus so that actualization of these potentials take place.

First of all central to the concept of the human person is **reason**. When rationality is recognized with all its demands and human behaviour and social relationships are guided by the sine qua non of rationality we can say development is taking place.

Second, **freedom** is a non-negotiable second component of the human person. If the individual and the society of which one is a member honour freedom, foster freedom, and sufficient space is available for the legitimate exercise of freedom, development of the human person is taking place. Compulsion, regimentation, homogenization etc. are hostile forces.

Third, the **dignity** of the human person flows from the very nature of the person. If values like equality, fellowship, are enjoyed by everyone in a given society, it will be considered a developed society. The much honoured phrase, ‘being and not having,’ needs to be recalled again and again.

f.The expectation of this line of thinking is that the target of ‘development’ by the State **ought to be** the all round well being of all the citizens of a country, leaving none behind unattended. Availability of resources to fulfil satisfactorily the basic needs of all citizens and every citizen ought to be the set objective of planned development. Growth, advancement, prosperity and well-being are concerns of the State when it aims at development. Availability of food, health care, housing, literacy, transport, employment, security,

is part of the schemes aimed at development. Economics, industry, agriculture, technology, energy, natural mineral resources, labour, management, financial institutions, and other agencies are closely associated with development of the country. Rate of production, gross national product, growth in income, sufficiency of resources for meeting the basic needs of the citizens like food, health care, education, entertainment and relaxation and other items are considered as indicators of development. Space and freedom for the exercise of one's rights and live a life worthy of the nature and dignity of the human person are the crowning of such state policy on development.

### **3. Development as Conceived by the State**

However the thrust and dynamics of development pursued by the State have merits and demerits. They are influenced primarily by the laws of economics where growth, production, and profit are the guiding principles and values. From the era of competition among mega corporations to that of merger in order to have greater control and greater profit, the trend is set. This powerful merger movements in industries and in trade climaxed in the much-debated globalization. It is a cultural mutation that has taken place. It is the global financial institutions that control and direct these trends. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the imposition on the world of the unipolar imperialist capitalism of the United States, development is under the dictates of market economy, the child of globalized and globalizing economy. The human rights of peoples, the chief concern of the U. N. Charter, democratic culture and structures are subordinated to the demands of the market culture. Corporates have grown stronger over sovereign States.

#### **a. What is the Criterion of the State and the Planners?**

Growth is the central criterion. Growth in economy dictates other policies. High rate of growth, booming stock exchange, increase in benefits of free trade are enjoyed by people because a variety of goods non-available hitherto when control was strict, are available now. Indian mega corporates like Mittal and Tata are entering the international market and buying. Our information technology

competes effectively with other known and powerful companies the world over. We have a booming economy!

**b. There is absolute reliance on the laws of economy and the favours and benefits of the market.**

The laws and dynamics of the market are allowed to have their sway which will eventually percolate and fill the plates and cups of those below, eventually even of the deprived of India, neglected for millennia, we are told. Free enterprise encourages and stimulates private initiative which is key to economic growth. Rise in GDP is a reliable index of the health of the nation, it is held. India is credited with a booming economy. The Stock exchange and the behaviour of the shares market are the index.

These developments are commendable in themselves. But then how do the people on the other side fare?

**4. Ground Realities that Need to be Attended to**

But signals sent from a wide spectrum of the Indian peoples carry messages that need to be taken seriously in order to balance the picture. The nation has a soft belly and is vulnerable.

First, the already bleeding farmers' serial suicide, over 9000 in the last six years, according to official statistics, in at least four States in the South, seem not to disturb the planners and their pursuers. This is appalling since the phenomenon exposes the Indian rural sector, the mainstay of India's economy, as undeveloped or under-developed. Indian farmers for centuries lived in contentment though struggling hard against the vagaries of nature and other forces. But today desperation has overtaken them and the industry-enticed State seems slow to take note of.

Besides, conversion of prime agricultural land for mega factories, malls, IT colonies, has become part of the process. Industry that swallows agriculture in a country like India where the farmlands feed the people has fatal consequences for the future.

The farmers are suddenly waking up to meet the invading forces symbolized by the new child of globalization, namely, Special Economic Zones. Political parties with different ideologies fall in

line as in the game of ninepins. The suppression of peasants meets with democratic resistance. But brutal force is used by the State. Brutal police violence on the workers of Honda factory in Gudgaon Haryana, firing and killing of tribals in Kalinga, similar acts of state violence in Singur and Nandigram are among the latest indicators of the direction of development of which the State is only an obedient servant. Elected representatives toe the line easily forgetting the truth that they are to represent the voice and the needs of the people.

What has recently been called 'development terrorism' by the State, inspired by a fundamentalism in economics, a new and deadly kind of land grab has been planned unilaterally by the elites without the consensus of the electorate and pursued ruthlessly by people's representatives and by the bureaucracy. Livelihood is destroyed, land is forcibly taken away by the State at low price and sold to the Corporates at ten times or more higher level. In this process the till-recently observed laws pertaining to the tribal lands sale has been violated by the State.

Where does the land go? It goes to the over 250 special economic zones set up by the peoples elected representative at the hem of the State without consulting the people. More than 250 such Special Economic Zones have been sold out. Kalinga, Nandigram, Singur testify to the killing by the Indian State to satisfy the demands of corporates. People are expendable and disposable for the purposes of what the State decides. This is immoral and anti-democratic, and damages the current mode of ownership and livelihood.

Second, the tragedy among the farmers needs to be linked with the fast growing concern for ecology. The message that human interference with the laws of nature is fraught with very serious consequences is being sent repeatedly by nature but listening to that is yet to become effective. The experiment with seeds (cotton, rice, and others) seem to have brought us to a T-point. In order to secure fast and copious yields, disproportionately higher than the normal, chemically treated varieties of seeds have been supplied to the farmers almost under compulsion. The disappearance of hundreds of varieties of plants, cereals like rice etc are signals we can ill-afford to ignore.

Third, the cruel phenomenon of the Indian State evicting millions of Indian citizens from Indian cities on the plea that they are illegal occupants of space in the city is unpardonable. The State cannot consider such migrants as a law and order problem. The effort to develop Indian cities and make them be on a par with 'world-class cities' should be with due consideration for the rights of the Indian people. The rural poor have to give way to the demands of the new set of holders of power. The nation is haunted by this spectrum. Both the suicide by the farmers and those taking refuge in the cities show our planning and development vision and dynamics as flawed. Indeed it is a blot on our culture known to be humane. Who are these evictees? They are not outsiders, but Indians, all of them, people whose knowledge of their rights is limited. The evictees are those who migrated to the cities for their living, since rural situation failed them. The voluntary migrants are turned back, thrown out of Indian cities, to become forced migrants. Law, and not humaneness, is the criterion since the evictees are on illegal land in the cities.

Fourth, large scale sale of rivers to Corporates is also part of that scheme. Corporates will make money and deprive thousands of farmers of their use of water, agricultural labourers will suffer loss of work, fishermen, the boatmen and others related to the process of traditional fishing and living will be deprived of their occupation for living..

Fifth, displacement of population without proper rehabilitation in order to facilitate the growth of such corporations is taking place on a colossal scale the world over. From Hattia in Ranchi in Bihar to Narmada in Madhya Pradesh the record of the State as regards settlement is dismal because shabby.

Sixth, the growing naxalite movement tells the nation loudly that the governance of the nation since independence was faulty. According to the figures available from Ministry of Home at least 150 out of a total of 607 districts are already affected by naxalite movement. The non-fulfilment of aspirations raised during the freedom struggle days and promises made after Independence landed them in this situation. Land distribution has not taken place adequately. The functioning of the many State apparatuses in the rural areas leaves the villagers only in despair. The Naxalites intervene to

correct and to improve. Where the State failed Naxalites won. The unchanged status of the millions who are still landless strengthens the movement.

Seventh, the percentage of the illiterate Indians remains still forbidding. And without literacy opportunity for employment is very limited. Present economic and industrial development has added to the already swollen number of the unemployed. The number of the men and women who lack employment to live is staggering.

Eighth, large-scale borrowing from IMF and the World Bank and Asian Development Bank for the purposes of development is comparable to drinking sea water to quench thirst. Ramifications are such. It is the multinational corporations that are employed by the government at their terms for giant projects. Such steps further contribute to the already existing debt traps. To respond, other projects are launched in order to feed them. Drinking salt water is no remedy for thirst, wise fish workers know, but not the planners.

Ninth, welfare policies of early days have been abandoned in favour of the laws of economy. Financing welfare schemes are unproductive investment, managers of financial institutions tell the State.

Finally, a combination of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty has gripped those still lower than the middle class and those below with apathy and hopelessness. The benefits of development have not yet reached them. Drinking water, health care, electricity, transport, are among the urgent needs the far-flung villages are badly in need of. Their patience is exhausted.

In other words, commoditization of nature and of social relations has subjected everything to the demands of rude consumerism and the faceless laws of the market that attend only to growth. Bulldozing of the weak in the name of the demands of new economy and a devaluing of the people without resources (social, political, economic ) is a major fall out.

From the strict understanding of the term development, the above black spots in human history are signs of undeveloped human thinking, being and relating. We can say that an 'undeveloped'

‘development’ is at work. We need to correct and move towards ‘real development.’

## **5. Some Factors Responsible for the Distorted Vision and Action**

### **a. Elitism and Absence of Peoples’ Influence in Development**

We need to take note of an important perhaps less noticed factor about post independent planning. The first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, during his days of the freedom struggle had travelled through the country side, and engaged with the rural population. He was deeply moved by their situation. In his autobiography he describes the shock that this Eaton educated humanist lawyer and visionary had registered when confronted with the lives of the nearly famished ill-clad village folks living in their simple dwellings with little amenities. India is largely rural, he was convinced, and the rural population shows a picture different from the affluent elitist urban population. This experience of rural India, the greater India, had influenced much of his planning and decisions once he became the Prime Minister. In other words it was the voice of the people still ringing loud in his ears and their picture vivid and moving that was a major clinching factor for policy deliberations and decisions while he worked in the present day Teen Murty Bhavan in New Delhi. He introduced planned development with the people and for the people based on his perception and experience of the Indian people..

Gandhi, on his return to India, travelled through rural India and acquired first hand experience and knowledge of the Indian people. He listened to India. The planners and the industrial-trade magnates should listen to India and feel the pulses of the people and plan.

Are the Indian peoples’ voices heard and listened to by our present day planners and performers, is the moot question before us today. The shrill voices from Narmada, Kalinga, Nandigram, Sangru, Kalahandi, Netrahat, Koel Karo, ‘Noida’ Kheirlangi, are treated with apathy and contempt by the destiny-makers of the nation at all levels since they are considered blocks to the ‘development’ which the

neo-foreign colonies known as 'SEZ' will bring about for all the people of India!? Dictates from outside and from above and not the voices of helplessness from below rule development. How far do people's voice and needs influence those who design and execute the plans for the nation?

This takes us to further questions. What could be the experience and knowledge of the planners and economists about the actual situation of the majority of the Indian people? Minds shaped by the World Bank-generated economy and culture can be immune to shocks when confronted, if at all, with the life of the great majority of the Indian people. Ambedkar had the fire within. That fire was born of his bitter experiences of humiliation as a dalit. This fire, combined with profound scholarship, gave him the drive to battle ceaselessly for the socially transforming steps he envisaged for India. But are the majority of administrators, bureaucrats, and planners that come from the affluent classes able to register the anxiety and anguish of villagers of the caste-affected rural India? For instance, the Musahars of Bihar live on gathering the fallen rice from fields, rat-holes and the precincts of FCI go downs! Recently some States that under-utilized the fund allotted for the rehabilitation of the tsunami affected people returned the balance to the Centre. The news shocked the sensitive citizens across the country. Bureaucrats and administrators at the helm seem not to be fired by the wretchedness of our people. Another Nobel laureate Professor Amartya Sen had experienced the famine of Bengal in his early days, and that coloured his economics and helped evolve an economics with a human face..

The development of the human person and society takes place in the first place when all substantially inhibiting and enslaving constraints are removed and a correct vision is evolved. In India it is the Brahmins and those associated with them in sharing power in a graded manner that are planning for the country, governing the country, and making judicial pronouncements. **There is an inherent flaw in the very make-up of that governance.** How can the tainted clean the indigent! A major factor is the hardened and valueless institution of caste in India. Caste taints the enforcer of caste. India needs to be free of this major block to development. This needs further elaboration.



In India the major flaw in the development of the very concept of the human person intervened with the introduction of caste since its very essence is grading of the human nature and grading of the exclusion of those below. As a category this determines the mindsets of the upper castes and vitiates them, and afflicts those below. The malady affects the dominating and the dominated, suppressed and the suppressor, the excluded and those excluding, equally and adversely.

Since it is this dominant group or class that is governing the country, planning for the people, allotting resources for the maintenance of the various departments of administration, it is inconceivable that the caste prejudices will be left behind when planning and decision making take place. For example in the reports submitted to the nation after riots and orgies in Gujarat, it was made clear that community caste or class or gender prejudices vitiated the enforcement of law. The fact that what is now known as dalits as a body, all over India, are largely still kept outside the society and regarded as polluting and hence to be avoided, is a clear indication that 'development' in the full sense is not yet ready to be applied to the human situation in India. Economically, proliferation of goods is taking place and flooding the house kitchen parlour or even the bedrooms of the affluent. But human development and consequent social transformation is slow to take place.

## **b. Significance of Peoples' Movements**

A distinguishing feature of governance in India is the space given to protest and to activism in order to attend to grievances the State is unwilling to listen to and address. It is to make up for that deficiency in democracy that various civil society initiatives in the form of peoples' movements, protest groups, and voluntary organizations are in the field utilizing the space available to them in the Constitution.

However, the future of this corrective presence and contribution to the democratic cultures and structures will diminish since the power in governance of the nation is still largely in the hands of the upper strata that are impervious, increasingly, to the voices of dissent. The best case in point is the campaign against tribals' displacement

in the Naramda valley. In spite of over twenty years of protests by the tribals, the upper class/caste combine has been consistently unyielding. The voice of dalits, tribals and other weaker sections have no impact upon the hardened minds of the ruling block. The power-holders in the society are unwilling to listen to them, honour their protest and consider their stand.

Below we need to trace the roots of this cultural malaise that intervenes in the process of development. We need to detect the perceptions, values and modes of deciding that shape the mindset. Religion has much to do with it since bureaucrats, legislators, judges, ministers, members of planning institutions all shape perceptions and organise actions

## **6. Hinduism and ‘Development’**

In this land of many religions Hinduism is the largest numerically. Therefore its potentiality to shape the behaviour of the people is greater than that of the other religions. Hence Hinduism is called upon, as are the others, to play a role.

The expectation of the people is that religions, as the meaning dimension of a culture, are expected to wake up and redeem the situation in favour of the concept of development that will enable healthy and full growth of the human person, and of all persons in this large country of contrasts..

### **a. Hindu Humanism and Development**

There seems to exist a close connection between the development thrust of a nation and the humanism of the culture. For the assessment of the situation of the people, planning, execution and evaluation are all conditioned by class/caste/gender and value bias and mindset. Humanism to a large extent is influenced by the world-view of a culture. Religion as the meaning dimension of a culture is a necessary, even major, component. Hence it is necessary that we consider the role of Hinduism for development linking it with the kind of humanism Hinduism has generated. A religion can influence the birth of humanism although other factors are also there to influence its shaping. For instance, elements of Christianity are present in what

could be called western humanism. But the western model of development is generated by humanism and also capitalism.

What could be the components of a humanism facilitated by Hinduism.

The following may be considered as components of Hindu humanism. It is not an exhaustive or researched data, but elements that seem decisive and significant are listed.

First of all, set against the Vedic cosmogonism and running through subsequent developments, is an evolutionary vision of all reality (*parinama/vivarta vada*) . Accordingly there is a graded manifestation of different realities, inclusive of humankind, from one primal source. When we come to the human level in that scale there is the inception of the humans (in India) **caste-wise: brahmans** on top and **shudras** at the bottom. This original classification was later on modified to create another group, called the **panchamas** (dalits), outside the recognized the fourfold division. The origin of caste, however, is a much disputed topic in Indian anthropology/ mythology combine.

Already, exclusion of one section of the human community has taken place, namely, that of the **panchamas**, the present-day **dalits**. The economic social and political powers and privileges begin to move away from them and move upwards towards the upper castes. Development benefits are only for the upper castes: land, resources, powers, privileges, rights. The lower we descend the duties increase and powers and privileges decrease. Dalits are assigned only abhorrent and despicable duties with neither power nor privilege, neither rights nor freedom. The era when this ideology was generated and matured could be now considered the most unfortunate. For, this is seen today as playing a major role in the development programmes and performances of the Indian nation.

Second, conceptually there is a mode of participation of all, especially of humans, in the nature of that one primal source, Brahman: (*tat tvam asi*, Aruni is told in Chand.Up.). Yet occupation for each caste is specified and there is no crossing of the fixed order. Rigidity and fixation as character traits are born and begin to mature and fossilize.

Life by prescription is introduced and walls are being created between profession and profession and between human agents.

Third, the axis of all thinking and doing in the early phase of Hinduism, known as the Vedic times, was **sacrifice**. And sacrifice was the key to the world of the gods on whom depended entirely the life of the Vedic Indian. *Yajet swarga kama* was the injunction ('Let the one desirous of heaven perform sacrifice') (*Artha Samgraha*, by *Laugakshi Bhaskara*). Sacrifice was endowed with power even over the gods. This power came from the *mantra*, the sacred formula uttered by the designated priest at the appropriate time. The performer of the *yajna* and the reciter of the *mantra* also share that power.

Performer of the sacrifice rises higher in the social hierarchy and hierarchy formation deepens and becomes rigid.

Fourth, *mantra* has **power, even over the gods**, because it is rooted in the Vedas that are of non-human origin (*apaurusheyam vakyam veda*). Vedas are eternal and have an existence of their own. The recipients of the Vedas, the *rishis*, and the dealers of the *mantra*, the priests, the brahmans, gradually began to be 'powerful' in society because they handle the Veda and the *mantra*. This religio-cultural phenomenon added to their social standing. Those without that power were kept at a distance.

Since the Vedas are sacred and liberating knowledge received from a realm beyond the human mind, they are received **obediently** and **submitted** to unquestioningly. This submission is extended to the recipient of the Veda, to the samhitas and injunctions, to the mores that were derived later on in the Sutra literature, and further down, to thousands of details worked out in course of time. This has resulted in the shaping of a mindset marked by fixation, rigidity in customs, beliefs and traditions. This uncritical acceptance has its unintended effect on the recipient, as well as on the community that receives them. What happened in this process was that the critical in the human faculty had to give way, and submission became part of that acceptance. At the popular level this led to a closure of the critical in humans.

However, critique of such a stand had been taking place periodically. The Upanishadic times, for instance. The Buddhist

revolt, for instance. The long history of Hinduism is seen as being punctuated by protest and stagnation, renaissance and relapse into traditionalism and blind veneration of the Past.

*Manusmṛiti* dealt with the Indian mind as those small men of Liliput did with Don Quixote as we have in Gulliver's Travels: tied it down with prohibitions and prescriptions. Promotion of exploration of further avenues and of alternatives, exploration and discovery of the mystery and power in nature are yet to take birth. To tear asunder the binding ropes, and to break open the closed and frozen minds and to respond to the new challenges, powerful stimuli are needed. The demands of development need to be felt and met by our culture marked by this twofold features.

Fifth, the law of *karma* determines practically everything: your future, your present social economic and other status and fortunes. Ills of empirical life in society like poverty, misfortune, ailments etc are traceable to this law of determinism. And determinism ruled the roost for a long time. It did ravage many minds in all castes. Human science tools are needed to unravel and heal and restore.

There have been sprouts of insights demanding service and welfare of all like *lokasamgrha* (welfare of the established order: Gita 3,25)) and pauranic concepts like *ramrajya* (welfare of all subjects—Ayodhya kanda). Yet the fatal consequence of the law of *karma* reduced the impulse to serve others to minimum. To repair the damage it is not *karuna* that is needed but *nyaya Swadharma* dominated. We recall here its crude economic form as in Adam Smith's economic theory and how it has come to today's economic global policy.

Six, as a result of a dualism that intervened (*sreyas-preyas* (Kath.Up.); *purusha-prakṛti* (Yoga Sutra of Patanjali) and the growth of the institution of *samnyas* (life of the renouncer) an exaggerated spiritualism and other-worldliness grew and a downgrading of the empirical historical life, in spite of the later summing of Hindu view of life as guided by four-fold objectives namely *dharma*, *artha*, *kama* and *moksha* took place.

However, two counter developments kept challenging constantly this view, namely the *charvaka* view of life and the intermittent rise

and disappearance of dissent and protest against the institution of caste ritualism and polytheism etc. The former, with the entry of the affirmation of the sex-gift via *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana, re-affirmed the value and legitimacy of earthly pursuit. Both these much-repressed and devalued systems have vigorously re-surfaced with vengeance in our times.

What had been the IMPACT of some of these features upon the human community need to be reflected upon. In the light of what has happened, predictability of what could happen may be possible. It is possible then to reflect upon this ethos vis-à-vis development.

The fact that the land and much of the resources of the rich land were in the hands of a very limited few was known to the patrons of religion. That means production and accumulation, though according to the rate and kind of the different ages, before the Moghal era, during the colonial period, were controlled and motivated by the interest of a few. Profit and accumulation of the profit guided further investment. The thought that others also should benefit, that others also have the right to the resources of the land, that others also have a share in the production of knowledge that was behind the systems of the times, was not part of the economists and resource-holders of pre-Moghul, Moghul, and British times. Still less was such thinking among the protagonists of religions. Is not this trend still continued?

We monitor diligently the Indian social structures. There is no mitigation of the rigour of the social hierarchy in India. The lower we go in the social hierarchy there is less space for the lower, and least for the lowest. The excluding culture has been operative at all levels in the new Indian governance culture. Maintaining this excluding mindset undiluted acts only against the incentives for social transformation, a major component of development.

Inter-dining, inter-marriage and other dynamic of levelling social barriers are only minimally practised. A sound humanism will advocate the rejection of social customs that are inhibitive of the development of the human person, and consequently of the community. B. R. Ambedkar was correct in holding that without social transformation freedom is in chains.

**It is religion that was a silent bystander and approver when caste was shaped.** It is so even today. Religion created the caste system. The same religion is unwilling to recast that religion in the light of the insights from the human sciences which reject these institutions as irrational and anti-human.

Caste system was and still is a social system which has led to the concentration of all powers in the hands of the upper castes and which deprives the dalits of these powers. Caste is also an economic system in so far as land and all resources are in the hands of the upper castes.

Caste also is a political structure. The upper castes largely constitute the upper class which even today, rule the country. They design the development plans for the people. They supervise their execution, although some from the lower rungs have succeeded in climbing the ladder – the so-called *creamy layer*. Three or four times anti-reservation fumes and flames warmed and burned Indian social landscape. The resistance to and protest against affirmative action for the low castes continue. That shows that the inherited social system and structure with its economic benefits and support system refuses to relent.

Development at the economic level without development of the social system, Ambedkar had warned, will give us only mutilated freedom and punctured dignity of the human person with all rights eroded. Ambedkar rebelled against Hinduism since he considered it a block to social transformation. Without social transformation economic development alone will benefit only the already beneficiaries of the inherited systems.

Under the inspiring and committed leadership of the first Prime Minister India embarked on a major national venture towards 'development'. And drawing inspiration from the Soviet and Chinese experiments planning became a major strategy for the development of the country. And the Planning Commission was created as the supreme body in order to design the development of the Indian nation. Similar approaches were made by other countries belonging to the so-called 'under developed' nations. Development became a global concern. International institutions like the United Nations created under its aegis departments like the UNESCO to address the

educational scientific and cultural and other aspects of the international community. World Health Organization was created to address in a focused manner the problem of health in the world at large. Because of the phenomenal growth and ramification of industrialization and to meet with the mounting labour problems the International Labour Organization was also created. Development became a major concern at the national and international level. It continues to be so even today even as the phrase 'under-developed' nations began to be replaced by 'developing' nations. But Nehru, the visionary, died a broken man because of the failure in execution. The reasons are clear:

First, the upper caste people have scarce experience of the degraded situation of the dalits.

Secondly, untouchability and pollution-purity fear keeps them away from the dalits not only physically but mentally, intellectually and emotionally. The officers keep them at a distance, as has been abundantly testified by the dalits.

Thirdly, the waves of anti-reservation campaigns have demonstrated to the

Indian people their conviction that the dalits have no way to regain their lost space in the society and to enjoy the rights granted by the Indian Constitution. These are major factors impeding the social transformation which is a necessary component of development

## **7. Closure, Stagnation, and Regimentation**

Moderns like Subhayu Dasgupta (1990) calls this mindset as the ossification and stagnation of the Hindu mind. Sociologist G.S. Ghurye (1932) locates much of the consequences of such walled-in mindset in the caste system which according to him gave the Hindu society the look of a hive with its "snug living by surrendering the inbuilt fluidity and flexibility of the human groups. Human freedom and the colourful adventures and hazards that it might lead to were sacrificed to gain security, stability and the stagnancy of a hive" (Dasgupta 1990: 162).



The unhindered journey of the human mind in India began to get signals from promoters of the conservation of what has been achieved. Freezing of the mind and drawing of lines and building of walls began to emerge. Prohibition of the free wandering of the mind, and dominance of convention led to imposition of ban on innovative thinking and acting. With the advancement of thought fixation of the mind too caught up with the process.

One aspect of development is to promote and draw benefits for life from industrialization. True benefits from industrialization depend on the cultural ethos. Commitment to work and to duty is a major requirement. Religion and ideologies that promote consciousness of and application to duty are required. One unintended consequence of karma is minimizing this personal aspect and attributing behaviour or result or even temperament to an untraceable vague past action in a previous birth. This evasiveness and disclaiming would adversely affect commitment and production.

Red tapism, corruption, and non-performance are held out as factors associated with Indian bureaucracy. Failure of the implementation of national or State programmes for the people are traced to these negative traits in individual and collective behaviour. Religious and cultural ethos determine these traits in individuals. Religions promote purificatory rites to free individuals from guilt and culpability without linking rectitude and truthfulness, as well as personal responsibility. This caution needs to be carried into the offices, the laboratory, the mines and the factories. It is here that such beliefs and rituals block development. A ritual bath draws lakhs of devotees to the holy waters. On return to their place of duty does the devotee carry a purified ethics of work, duty and responsibility? If yes, our country will benefit immensely.

## **Concluding Observations**

The human process of planning, deliberation and making decisions need to be guided by a prioritization of values. The supreme value and concern is all that pertains to the origin nature dignity and destiny of the human person. Full and all round development of the human person is non-negotiable priority, and there is almost universal consensus on this. The human person is body-spirit integral reality.

Close on the heels of human development is the need for all that pertains to other needs of the person in society, the person in community, the person in the 'modern city'. A major concern of the State is on this issue of development.

Hinduism had made a remarkable contribution to the development of a great civilization. At the same time at a particular point in time certain degree of closure of mind and its exploration intervened that began to affect adversely the human person. Caste system was one major consequence. It impeded the pace of human development. The current society, along with the State, is engaged in pursuing development. The light of the fast growing human sciences could be focused on socio-cultural mores to help them become creative tools for the development of the country.

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## Folk/Subaltern Religion and Development

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*Abstract:* This paper deals with the proactive role of *folk religions* in the evolving concept of '*development*'. It dwells on the various possibilities of interaction between the two at different levels and between their different aspects, bringing into dialogue two seemingly contradictory historical human initiatives: the phenomenon of folk religion which is often regarded as pre-modern, and the idea of development which is conceptually intertwined with the process of modernisation. While the latter is taken to mean primarily the economic disillusionment, the article takes into account other models of development evolved in the last few decades, in which the concept has undergone change and the horizons of its understanding have expanded to include the overall well-being of humans. This article has two parts: *part one* focuses on the nature and dynamics of the relationship between the economic terrain of development and the phenomenon of folk/subaltern religion, and *part two* dwells on the new meanings of development, and the mediating role that the folk religions can play both at the conceptual and the concrete levels of such development schemes.

*Keywords:* Folk religions, subalternity, rural religiosity, urban religiosity, equality.

This article endeavours to investigate the question of the relationship between folk or subaltern religion and development, bringing into dialogue two seemingly contradictory historical human initiatives: the phenomenon of folk religion which is often regarded as pre-modern, and the idea of development which is conceptually intertwined with the process of modernisation. While the latter is taken to mean primarily the economic dimension, the article takes into account other models of development evolved in the last few decades, in which the concept has undergone change and the horizons of its understanding have expanded to include the overall well-being of humans, as many authors have pointed out. Subsequently, the article has two parts: *part one* which focuses on the nature and dynamics of relationship between the economic terrain of development and the phenomenon of folk/subaltern religion, and *part two* which dwells on the new meanings of development, and the mediating role that the folk religions can play both at the conceptual and the concrete levels of such development schemes.

## **Part I**

### **1. Folk Religion and Economic Development**

Though today's understanding of development means more than the economic aspect, yet we need to take up the relationship of folk religion and development not only because Weber's theory of religion, which remains very influential till today, focuses on the relationship between religion and economic development, but also because most of the social scientists following Weber have found Hinduism as obstructing development. For instance K.W Kapp<sup>2</sup> held that the general beliefs and values of Hinduism like the law of karma and astrology denied history its transformative role in social and economic development. Another writer, Mishra, attempts to establish that the other-worldliness of Hinduism stresses the release from the cycle of rebirth, and this, he believes, has adversely affected economic growth. While we cannot take up this issue in detail, the questions that need to be asked are "Are these observations true? Are they applicable to the whole of Hinduism? Or to part of it? What brand of Hinduism if any is anti-development?" Is the kind of Hinduism that we are interested in, namely, folk religion against development? or does it promote development?

While scrutinising the relationship between Hinduism and economic development, most of the authors following the hypothetico-deductive method have derived their conclusions from the abstract ideas of higher Hinduism's values which are either favourable or unfavourable to economic development. Such conclusions deduced from beliefs and values of the conceptual domain remain alienated from concrete social and cultural contexts. Instead, one has to shift the focus from text-bound Hinduism to practice-oriented Hinduism. The latter includes not only the practices of the elite Brahminic order, but also the rituals of the ordinary common folk. "In considering Hinduism in relation to economic growth, the character of the former as it is practiced by the common people is more important than its metaphysical aspects."<sup>3</sup>

The common people's folk ritual observances and practices such as vows and votive offerings and a consideration of these in relation to economic activities present a different perspective on the relationship between religion and economic action. Rao notes that people keep the *vratas* to various folk deities not only in the rural areas but also in the urban habitats, in order to seek benefits which are often mundane and material.

In the folk religious practices, a worshipper is promised success and prosperity in this world, and often such mundane prosperities are regarded to be the result of accumulated ritual merit. The folk gods and goddesses are perceived to have enormous powers over the prosperity of the village and the fertility of the village lands. These deities who represent the powers of nature offer not only promises and assurances to people to improve their economic lot in the agrarian settings, but also hope to those who have failed in business or who seek employment. "The ritual practices seeking the divine assistance in achieving a specific objective belong to the realm of religion and they seek to establish a bridge between the mundane activity on the one hand and supernatural beings on the other."<sup>4</sup> This integrating function of folk rituals enables the common folk to harmoniously reconcile the needs and demands of modern life with their day-to-day living through their belief in the powers of gods and goddesses.

Thus, contrary to popular belief, the folk ritual observances and practices emphasise the this-worldly aspect of Hinduism, which has been ignored by those who have written on Hinduism and economic development. Ritual practice, often enacted through the folk religious realm, “emphasising the worldly character of Hinduism acts as a corrective to the hypothetico-deductive view of the other-worldliness of Hinduism. But this worldliness of Hinduism does not by itself guarantee a positive orientation to economic action”<sup>5</sup> As Rao rightly observes whether ritual promotes an outlook for the positive pursuit of economic activities is a question which requires empirical investigation.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Folk/Subaltern Religion and the Process of Modernity**

In the sociological studies of religions in India, folk religions are generally treated as pre-modern or mere remnant of the old feudal system, and as static or stagnant with the mechanical routinisation of their rituals. The latest studies on the folk and subaltern religions conducted in their socio-economic-historical milieus take issue with such understandings.

My own research done on the folk religious phenomenon of Sudalaimadan Cult in Tirunelveli district of Tamilnadu has contested such a view. The study has shown that in the origin and growth of a folk religious phenomenon such as Sudalaimadan cult changes can occur in the symbolic meaning schemes as a result of the *advent of modernity*. It has indicated how old religio-cultural forms can obtain new schemes of socio-economic meanings in course of history.

The changes in the district occurred following the initial phase of modernization inaugurated by the British in the nineteenth century in this region. The policy decisions regarding land-holdings, new revenue systems (such as *ryotwari*), education, employment, market, etc., made by the colonial state brought about transformation not only in the socio-economic systems, but subsequently, it became a collateral factor for the emergence of different folk religious forms. It was not a mere change that took place in the past and was pertinent only to a particular point of time in history. It was not experienced as a residual phenomenon that passed away along with the death of the colonial state. The changes brought about by the

colonial state were carried out by the independent Indian state which has carried over the impact of modernity to the present. Modernization has undoubtedly acquired new accents and varied emphases through different economic systems such as capitalism, liberalisation and globalisation, but has also yielded different benefits to different sections within the caste hierarchy. The different agents of change have provided impetus to different actors by bringing in alternative economic systems and schemes at different times, and, through them, new opportunities for the liberation of the subalterns from the old economic system of caste hierarchy. Thus, it has effected a change in society over a period of time. All these phenomena have brought about not only fluidity within the socio-economic systems but also transformations in the religious systems such as folk religions.

The study shows that by making use of temple honours and the nuances of ritual power, social actors can articulate the newly acquired symbolic power. It has been appropriated by different social actors across the spectrum of the caste hierarchy at different times in different intensities. The changes experienced by the people by their appropriation of new systems have shown up in the symbolic universe. New cohorts of castes and families have appropriated the subaltern religious terrain and generated new forms of socio-symbolic discourse in the district of Tirunelveli. They have not drastically altered the folk forms of worship, but have infused new social meanings into the old symbolic systems. Thus they have altered the old cultural conceptual schemes and meaning systems in the ever-growing new contexts, be it the colonial state, independent India, or the global world. Here, modernity, through various agents such as the colonial state, the independent state and the global world order, has provided new socio-economic constructs to social actors within the caste hierarchy. They, in turn, have apprehended and appropriated the benefits and the privileges of such contexts on the one hand, and, in the process of social transformations, have constructed, constituted, adduced, disseminated and explored new systems of meanings to old religious forms, and have created new socio-symbolic cultural discourses, on the other.

The study has thus unfolded the interplay between culture and modernity in the domain of folk religious cults, in the process of

demonstrating 'how the symbolic can mirror – and can be mirrored by – the subtle transformations in culture and society.' It shows that, through the medium of a subaltern religious universe, folk culture can provide new cultural schemes to the subalterns to display new forms of power acquired by the appropriation of the benefits of modernity and industrialisation. Thus modernity has its insidious effects on the delicate balance of power relations within the caste hierarchy, and can become a partner with religion and culture to generate new texts of discourse of symbolic power. It is to be noted that, as modernity can add colours to religion, so, too, culture and religion can add new shades of meaning to the thesis of modernity.

Saurabh Dube, in his seminal study on the history of a subaltern religious sect of the Chamars known as Satnamis, has nuanced the relationship between folk/subaltern religion and modernity further. He has held that through religion arena, the subaltern communities can also engage in construction of creative cartographies defining spaces in time and places in history.<sup>7</sup>

In the above mentioned work, Dube shows that the subaltern Satnamis, while challenging the terms of ritual power and caste hierarchy, colonial authority and nationalist imperatives, can carve out their own visions, designs and practices surrounding sect and caste, myth and history, highlighting the interplay and interpenetration between symbols of modern state and forms of communities in India. Thus, as he claims, he has tapped the potentiality of subaltern religious domain to suggest the importance of linkages between the pre-colonial, colonial and the post-colonial. To achieve this, he has followed the method of conducting fieldwork in an engagement with the historical imagination which addresses the key analytical relationships between sect and caste, myth and history, religion and power, gender and order, community and hegemony, resistance and domination.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, Dube would claim that the entangled endeavours of ethnographic histories and untouchable pasts is capable of unravelling process "involving myths and the making of modernities, orality and the construction of histories, writing and the fashioning of traditions to interrogate the place and persistence of binary categories—of modernity and tradition, state and community, rationality



and ritual, reason and emotion—within influential strands of social and political theory.”<sup>9</sup> His work calls into question the taken-for-granted overarching opposition between tradition and modernity, “which is often accompanied and animated—at the very least implicitly—by equally grand divisions between myth and history, ritual and reason, magic and the modern.”<sup>10</sup> These binary schemes and categories are actually rooted in reified representation of a singular modernity. The study of subaltern religions in India has unfolded the power of the subaltern religious initiatives to question such conceptions of singular modernity. Thus the historical phenomena of subaltern religions is perceived to have the potentialities to expose the falsity of a representation of modernity, to put it in the words of Saurabh Dube himself, “as a self-realising project of progress, a self-evident embodiment of development and a self-contained incarnation of history.”<sup>11</sup>

### **3. Public Sphere, Folk Religion and Modernity**

The concept of public sphere as proposed by Habermas meant “a domain of social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed .... A portion of the public opinion is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion.... The coercive power of the state is the counterpart, as it were, of the political public sphere, but not part of it.”<sup>12</sup> In his opinion, public sphere is a mediating category between the civil society and the state. To our Indian context, we have to broaden the outreach of this concept so as to include public spheres other than those envisaged by Habermas, and focus upon the multiplicity and plurality of spheres as well as groups that create them. There is no single monolithic public sphere as there is not single monolithic notion of civil society. Different socio-historical conditions generate multiple spheres and public groups that are engaged in the continuous process of defining and redefining the state and the individual, the caste-hierarchy and the marginal castes. With the production of new and altered symbolic cultural schemes, the subalterns raise voice that transcends hierarchical boundaries of gender and caste through the medium of folk religion and folklore. Folklore and folk ritual performances serve as a me-

dium for contesting dominant world-views. Through them public opinions are generated, discussed and debated. They could be used for articulating heterogeneity rather than stressing homogeneity.<sup>13</sup> Study of folklore and folk religious forms can reveal how communities can break hierarchies, articulate aspirations and constitute new identities. As identities are constantly created and recreated, what we encounter through the generation of such folk forms is a complex cultural phenomenon “not necessarily rational but in alignment with the logic of cultures concerned. Such process do create and influence public opinion.”<sup>14</sup> As Muthukumar notes, what we see here is a ‘performing society’ that generates public opinion not necessarily through rational verbal arguments and dialogues but *also through gestures, genres, versions, performances, stories, narratives and codes*.<sup>15</sup>

Besides, public sphere plays a vital role in the process of modernisation. The changes that modernity brings in its wake become more socially acceptable and the conflicts that are created find a medium in public sphere through which they can be resolved. The various folk forms, including folk religious performances, provide and create public sphere in India, and they help in bringing into focus ideas, values and contentions into public discourse, a kind of unshackling of inhibitions in a stress-free manner.<sup>16</sup> Here folk religion functions as a notable instance in which the creation and sustenance of public sphere becomes significant to achieve the multi-level interests of different performers and patrons.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, in some cases, the folk religious arena is perceived to have undergone a shift from the usually ‘private sacred space’ to a site of construction of what can be called “public sphere.” As Bhaduri notes in the case of the origin of community Durga<sup>18</sup> Pooja in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Bengal, such public spheres arose in the process of the modernisation process initiated by the British. As the author observes, it evolved “in response to the colonial state machinery and often included subversive strategies.”<sup>19</sup> The fact that Raja Nabo Kissen Deb in 18<sup>th</sup> cent. celebrated Robert Clive over the Muslim ruler, Shiraz-ud-dowla with Durga Puja indicates that the Hindu upper class took the opportunity of British control over Bengal to demonstrate its negative reaction to its erstwhile repression under

Muslim domination. Keeping in line with their general policy that the British would not meddle much in the religious affairs of the natives, they abolished the festival tax introduced by the Muslim rulers. However, the British also introduced a more rigid system of taxation, which means the Zamindars had to pay more to the new masters. But, making use of the privileges and freedom given by the British in religious matters, “an annual extravagant event like the Durga Puja became an easy route for Zamindars to get major tax reliefs and even manage extra allowances from the British.”<sup>20</sup> Thus folk or popular religious practices have the potential of becoming an interface between the modern state and civil society, “in this case between the emergent British colonial state and the Hindu Bengali religio-cultural space.”<sup>21</sup>

#### **4. Folk Religion as a Counter-Public and Identity Politics:**

One of the social consequences of development and modernisation in India today is the identity politics of religion and caste which is often displayed in the religious realm, more so in the case of folk religious realm. Kaushal, who made a study on the Gaddi community in the western Himalayas, notes that “another very important sub-text of public ritual performances is construction and presentation of a group’s identity to oneself and to others.”<sup>22</sup> Blackburn, who made a study on the folk religious performances of South India, also arrives at a similar conclusion. According to her, folk performances “help to shape a community’s self identity” and “they have that special ability to tell a community’s own story and thus help to create and maintain that community’s self-identity.”<sup>23</sup>

Now, folk religion’s capacity to construct and uphold the identity of a social group is appropriated by different groups with ingenuity to display their social status and to assert their identity. For instance, the folk cults/ folk rituals like *Kodai* in the southern part of India can become the site of assertion of the newly gained autonomy of the depressed classes in this district, as insightfully shown by Diane P. Mines in a recent study.<sup>24</sup> She has demonstrated that identity politics has not only impacted upon the meta-narrative of Hindutva but also has transformed the folk religious arena into a site of contestation by the subalterns who dared to defy caste-hierar-

chy empowered by the newly gained economic status thanks to modernity and its fruits such as education and employment. She explains how the people of Yanaimangalam in Tirunelveli district drew on regional and national socio-politico-religious movements, and contested the social and spatial contours of their local lives and their villages through ritual action.

Making a study on the folk community festivals called *jatar(s)* in the western region of Himalayas, Kaushal holds that while *Bharmour jatar* and *Chchatarari jatar* were the community festivals of the dominant castes in the region, the *Guggal jatar*—celebrated by low caste Halis and Rehars created a space for the articulation of voices of protest against mistreatment and neglect, and can be “generative of multiple public spheres that may use the language of myth and ritual, which seem to overlap, but nonetheless facilitate articulation of counter-hegemonic voices that contest and compete.”<sup>25</sup> He concludes that the public sphere created through the medium of folk religious rituals, rather than defusing boundaries may actually become arenas for public display of hostilities and tension that exist in the society.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, in our contemporary times, the public sphere of folk religions is bound to have within itself fissures and spaces for subversive appropriation leading to the possibility of counter-public

### **Ambivalent Character of Folk Religion in Urban India**

Folk Religions, especially in the urban setting of today’s India, can be described to have ambivalent picture. On the one hand, you have folk temples in the urban setting, which seeks to transcend the boundaries of caste, gender and religion. For instance, Kalpagam, having made a study on roadside temples in the urban areas, observes that, the creation of an urban popular culture through roadside temple activities is an expression of working class culture that seeks to synthesise the Hinduism of the “great tradition” and “little tradition,” and in its everyday practices transcends caste, class, religious and gender boundaries. “It is also simultaneously the constitution of a social text that allows people to draw meanings of nationhood and their sense of belonging in cultural terms that are rooted in local practices, everyday life and localities, and seeks to evolve

new perspectives and ideas of a secular society” This signifies the harmonious side of evolving civil society in the cities and towns.

On the other hand, we can also witness the opposite characteristics of folk religions. Folk religious forms, which assert caste-identity as noted earlier in the article, can also function as a source of subaltern agency. In some urban settings, they can operate as an instrument of negotiating civil space through creation of folk or popular religious sites such as the celebration of ‘Kanwad’<sup>27</sup> in cities like Delhi. These religious sites are fundamentally ritual domains wherein, through the rituals, people display their identity, re-member themselves into the cultural habitus they belong to, draw resources to face life, and sometimes even negotiate a new civil space according to their terms.

The above mentioned presence of such contradictory characteristics reveals the ambivalent portrait of folk religions in India. But, in as much as the Indian society that we live in has ambivalent characteristics of equality and discrimination, harmony and conflict, folk religions can be found to depict them in the religious realm. Thus the opposite functions of folk religion can be described to mirror the society which is in conflict itself.

## **Part II**

In this Part, let me deal with the different meanings that the concept of development has acquired over a period of time and the new areas of interaction such new understandings can create for the folk religious phenomenon to engage in the process of development.

### **1. The Development of ‘development’**

We are at the cross-road now in our vision and practice of development. Much of our difficulties here relate to our inability to look at and participate in the field of relationship and as a quest of a shared responsibility which brings the self and the other together. The project of development has been subjected to much criticism and rethinking in the recent years in the midst of which agenda of development has been broadened to include human development from mere economic development and rise in per capita income.<sup>28</sup>

The above quotation shows us the shifts that have taken place in the very conception of 'development.' In order to have a better grasp of the problematic of development, let me dwell briefly on the history of development.

The concept of 'development' meant different things to different people at different times. Authors identify three post-World War II phases of development. In the first phase (1947-1949), the liminal phase between the World War and the beginning of the cold war, the world grappled with the future after an extreme crisis. In this period, development was seen as a 'work of hope.'<sup>29</sup> It primarily aimed at alleviating poverty. It did not go beyond economic growth. In the second phase (1949 – ), of the cold war, development entered the domain of politics , application and administration. In 1960, development was defined as 'growth with change,' referring to economic and cultural change, influenced by structural functionalism.<sup>30</sup> Development thus meant a simultaneous transformation in all these dimensions. In the mid 1970s, there again occurred a shift of focus of development which aimed at a decent standard of living for all humans, in line with the basic human rights as defined in the UN charter, and measured by 'human development indicators.'<sup>31</sup> In the third phase (1990-), the natural environment and its ecology became integrated into the development discourse, and 'sustainable development' became the watchword. Sustainable development drew attention to formerly ignored marginal regions and people, like the gold miners in the Amazon, the peasants in Africa, the hill tribes in Thailand etc., who were previously rather ignored.<sup>32</sup> Development had little to do with equity, justice or with people and social relations since the subject matter at that time was growth and not distribution. It was in this context that the UN General Assembly resolution called for the renewal of political will to invest in people and their well-being in what could be the trend setter for the next millennium, and set up a special committee in the year 2000 to review the process of development.<sup>33</sup> Following these, a whole array of new discourses of development, such as Amartya Sen's idea of development as freedom (i.e., development as expansion of substantive freedom to achieve alternative functions), development as human dignity and human rights,<sup>34</sup> development as 'global responsi-

bility,' and development as cultivation of 'self'<sup>35</sup> etc., has acquired significance in the development theories.

### **Folk/Subaltern Religion as a Process of Development in the Restoration of Equality for All and Human Dignity of the Oppressed**

As Aloysius notes, in the subaltern religions, there is a privileging of the ethical over the transcendental and they are often manifestations of voluntary construction of the morally just in place of involuntary acceptance of the 'religiously given' as found in the case of dominant religions. "These transitions need not only be seen as historical, that is, from pre-modernity to modernity, in religion. They are, in fact, dimensions or aspects of religion of all times."<sup>36</sup> No doubt one immediately tends to link development of the ethically religious worldview, embodying a social order that is egalitarian, with the emergence of modernity and its democratic institutions. But there were in the pre-modern times protest religious movements in India proposing an ethical world-view, although they came to be subordinated and often submerged as we see in the example of Buddhism in India.

These types of religious movements strive for collective emancipation rather than individual salvation. It has "the power of motor force moving a collectivity to effect a change in human-social reality, a change that takes the reality nearer to the conceptual ideality"<sup>37</sup> But in the emancipation of the collective, the human and the dignity of the individual human is restored developed and constructed. The historical examples of The Satnami movement, which reformed the lives of the Chamars in Chattisgarh, Ayyavazhi Movement that transformed the status of Nadars in Kannyakumari District in Tamilnadu, the Narayanguru movement which revolted against the oppression of Ezhavas in Kerala reveal the fact that religion can function as a subaltern agency to defy the oppressive social order, to negotiate a new egalitarian social identity and to restore the human dignity of the oppressed

But not all folk religious phenomena such as CM cult in Tamilnadu, Virabhadra cult in Andhra Pradesh etc, could fit into this type. These pre-modern cults have not emerged as a separate

and a distinct subaltern religious phenomena. But they are sites of contestation of the dominant religious ideology. In fact, both these types contest the hierarchy and both embody the aspirations of the oppressed for liberation from the clutches of gruesome caste hierarchy.

### **Folk Religion: An Idiom of Reversal ?**

Kaulpagam, in his/her study on roadside temples in Chennai, takes note of a case in which the poor auto drivers have employed a Brahmin as a priest wherein the high caste Brahmin is made answerable and accountable to the low caste men. My own PhD research in the district of Trinvelveli on Folk Religion reveals that a good number of most backward castes get the Brahmin priests to perform rituals in their folk temples. Through such folk religious sites, there is a reversal of social dynamics as regards the construction of human dignity in the Indian society. In the traditional agrarian Indian society, the Sanskritic Hinduism had provided a socio-economic structure through its caste-hierarchy wherein the Brahmin-Kshatriya alliance had the power of determining the human dignity of the Sudras and Dalits. The self-worth of a Sudra or a Dalit or his/her self perception was dependent upon the kind of treatment meted out to him/her but within the parameters of caste-hierarchy. The Dalits and Sudras always remained dependent on and accountable to the high castes. In folk religious realm today, on the contrary, as we see in the case of a Brahmin above, the Sudras/Dalit (the auto drivers in Chennai or the most backward castes in Trinvelveli district) have a significant role to play in the self-making of a Brahmin priest. The Brahmin priest in Chennai openly acknowledged this. Kaulpagam writing about him says, "Post-retirement employment as a priest of a roadside temple is really the fulfilment of a long-long yearning as in his youth he was trained in a gurukulam in Mahabalipuram on Agama sastras." While such occurrences point to the new kind of social dynamics that take place in the folk religious realm, they also mirror the subtle social transformations that could occur in the process of development like modernisation or urbanisation and folk religion's potentiality in being instrumental to bring about such transformations.



## Folk Religion and Holistic Development

Another major step in the evolution of the concept of 'development' is the realisation that care of the human is intrinsically related to the care of nature. The actualisation of the human cannot take place in isolation or in the abstract. It has to take place in the concrete material world and along with the other creatures and beings in the world. This implies that, during the process of transformation of the humans, the human beings have to work for the promotion of well-being for the whole of the cosmos. While such a task calls for a proactive involvement of the humans in the world, it implies a total rejection of any dichotomy between matter and spirit, sacred and profane. This entails a holistic view of the universe which underscores a fundamental unity between the humans and the cosmos. This basic unity and the symbiotic relationship between the humans and the cosmos is best inscribed, created and established in the embodied human beings through concrete human practices. Such human practices obtain religious overtones in most of the cultures wherein the sacred character of nature is made aware of through folk religious rituals. For instance, Madhu Kanna holds that the folk festival of *navapatrika* worship can be related to the issues of ecological sensibility.<sup>38</sup> Similarly the various folk festivals such as *karam* in the tribal belt of Chotanagpur, *kodai* in South India and various season-transition festivals in different parts of India are at once the expressions of the religious and the ecological concerns of the common folk. Folk religious rituals such as *Bihu* in Assam or *Pongal* in Tamilnadu play a major role in making humans realise the inalienable relationship between nature and humans. More often than not, religious beliefs/practices and the earth's ecology are inextricably linked, and organically related. "Religious beliefs—especially those concerning the nature of powers that create and animate—become an effective part of ecological systems."<sup>39</sup> Rather than the major religious traditions, it is the folk/indigenous religious traditions which ensure the creation and the maintenance of the human being's intrinsic relationship with the natural environment.

## Conclusion

This paper which has attempted to discourse on the proactive role of *folk religions* in the evolving concept '*development*' has dwelt on the various possibilities of interaction between the two at different levels and between their different aspects. Since both these realities have been undergoing evolution themselves in human history, the attempt of discourse, like that of this paper, on interaction between the two can never get exhausted, but rather will remain open-ended.

## Notes

1. Folk religions stand for the original religious representations and categories of the non-twice born and non-brahminic masses (Sudras and Dalits), found in the agrarian setting. Unlike Sanskritic Hinduism, folk religions are centred on gods who are carnivorous, and served by priests who are non-Brahmins. Folk religions are believed to have their origin in the feudal system. When a folk religious phenomenon becomes for a subordinate group a site of assertion of their identity and of negotiation with the dominant (the powerful) social groups, be it in the rural and in the urban setting, in the past or in the contemporary time, we can name that religion as subaltern religion.
2. Kapp, K.W, *Hindu Culture, Economic Development and Economic Planning in India*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963.
3. M.S.A. Rao, "Religion and Economic Development" in Rowena Robinson (ed.,) *Sociology of Religion in India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2004, 68-83, p.74.
4. *Ibid*, p.78.
5. *Ibid.*, p.79.
6. *Ibid.* p. 79.
7. Dube, *Untouchable Pasts*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998, p. xii
8. Cf. Dube "Entangled Endeavours," in *PostColonial Passages*, edited by Dube, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 196-209.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 209.
10. *Ibid.*, p.206.
11. *Ibid.*

12. Habermas, "The Public Sphere" in Habermas, *Kultur and Kritik*, Trans.S.W. Nicholson in Paul Marris and Sue Thornham , eds. Media Studies: A Reader, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1996. p. 55.
13. Muthukumarasamy & Molly, "Introduction" in (eds.), *Folklore, Public Sphere and Civil Society*, IGNCA, New Delhi, 2004, 1-16, p.3.
14. *Ibid.*, p.4.
15. *Ibid.* p.3.
16. Bhattacharya, "Preface,"
16. Muthukumarasamy & Molly (eds.), *Folklore*, IX-X.
17. *Ibid.*
18. One might wonder if Durga is a folk deity, as it is often associated with Kali. But the characteristics of the folk deity is clearly seen in Durga. Bhaduri observes that Durga has no permanent temple to her credit and can be worshipped only once a year as a temporarily sculpted idol in temporarily erected community pandals under a temporarily festive public gaze, and a Durga puja is an annually generated mass activity and not a solipsistic religious function. Cf. Bhaduri, "Of Public Sphere and Sacred Space: Origin of Community Durga Puja in Bengal," in Muthukumarasamy & Molly (eds.), *Folklore*, pp 77-89, p. 80.
19. *Ibid.* p. 7.
20. *Ibid.*, p.82.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
22. Kaushal, , "From Mythic to Political Identities: Folk Festivals and Cultural Sub-texts," in Muthukumarasamy & Molly (eds.), *Folklore*, pp 186-196. p. 187.
23. Blackburn et al., *Oral Epics in India*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1989, p. 11.
24. Diane P Mines in "Hindu Nationalism, Untouchable reform, and ritual production of a South Indian Village," *American Ethnologist*, Vol 29, No;1, Feb. 2002.
25. Kaushal, *From Mythic.*, p. 194.
26. *Ibid.*
27. Naresh Goswami notes that the celebration of this festival has as much to do with religion as an assertion of identity in urban social dynam-

- ics. Cf. "Songs of the Road," in *The Times of India*, August, 17, 2005, 14.
28. Ananta Kumar Giri, *New Horizons of Social Theory*, Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2006. p.200.
  29. Cf. Wiebe Nauta, "A Moral Critique of Fieldwork," in Ananta Kumar Giri et al.(eds.,) *The Development of Religion and the Religion of Development*, CW Delft: Eburon Delft, 2004. Pp.89-100, p. 90.
  30. Cf. Rudiger Kroff & Heiko Schrader, "Does the End of Development Revitalise History?" in Ananta Kumar Giri et al. *The Development of Religion and the Religion of Development*, 9-17, p.12.
  31. *Ibid.*
  32. *Ibid.*, p.14.
  33. Cf. John Mohan Razu, "Introduction," Bangalore Theological Forum, 3&4 (30), 1998, *A Special Issue on Development*. pp 2-6.
  34. Cf. Bas de Gaay Forman, "In Search for a New Paradigm" in Ananta Kumar Giri et al. *The Development of Religion and the Religion of Development*, pp. 18-28.
  35. Cf. Ananta Kumar Giri, *New Horizons of Social Theory*, pp.199-222.
  36. G. Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity*, New Age Publishers, New Delhi, 1998. p. 10.
  37. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
  38. Cf. As noted by Bhaduri, *Of Public Spheres*, p. 88. See also, Madhu Kanna, "The Ritual Capsule of Durga Puja: An Ecological Perspective," in Christopher Key Chapple et al. (eds.,) *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2001.
  39. Sullivan, "Preface" to John A. Grim ed., *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology, Centre for the Study of World Religions*, Harvard University School, Massachusetts, Cambridge, 2001, p.xi.

## **Cultivating a Global Mentality Virtue Ethics for an Age of Globalization**

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*Abstract:* Cultivating a global mentality is a contemporary need with a view to the formation of good habits or virtues necessary for co-existence in the present situation of globalization. Rather than providing a critique of globalization in terms of whether it is leading towards integral development or not (a method more suited along the lines of a deontological or teleological ethics), the author has preferred to adopt an approach more in keeping with virtue ethics. Accordingly, he has focused on the cultivation of key virtues which are not only necessary to survive in this new age of globalization, but also to flourish in such a world. Furthermore, the cultivation of these virtues is with a view to guiding the processes of development along more salubrious lines. The virtues chosen are the following: dialogical pluralism, creative visualization, collaborative solidarity, transnational responsibility and pro-active optimism. A basic theme which underlies the discussion is the role of religion in this contemporary situation, and how religion has the power to cultivate these virtues so as to flourish within such a world and also to guide such a world towards integral personal and social development.

*Key Words:* Globalization, global capitalism, religion, integral development, virtue ethics

This is an essay in *virtue ethics* applied to the phenomenon of globalization and social development, guided by the role and influence of religion. I intend to present the basic virtues or elements of an appropriate practical mentality or disposition necessary in order to both experience personal and social well-being (*eudaimonia*) in the current scenario of globalization and to orient global processes towards integral social development using adequate practical wisdom (*phronesis*).

In order to both experience personal fulfilment within our contemporary world of globalization and to make this world more humane and harmonious, one needs an adequate social and moral education – an education which virtue ethics is better suited to provide as compared to *deontological* and *teleological* ethical schools of thought.<sup>1</sup> There is a considerable amount of literature available with regard to critical perspectives relating to the merits and demerits of globalization from a deontological or teleological position. From a deontological position (which is largely concerned with rules and duties), one can provide a critique of globalization in terms of whether its processes and products are *in principle* suitable or detrimental to human nature and social relations (i.e, whether they are right or wrong). From a teleological position (which is largely concerned with social consequences), one can provide a critique of globalization in terms of whether it is *ultimately or proximately socially beneficial or destructive* (i.e, whether they are good or bad).<sup>2</sup> Compared to these deontological and teleological perspectives, there is comparatively little literature available with regard to the adoption or the cultivation of relevant virtues which would serve to better prepare ourselves to live in an increasingly globalized world. Such an approach is necessary, so as to both enjoy the benefits of globalization and to necessarily guide, to the best of our ability, the shape globalization will take in the future.

### The Context of our Discussion

We live in a world of increasing globalization. We also live in a world where religion seems to be playing a more significant role in the public sphere, for better or worse. The challenge before us is to orient both globalization and religious currents – separately and con-

nectedly – into more productive channels in terms of social development.<sup>3</sup> By ‘religion’ I do not include only the mainstream organized systems of faith, but indeed any organized or relatively unorganized movement which is governed by a set of meanings, values, beliefs and rituals based on a transcendent reality. By ‘globalization’ I do not just include transnational eco-political processes, but the whole gamut of a transnational exchange of goods, services, capital, knowledge, values and lifestyle. The more specifically eco-political aspect of globalization may be termed ‘global capitalism,’ which is a movement mainly concerned with the development of a transnational system of liberal, market-driven trade, which is of course influenced and restricted by global political currents.

In *Making Globalization Good: The Moral Challenges of Global Capitalism* – a seminal work closely related to the theme of this essay<sup>4</sup> – John Dunning, the editor, defines globalization as:

*the connectivity of individuals and institutions across the globe, or at least, over most of it. Such connectivity may be shallow or deep; short or long lasting. It may be geared to advancing personal or institutional interests; and economic, cultural, or political goals . . . Globalization is a morally neutral concept. In itself, it is neither good nor bad, but it may be motivated for good or bad reasons, and used to bring about more or less good or bad results. (original italics)*<sup>5</sup>

The concept of ‘global capitalism,’ as has been pointed out, is relatively more restrictive, as it has to do primarily with eco-political maneuvering. It is thus ideologically more problematic, as it is rooted in traditional economic presuppositions and practices which have given rise to the current eco-political imbalance within and between nations. However, as a contemporary adage goes, “capitalism is the worst economic system on the face of the earth, except for all of the other alternatives!” In contrast to this more narrow concept of ‘global capitalism’, Dunning proposes a wider and richer concept of ‘responsible global capitalism’ (RGC), which

includes the set of non-market institutions within which the market is embedded and which, together, characterize a global society . . . it is the task of these institutions to set the rules and monitor the behaviour

of markets; to engage in a variety of market facilitating and/or regulatory activities; and to produce such socially desirable products, which, left unaided, the market is unable or unwilling to produce. RGC then is a system made up of individuals, private commercial corporations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governments, and supranational agencies. Each has a unique and critical role to play. (*original italics*)<sup>6</sup>

A virtue ethics suited for the world of globalization would need to be cultivated within this matrix of personal, social, governmental, non-governmental and corporate responsibility. Joseph Stiglitz too advocates this “more holistic approach to development . . . Such an approach should embrace a social, moral and environmental dimension as well as an economic one.”<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that we are living today in a situation of increasing globalization (and increasing global capitalism), and it appears that we will continue to do so in the near future. There are two primary responses to such a situation. One is to fight the processes of globalization, especially those processes which are based on ‘neoliberal’ eco-political policies leading to apparently draconian ‘structural adjustment policies’ which seem to harm weaker nations and peoples. The second is to channelize the social energies which globalization has released along productive and integrally developmental pathways, including that of maximizing the possibilities for transnational fair trade. This essay will adopt the logic of the second alternative, for two main reasons:

Firstly, at a more realistic level, I do not see any viable and widespread alternative to globalization – and its attendant global capitalism – gaining international currency. The past couple of decades have seen the collapse of communism as a viable eco-political alternative. Even China has pragmatically given way (economically, if not politically) to primarily capitalist means of production and distribution. The Communists today in West Bengal are also struggling to come to terms with this reality.

Secondly, I see that globalization, in spite of its many drawbacks, has the potential to raise humanity to a new level of consciousness, so as to shake off the shackles of much of debilitating tradition and



replace them with more emancipatory mentalities. Also, responsible globalization has the potentiality to overcome artificial problems such as famine, hunger, epidemics, illiteracy and war, among other human-made problems. Here it is good to recognize that the strengths of globalization may also be considered to be its weaknesses, even though we may attempt to make it a responsible process. For example, even in a situation of fair trade, global capitalism could lead to job insecurity, for jobs can move overnight to locations favouring more lucrative production opportunities (this is certainly adversely affecting citizens of more economically developed nations today). At the cultural level, openness to transnational cultures may lead to the gradual erosion of one's more traditionally salubrious cultural values. One may be more influenced to adopt lifestyles, relationships and commitments which are easy, convenient and gratifying, rather than those which are more substantial, wholesome and longer-lasting. This in turn will play out at the economic level in terms of a focus on the production of needless sophisticated consumer goods instead of more wholesome and cheaper sustainable-oriented goods and services which are relatively of greater benefit for those more socially disadvantaged. For these and other reasons, globalization and (economic, political, and cultural) marginalization may well go hand in hand for some time to come.<sup>8</sup>

It is debatable, however, whether the contemporary processes of globalization are the *causes* of this marginalization or the potential *solutions* of impoverishment and marginalization. A substantial amount of the literature with regard to the current state of social development is rather polarized, depending largely upon the agency and individuals presenting the material, and the parameters or criteria being considered. As a result, value-laden theories and instruments of investigation give rise to ridiculously different social scenarios, ranging from a frenzied apocalyptic rally call at the one end, to annunciations of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth itself at the other. The former clarion call is usually issued by singularly anti-MNC<sup>9</sup> NGOs, while the latter acclamation is enunciated by a good number of corporate and management gurus who seem to worship unashamedly and uncritically at the shrine of opulence. Such a polarized situation is unhelpful, even though partially unavoidable, for exaggerated rhetoric unfortunately still remains one of the most pow-

erful tools for social mobilization.<sup>10</sup> Keeping these excesses in mind, I will instead attempt to adopt a comparatively conciliatory, practical and realistic approach in this essay.

Globalization has to do with integral social development, somewhat matching the purpose and direction of the different religions, which are concerned with salvation or personal and communitarian wholeness or integrity (Latin '*salvus*,' Greek '*holos*,' and Sanskrit '*sarvam*'). Today, the influence of religion seems to be on the ascendancy with regard to contemporary social processes. The task before us is to channelize religious interests and forces so that salubrious processes of globalization are fostered and less healthy processes are challenged and overcome. Sustained religious instruction and education could well provide the foundations for an adequate virtue ethics in such a situation. The role of religion is pivotal in the development of these virtues simply because of the power which religious organizations and movements have over the minds and hearts of billions of human beings worldwide.

We will now focus on the specific virtues or dispositions or attitudes governing practical action which need to be cultivated in this world of globalization. These attitudes are necessary not only to help one to survive in such a world, but hopefully more than that, to thrive in such a world, and even more, to act responsibly so as to guide processes of development towards a more integrated pattern of personal and social well-being (*eudaimonia*). I have chosen five prominent virtues, viz., *dialogical pluralism*, *creative visualization*, *collaborative solidarity*, *transnational responsibility* and *pro-active optimism*. These are by no means an exhaustive list of virtues necessary for our contemporary world, but they seem to be some of the more basic ones, both on a personal as well as on a communitarian level. Also, these are not virtues to be cultivated mainly by the more privileged beneficiaries of globalization, so that they may further benefit from these processes of globalization, but instead by each and every member of the human community, even those who are at present the victims of globalization, so that they may better prepare themselves to be victims no more.<sup>11</sup>

## 1. Dialogical Pluralism

Perhaps one of the more helpful insights of 'post-modern' thought is that every metanarrative or worldview is a partial, limited perspective which needs to be complemented by other perspectives. It would be too much for religious believers and even believers in any form of developmental work to go along with Lyotard's more radical suggestion of an adoption, along post-modern lines, of "an incredulity toward metanarratives." For no individual or institution engaged in developmental work could truly be said to be free of the power and influence of some form of 'ideology,' or in terms of a temporal construction, a 'metanarrative. Indeed metanarratives are not only the consequent construction of a community's search for truth, but concomitantly serve as powerful means of motivation towards personal and social development. Thus, instead of a rejection or a forfeiting of these metanarratives (an act which would do violence to the human spirit), what would prove to be more helpful and productive is a concerted strategy of *dialogical pluralism* between the adherents who live by these metanarratives. Negatively, dialogical pluralism entails the readiness to renounce any form of aggressive dogmatism or fundamentalism associated with these grand narratives, be it socio-political, cultural or religious. Positively, dialogical pluralism is an attitude which is aimed at cultivating at the very least a basic tolerance of the 'other' (community), with a more ultimate objective of fostering a deeper respect for the 'other.' J. Orstrom Moller provides us with a helpful and somewhat comprehensive understanding of tolerance:

Tolerance does not mean opening the floodgates for everybody to behave as they like. Tolerance means the right to think and act differently from other people but within a mutually agreed framework . . . Thinking in this way opens the door for realizing that what is best for us may not necessarily be best for others. And that gives birth to the crucial observation that the heart of tolerance is that we care for other people's destiny even if we do not agree with them.<sup>12</sup>

Tolerance, then, is not an excuse or condition for relativistic thinking. A globalized world cannot afford such a luxury, especially since we are compelled to interrelate with different peoples in different social circumstances. An educated tolerance rather entails the virtue of humility, viz., a recognition of the limitedness of one's perspective with regard to personal and social development. This in turn entails the necessity of the creation of an adequate hermeneutical (interpretive) and social space for the 'other' to function and relate, while at the same time sharing a common social space ("within a mutually agreed framework," according to Moller).

The full flowering of this virtue of tolerance is thus the virtue of respect for the other, and if this respect is genuine, what will necessarily follow is the desire to borrow from the wellsprings of the other. For even if we do not entirely agree with the perspective of the other, there are surely some aspects of the worldview of the other which may be incorporated into one's own paradigm or way of life. Respect, then, is not just a recognition of the validity of the 'other,' but a conscious desire to interact with the other in order to both learn from and contribute towards each other's development. The foundation of these virtues of tolerance, humility and respect is human relationships – not just the formal relationships constructed at forums of interreligious or intercultural dialogue, but informal relationships with one's neighbour at home and at work, and, in a situation of globalization, this may mean with one's neighbour living halfway around the globe.

Globalization has the potentiality to raise us all beyond the 'we' versus 'them' discourse. This discourse is based on a narrow understanding of the self as belonging to one primary community. In fact, as Amartya Sen convincingly argues, a sense of multiple-identity is both true to a phenomenological description of our being-in-the-world, as well as is a powerful means of overcoming communally divisive ideological forces.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, we belong to different communities – not just religious, but also national, ethnic, regional, class, caste, occupational, guild, neighbourhood, sportsclub, etc. To identify ourselves with one primary community seems to belie all other identifications. Furthermore, even if this is widespread, and in some sense inevitable, because of primary in-

doctrination and social pressure, it is unfortunate that these forms of identification sometimes result in inter-communal strife and even violence. Indeed, Sen's interest in pursuing this topic initially arose from a first-hand witness of the bloody interreligious violence in West Bengal during his childhood.

Religious sentiments have played a powerful role in fermenting interreligious strife, often linked with political interests, and based upon fundamentalist religious and inadequate secular education. But religion can also play a powerful role in reversing this trend, and in fostering a spirit of interreligious dialogical pluralism. The virtue of pluralism leading to respect for the other is not an optional luxury but a pressing necessity, especially as interreligious relations will only become more intense with the increase of global trade and exchange at different levels. This means a greater openness to as well as a greater challenge between adherents of the different religions to reinterpret their respective religions in more salubrious terms, not only for themselves, but for the sake of the common good. In the long run, and even in the short, this virtue will help religious practitioners and the human community in general not only to experience peace between the different communities, but more so, to make progress as one borrows from one another's traditions. A reinterpretation of the past is necessary if one has to move towards a peaceful and prosperous future – which brings us to the next of our shortlisted virtues, viz. creative visualization.

## **2. Creative Visualization**

Perhaps one of the most important virtues to develop in this new age of globalization is that of creative thinking or creative visualization. Those individuals and institutions ready for significant 'paradigm shifts' will survive, while those who refuse to emerge from their comfort zones and modify their traditional ways of thinking and doing will likely have to struggle to survive. For the only thing one can be certain about in the world of globalization is that it is characterized by change.

Perhaps the most significant change that has been brought about in our world over the last two decades is the possibility of instant and widespread communication via the internet. Primarily on ac-

count of the power and omnipresence of the internet, each one of us is increasingly capable of raising global levels of creativity. This is already happening in terms of projects undertaken by TNCs which span whole continents and which thus enable an almost uninterrupted '24/7' work schedule. But besides this, creativity in terms of productive solutions for current problems is considerably enhanced, because projects placed on the internet are being increasingly transnationally executed by faceless and even nameless individuals, and often for little or no remuneration.<sup>14</sup>

The communication revolution in general has brought the world much closer, not only at the level of multinational business conferences and sophisticated scientific (medical/engineering) ventures, but even at the very ordinary level of cell-phone conversation which allows very small scale entrepreneurs like the streetside vegetable seller to optimize his or her sales. The days of state-controlled media in most nations is a thing of the past, as it has become well-nigh impossible for totalitarian regimes to successfully employ strategies of media-censoring or to disseminate monopolistic propaganda. Indeed, conventional media sources too stand threatened on account of the power of omnipresent 'bloggers' who are capable of operating more independently with regard to the reporting and analysis of events.

Knowledge and the 'service' industry in general has replaced goods and manufacturing as the key ingredient in any fast-growing economy. Today India has an edge in this sector simply because of the number of skilled workers available. For the moment, at least, we are capitalizing on the English-based educational infrastructure of the past. But this situation could change overnight, unless one is ready not only to be trained adequately to perform specific skills, but to be trained to think creatively as well. What is already perceived is a dearth of competent CEOs for corporations which are currently driving the Indian economy. Soon there may be a vast amount of capital in India, but not enough creative visionaries and competent heads of organizations to sustain and drive economic growth.

Perhaps this virtue of creative visualization is most needed in international relations, for politics and economics are intrinsically

related. The new world order, pulled along headlong by the fast pace of global capitalism, cannot travel very far if political relations are sour and unstable. While it is true that the permanent members of the Security Council are paradoxically the world's largest producers and exporters of arms, this situation seems to belong to a logic of the past, when instability in a distant country did not affect these host nations which export war and its accoutrements. Today global terrorism which at its roots is a response to ecological rapaciousness and eco-political domination, has proved that this does not hold true any more.

For economic trade to flow smoothly, the logic of the future will need to be dominated by peaceful processes, and above all by processes not just of justice, but more so of reconciliation. Justice is often a necessary precondition for peace within and between nations, but sometimes justice does not prove sufficient. What is needed is to work towards deeper forms of consensus based upon reconciliation. Reconciliation requires creative visualization, because one needs to be able to retell or reinterpret the same story also from the sympathetic perspective of the 'other,' rather than purely from the more conventional, and often partisan, justice-oriented 'rights-duties' discourse. The 'Truth and Reconciliation Committee' experiment in South Africa, based more upon honest dialogue rather than incriminating discourse, provides us with a working model as to how this approach may better serve to bring about peace in our conflict-ridden world. Another example demonstrating the importance of this alternate logic of peace and reconciliation features in a joint letter framed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Amartya Sen with regard to the present political predicament in Myanmar:

Now that Burma is on the [Security] council's agenda, we urge the passage of a *nonpunitive resolution* that will serve as a baseline for freeing political prisoners, ceasing attacks against Burma's ethnic minorities, and promoting a political dialogue that will lead to the peace and freedom the overwhelming majority of the Burmese people have demanded. (italics mine)<sup>15</sup>

This is because thinking in terms of punitive resolutions (especially extreme ones like the execution of Saddam Hussain) belongs

to the logic of the past. This type of thinking, rather than resolving issues, only serves to fuel the cycle of violence. The new age requires leaders quite different from the ilk of the Bushes and Bin Ladens of our time.

In this area of creative visualization, especially as applied to processes of reconciliation within and between nations, religion clearly has a pivotal role to play. Religious texts need to be interpreted in more benign and contemporary terms that match the ethos of the day and are more forward-looking, rather than serve to reinforce old prejudices against other communities. Those religions which are able to appropriately reinterpret themselves will also be able to attract more followers, while those that do not will either be marginalized, disregarded, or worse, gain pariah status. If religions have to survive they will need to learn how to relate well with other religious traditions as well as how best to contribute towards common human welfare by adopting the common mindset of collaborative solidarity.

### **3. Collaborative Solidarity**

During the period of the Cold War there were more rigid power blocks, including that of the relatively powerless Non-Aligned Movement. Today global capitalism has allowed for and even necessitated the emergence of strategic relationships which break down such rigid power divisions. Thus it is quite possible (though not always easy) to have political alliances with one nation while at the same time pursuing economic relations with a nation which is politically hostile to the first. This is what makes the present eco-political situation more complex, but also far less polarized. Global trade has necessitated the pursuit of these transideological relationships.

But global trade will also necessitate the promotion of the well-being and success of the other, whether the other is the friend or the enemy. This is not just for magnanimous reasons, but for reasons of survival to begin with, and furthermore for reasons of one's own prosperity. For if the other person or community succeeds and is prosperous in life, this in turn will lead to the production of better economic and political opportunities for all. An enlightened global-



ization will not merely allow for the success of the other, but positively desire the success of the other. The present Indian government has realized, for example (beyond obvious politically strategic reasons), that if the country has to make progress, the most backward communities will simultaneously need to progress as well. Hence, based on the recommendations of the Sachar Commission Report, the present Government wants the Muslims of our country to be better educated and emancipated, so as to more suitably enter into and contribute towards the dynamics of nation-building.

This sense of partnership or collaborative solidarity is also called for in the area of interreligious relations. Religions have often arisen from quite different social contexts, and where they have arisen from the same context, they have sometimes had bloody pathways of separation. The time has come for the different religions (especially the mainstream ones) to learn to coexist together. The alternative is to live in disharmony – a state which should normally be antithetical to any religious tradition. This need for overcoming conflict and pursuing collaboration in interreligious relations is well brought out by the words of the summary statement of the ‘International Conference on Religion and Globalization’ held at Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2003:

We in our respective religious communities can no longer afford to live in isolation, or with attitudes of exclusion or competition. We acknowledge the continuing need to reexamine our religious traditions and institutions, so that religion, rather than being part of the problem, can serve as a source of empowerment and enlightenment as we seek for solutions [to the world’s problems].<sup>16</sup>

This partnership is an urgent need between religious believers who believe differently, but who need to work towards a more concerted effort in the resolution of global problems. The logic of superiority and domination needs to give way to the logic of partnership and solidarity. Furthermore, this solidarity needs to express itself not just in interreligious pathways, but more so in collaborative social action.

The various religions, with their vast international infrastructures, have the ability to radically alter the conditions necessary for eco-

conomic prosperity. Amartya Sen is one of those economists who recognizes the role of non-governmental forces in the creation of better educational and health resources in order to foster long-term economic growth. In the words of Sen,

As has been amply established in empirical studies, market outcomes are massively influenced by public policies in education, epidemiology, land reform, microcredit facilities, appropriate legal protections, et cetera; and *in each of these fields, there is work to be done through public action* that can radically alter the outcome of local and global economic relations. (italics mine)<sup>17</sup>

Rather than purely focus on the sacred and make religion purely an individualistic affair, religious leaders need to increasingly recognize the tremendous potential which religious organizations possess in terms of a contribution towards the economic welfare of the human family. This recognition, however, can only come about when one is open to develop a sense of transreligious and transnational responsibility, i.e., a sense of duty which does not terminate at the boundaries of one's religious or national community. When this happens, we will truly experience the full flowering of Teilhard de Chardin's 'noosphere' or global sense of interconnectedness.

#### **4. Transnational Responsibility**

Globalization necessarily calls into question traditional political boundaries and juridical paradigms. What we will increasingly witness is a gradual reduction of the power of solely national legislative, executive and juridical processes in favour of a transnational and hence a more just global forum for the preservation and expression of human rights. It seems that we have indeed entered into this new age of critical co-responsibility for our world, or, in other words, the age of the global citizen. This is not as yet a structured political experience, but it is already an experience of the new global polis (the new global city), reflected by TIME magazine, when it nominated the 'Person of the Year 2006' to be 'YOU,' i.e., each and every citizen of the world. By doing this, TIME wants to make the claim that the makers of human history are no more primarily the leaders of the political or the business world, but average citizens

who have access to the global communication network, and who thereby have the power to influence the direction of human history.

Political accountability, for one, is being considerably enhanced, because people are more free to 'blog' their views online, uncensored by restrictive governmental pressure and unfettered by main-line media propaganda and interests. This is tremendously helpful for NGOs who wish to network at the global level so as to put pressure on local governmental and business policies and practices. It is precisely such a network which can influence public opinion and lead to the denial of political status to tyrants who think they may adopt totalitarian or double standards in one country and get away with them in another. The denial of a visa to Narendra Modi to visit the U.S.A. is a good example of the power of this global network.<sup>18</sup> With its power to disseminate relevant and widespread information, the internet is beginning to function as a propitious shaming mechanism and needs to be put to full use towards this end, whenever necessary.

Globalization will lead to the emergence of a democratic mentality, not because of the messianic missionary drive on the part of some powerful nations to colonize parts of the world in the name of democracy (which will more likely do a disservice to the spirit of democracy), but simply because democratic processes will increasingly be seen to be beneficial in terms of the common good. This is happening in India, especially in the cities, but also in the rural areas, when more and more citizens' groups are compelling state and metropolitan governmental authorities to be more accountable. The fructification and the optimal use of the RTI (Right to Information) Act is a good example of this emergence of the democratic spirit at the level of the ordinary citizen.

It is this process of the rapid and widespread dissemination of information that will bring about social transformation and accountability much more quickly than in the past. In his book, *Development As Freedom*, Amartya Sen argues that no famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy.<sup>19</sup> According to his analysis, economic disasters like famines more easily take place under the following circumstances: when government leaders and workers largely belong to the upper class, when there is less

accountability of the leaders to the people they govern, when there is a greater centralization of authority, where there is a lack of an adequate political opposition, when there is rigid censorship which entails a lack of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, where there is a desire to fudge information, to conceal accurate data, and to misinform people. One can easily see how many of these factors can only survive when the dissemination of information and social analyses are limited and restricted. But this is not possible in our contemporary situation. Consequently, it will be more and more difficult for non-democratic governments to function in an irresponsible and autocratic manner. Even if countries are not technically democratic, they will increasingly become only nominally non-democratic republics, as is the case in China, where totalitarian practices are compelled to be less harsh, as compared to the past.

A greater sense of democratization has also resulted in greater corporate social responsibility on the part of a good number of TNCs, whereby corporations are increasingly recognizing the contributory role they need to assume in civic affairs. CSR (corporate social responsibility) has become the buzz word in many corporate offices, but for various motives. Some corporations use the opportunity for image building, while others only reluctantly and marginally enter into this process. A few, however, recognize that if business has to succeed, corporations need to get involved in the process of building up a better social and civic infrastructure.<sup>20</sup>

In this regard, what is remarkable is the establishment of the world's largest philanthropic endowment by the world's richest couple, viz., the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. What was even more consoling this past year was the fact that the second richest person, Warren Buffet, has added to the monetary volume of this already immense foundation. According to the official website of the Foundation, the mission statement reads as follows:

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to reduce inequities and improve lives around the world. In developing countries, it focuses on improving health, reducing extreme poverty, and increasing access to technology in public libraries. In the United

States, the foundation seeks to ensure that all people have access to a great education and to technology in public libraries. In its local region, it focuses on improving the lives of low-income families.<sup>21</sup>

One of the reasons for engaging in such charitable ventures may be in order that business interests are strengthened rather than minimized in the future, because of a betterment of human standards of living, and hence better consumer education and buying power. But perhaps a deeper motivation is the realization of the sheer imbalance which constitutes contemporary global capitalism, which allows some people to make such obscene sums of money to be spent in vulgar opulence while others have to struggle to barely survive in hostile and subhuman conditions. It is a pity, however, that it is often (voluntary) charity and not forces of social and distributive justice which lies at the heart of such social projects.

Whether it is justice or charity which contributes towards the furthering of transnational responsibility, it is clear that transnational religions have a pivotal role in cultivating this virtue. As the sense of community within such religions is often transcontinental, there is a need to generate a concomitant sense of responsibility for the welfare of others within the community who need help in terms of integral welfare. Furthermore, while charity may begin at home, it ought not to end at home, but rather be extended to all, especially those who are in most need. Indeed, in an ideal global and virtual community, home is everywhere and everyone is a member of our home.

Over the past few years, the theologian Hans Kueng, along with others, has worked on the outlines of a 'global ethic' which would not only serve to unite believers and non-believers on the level of ethical theory, but, more importantly, serve to relate transcendent principles, whether religious or secular, with concrete projects connected with social development.<sup>22</sup> Whatever be the merits or demerits of such a project, it is the likes of such a mentality which is necessary to usher in a new consciousness more fitting for the new world of globalization. Such a mentality can only arise from minds and hearts which are dominated by the spirit of hope and optimism, rather than that of despair or cynicism.

## 5. Pro-active optimism

Globalization has little room for 'naysayers' and cynics. NGOs and religious believers sometimes take a bleak view of the transnational, globalizing corporate world, as if it is an inhuman monster about to devour whole peoples and civilizations. On the other hand, the corporate world and Governmental agencies often consider NGOs and religious-based ethical protest as an unnecessary hindrance on the sure pathway towards development. There is need to overcome this polarization and work together towards a common future. Constructive criticism while working together is not only welcome but necessary. But there is no room for pessimism, and worse, cynicism. Instead, what is needed is a realistic, optimistic and futuristic approach towards development.

A realistic approach enables one to sacrifice one's ideological presuppositions and prejudices if they are not consonant with new developments. For example, the struggle towards economic development in West Bengal is a good indication whether the State is ready to participate in the process of globalization or not. The Party which has claimed to best represent the interests of the workers and the proletariat is forced to do a tightrope walk between past ideology on the one hand and pressing concerns for present and future development on the other. Party leaders who have had the chance to visit neighbouring China are in a good position to rethink their priorities in terms of development. However, it is difficult to be inspired by the Chinese model (which is a top-down State-controlled one) when one has to work with the Indian model which is more democratic. That is why the State Government is under pressure to reconsider methods of landgrabbing as evidenced in the recent Singur and Nandigram peasant protests. The Chief Minister, while regretting the use of force on the part of the Government and party cadres, has however made it quite clear that a primary reliance on agricultural labour will only result in backwardness. Such an admission clearly favouring industrialization and globalization from a Communist leader would be unthinkable a few years ago. Today, however, it bears testimony to the power of globalization, and the necessity to reinterpret one's principles if one is to survive, or better, flourish, in such a world.

Similarly, with regard to language, some who are overly patriotic have resisted the use of English as a medium of instruction in India (this of course does not include those who hypocritically do so for politically convenient reasons). However, many Indians of the lowest social classes, especially in urban areas, seem to prefer an English-medium education if they can afford it, for the future of their children stands to gain if they can be educated in a globally-recognized and competitive medium. Ideological convictions are necessary, but one must be ready to reinterpret them in the light of new developments, if one is to make progress.

Where environmental development is concerned, the future is in some sense more important than the present. This is an area where unbridled global capitalism coupled with cheap technology and weak political resolve can cause havoc, and lead to dramatic climate change even in our own age, as is already happening worldwide. If realistic and futuristic measures are not adopted in a reasonable manner, the span and quality of human life (to say nothing of non-human life) will considerably reduce. Wisdom demands that sacrifices be made by all, not only by a few, so that future generations may profit. For example, while China is producing cheap goods for the West, but by using methods of primitive energy generation, it is imperative that both China and the West need to sacrifice – China in terms of investing in better and ecologically safer technology both in terms of energy production and the manufacturing of goods, and the West by paying a coal tax (or energy tax in general) towards adequate monetary compensation for Chinese-manufactured goods, so as to partially cover these costs.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, with regard to the future, religion is one of those social institutions which are best suited to generate optimism and hope. All religions are based on narratives which end with some form of salvific or liberative situation. This is similar to other forms of developmental models, whether economic, political, cultural or educational. But religious myths, belief-systems, rituals and a sense of community place religion in a privileged and opportune position, both to generate hope among its adherents as well as to inject hope into the collective consciousness of humankind. What is needed is a conscious effort to relate religion with social development, so as to

both guide the current forces of globalization in a proper direction, and to provide motivation to work towards social change, not only among believers, but together with all people of good will.

## Conclusion

Globalization is not a perfect example of social development, as numerous studies based on teleological and deontological considerations have demonstrated. However, whether we like globalization or not, as a social force it has come to stay, at least over the near future. We have to learn how to sublimate its productive energies into more salubrious channels and how to address and rectify its less integrally developmental dimensions.

Religion as a social force has a lot to offer in this regard. By cultivating relevant contemporary moral dispositions or virtues among its adherents (and I have focused on just five), believers can work along with people of other faiths and non-believers alike to make globalization a humane experience for all rather than a monstrous experience for a sizeable section of humanity. This ability of religion to be a resource for the cultivation of virtues for our contemporary age needs to be realized desperately today. If religion does not rise to this challenge, it will not be able to take its rightful place among the different social forces which are currently helping to shape human destiny. Not to be involved in human history towards this end is not to be true to one's sacred vocation. We live in the hope that the different religions will together rise to the occasion in the service of a global human family.

## Notes

1. Virtue ethics is traditionally associated with the ethical approach of Aristotle, as compared to deontological ethics, which is associated with Kant and those who subscribe to some form of natural law, while teleological ethics is associated with the British Utilitarian philosophers.
2. See John Kline, *Ethics for International Business: Decision Making in a Global Political Economy*, Routledge, 2005, where the author discusses various aspects of globalization from an ethical perspective, especially from deontological and teleological concerns.



3. See my article, "Mutual Challenges to Religion and Globalization," in Institute of Indian Culture Newsletter, Mumbai, July 2006.
4. *Making Globalization Good: The Moral Challenges of Global Capitalism*, ed. John Dunning; Oxford University Press, 2003. In this work, there is an attempt to relate this process of globalization and global capitalism with primary ethical and religious movements and institutions. Specific Chapters are devoted to the relationship between globalization and the major religions, including 'Eastern Religions.
5. John Dunning, "The Moral Imperatives of Global Capitalism – An Overview," in *Making Globalization Good*, p.12.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
7. Joseph, Stiglitz, "Towards a New Paradigm of Development," in *Making Globalization Good*, p.76. Stiglitz is a Nobel Laureate in Economics, who famously stepped down as the Chief Economist and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank in 2000. His books include *Globalization and Its Discontents*, W.W. Norton, 2001, and more recently, *Making Globalization Work—the Next Steps to Social Justice*, W.W. Norton and Allen Lane (Penguin), 2006.
8. See the document, *Globalization and Marginalization – Our Global Apostolic Response*, brought out by the Jesuit Social Justice Secretariat in Rome, 2006, which argues towards this end.
9. The terms MNC (multi-national corporation), TNC (trans-national corporation), MNE (multi-national enterprise) and 'supranational companies' are used to describe the same reality, viz., business interests and projects which span nations and continents in order to produce and distribute goods and services mainly for profit.
10. A good example of exaggerated rhetoric leading to futile action is the war in Iraq. It was ostensibly based on the claim of weapons of mass destruction, which the 'embedded' American media rhetorically supported right from the inception of the bellicose discourse, systematically obfuscating the truth. This war in Iraq is one of the more pressing international hindrances towards global development, with not only economic but even interreligious overtones of disharmony.
11. See *Globalization and its Victims – As Seen by its Victims*, edited by Michael Amaladoss, S.J., Delhi, Vidyajyoti/ISPCCK, 1999, for a broad analysis of how irresponsible globalization has the potentiality to generate a wide variety of 'victims.
12. J. Orstrom Moller, "Wanted: A New Strategy for Globalization," *The Futurist*, Vo.38, Jan 2004. p.20ff. Moller was Ambassador of Den-

mark to Singapore, and is one who argues that globalization is resulting in a greater divide between the haves and have-nots and, if unbridled, will result in an ascendancy of nationalism (to safeguard local interests) rather than internationalism.

13. See Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence – The Illusion of Destiny*, London, Allen Lane (Penguin), 2006.
14. A good example is *Wikipedia*, the free (and perhaps fastest-growing) online encyclopedia started in 2001, to which anyone is free to contribute. But besides this, there are numerous medical and engineering problems which are placed on the internet eliciting responses and solutions, to say nothing of chatrooms and blogsites which allow free expression and interaction on almost every aspect of human existence.
15. Archbishop Desmond Tutu received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, while Amartya Sen received the Nobel Prize for Economic Science in 1998.
16. The full summary statement of the “International Conference on Religion and Globalization” is edited by Ruben Habito, and may be found in *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, 24 (2004) 241ff. This statement covers the most significant areas which relate the promise and the problems of globalization on the one hand with the power and the limitations of religious resources on the other.
17. Amartya Sen, “How to Judge Globalism,” *The American Prospect*, Vol.13, Issue.1 (2002) p. 2ff.
18. Narendra Modi will go down in history as the Chief Minister who was primarily responsible for the pogrom against the Muslims in his state. Indeed, his strategy of communally divisive politics has been poignantly referred to as the ‘Gujarat experiment,’ perhaps intended to be the precursor of a Nazi-like ‘final solution’ of some of the minorities in India.
19. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford University Press, 2001.
20. See, for example, the DNA (Daily News and Analysis), Mumbai, report of December 15, 2006, p.1, which is titled, “Private Sector Wants to Maintain City – Corporations Will Adopt Municipal Wards and Help in Their Upkeep.”
21. <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/MediaCenter/FactSheet/>
22. See <http://astro.temple.edu/~dialogue/Antho/kung.htm> for an outline of this global ethic project.
23. See “The Coal Trap,” *Newsweek*, January 15, 2007, in which this point is argued.

## **The Voice of the Marginal and the Poor Responsibility as the Basic Concept for Development Ethics in the Footsteps of Emmanuel Levinas**

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*Abstract:* Taking on the suggestion of Ananta Kumar Giri that we should broaden and deepen development ethics with the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, the author tries to demonstrate how the ethical thought of Levinas about the other and the heteronomous responsibility for the other achieves this in an eminent manner. However, so that this responsibility would not lapse into the one-sidedness of old altruism, whereby the marginal and the poor would only be the objects of personal or organisational aid, he has developed out of Levinas' thought itself the idea of an emancipatory responsibility. The responsibility for the development of the marginal and the poor other essentially implies the idea of self-unfolding and thus of responsibility for oneself. But in order that this emancipatory responsibility in its turn would not turn into a new and disastrous one-sidedness, he has indicated with Levinas how the heteronomous responsibility for the other implies a responsibility for the responsibility of the other. Only by applying Levinas' idea of heteronomous responsibility to the marginal and the poor as well, is full justice done to the thesis that they are not only objects but likewise subjects of responsibility.

*Keywords:* Heteronomous responsibility, emancipatory responsibility, Levinas, vulnerability of the poor, development as responsibility.

The starting point for this reflection is the suggestion of Ananta Kumar Giri<sup>1</sup> that we should broaden and deepen development ethics with the thought of Emmanuel Levinas<sup>2</sup>. For this purpose we begin with his famous idea of the face of the other as the source of responsibility. Insofar as the face of the other displays a radical alterity, it puts us on the track of the vulnerable other, which Levinas likewise calls “the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger”. This vulnerability, which manifests itself in an extreme manner in its mortality, reveals at the same time its mastership, which is from the very beginning an ethical mastership, meaning an appeal to responsibility. Not only will we lay bare the foundation of this responsibility but likewise make explicit its different major lines. Concretely speaking, we will demonstrate how the responsibility to which the vulnerable face appeals to us displays a multi-dimensional character. It indeed takes place as a responsibility for the responsibility of the other. And in its turn this implies a double line of responsibility. Firstly, there is an emancipatory aspect, namely a responsibility for the responsibility of the other – the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger – for oneself. And then there is likewise a strong ethically provocative aspect, namely the responsibility for the responsibility of the other for others.

## **1. The Mastership of the Marginal and the Poor**

The core of Levinas’ thought consists in that he does not primarily link the vulnerability of the marginal and the poor with their factual condition of poverty or exclusion, but with the essential and radical alterity of the other, that is to say with the epiphany of the other as ‘other’ or as ‘face’. Hence we commence our search for the link between development ethics and Levinasian thought with a description of this alterity. The poor is not in the first place a poor person, but an other who as other directs oneself towards me.

The ‘I’, that by means of its capabilities and knowledge draws the world to itself, becomes as it were frightened by the epiphany of the other, precisely insofar as the other manifests itself as the *radically other*. The other presents itself to me as a ‘withdrawing’ and ‘transcending movement’, and this not only factually and temporarily but essentially and definitively. The other derives its

meaning not integrally and wholly from the world surrounding it, nor from evolution, history, a system of totality. The other surpasses all historical, sociological, psychological and cultural origin of meaning. The other presents itself as the unique one, that radically goes beyond all belonging to kind, race, family, tribe, ethnicity and people – which already implies a condemnation of all racism (VA 98). The other is already infinitely more than the images, photographs, representations, evocations and interpretations that I design or am able to design. Of course the other is visible; of course the other appears and evokes all sorts of impressions, images and representations, whereby the other is describable. Of course we can come to know much about the other on the basis of what the other allows to be seen somatically, psychologically and sociologically. But the other is always more than, and irreducible to, its photograph. This not only coincidentally or factually, but also in principle: the other can never be adequately represented and contained in one or the other image. I can never encase the other in, or equate the other with, its graphic form (EI 90-91/86-87). Even though the other has its own physiognomy and character, and thus a recognisable estimable feature, still its face precisely consists in breaking through and surpassing its own image and appearance time and again (AE 109/86). In so doing the other essentially escapes all typology, characterisation, diagnosis and classification – in short all attempts at knowing and understanding the other totally. The other makes all inquisitiveness ridiculous (TI 46/73-74). This implies that the other is not constituted by me as a supplement to my deficiency, and likewise not as my mirror image, alter-ego or ‘re-issue of myself’ (TA 75/83). In short, ‘the other is invisible’, as Levinas expresses it provocatively (TI 4/34). The face continually belies its own countenance, meaning to say its own visibility and describability. It is literally ‘*retraite*’ or ‘*anachore-sis*’, withdrawal. Its epiphany is always a breaking through, and a confounding of, this epiphany, whereby the other always remains enigmatic and thereby precisely intrudes as the irreducible one, the separate and different, the foreigner – in short, as the pre-eminently different or as radical alterity.

If we relate this to the marginal and the poor (dalits, proletarians, elderly, mentally disabled persons...), then this means that they

definitely have a biologically determined origin, but also that they transcend this origin infinitely. Poor persons always transcend their past and milieu. They never coincide with their appearance, family, psychology, sociology. They are always different from what their background appears to be or would lead us to suspect. They do not only remain a mystery factually but also principally. In this aspect poor persons are – no matter how visible or tangible – invisible. That means that they are irreducible to their tangible or descriptive characteristics. Sociology, psychology and other human sciences can most certainly make a contribution to ‘define’ the marginal and the poor, but they will never coincide with these descriptions. (Later on we will see how on the ethical level they *may* never be reduced to these descriptions). The poor as the radically other will always escape and show themselves different from the ‘foreseen’. Poor and marginal people will continue to surprise those who take care of them as the ones who are ultimately new and other!

This rather negative description of the alterity of the other in general, and of the poor in particular, however, has a clearly positive meaning. The basis for its in-visibility, un-knowability and unpredictability is indeed its ‘manifestati-on *kath’auto*’ (TI 37/65). The face breaks through its form in order to show itself out of itself. It is pure and simple ‘expression’ (TI 37/66). This self-expression occurs in a concrete manner in the word and glance of the face. The other is the one who looks at me straight in the eye and also directly addresses me: we stand ‘*face-to-face*’ with each other. Its glance and word make it present without any detours or intermediary stages. I need not reason out, starting from the fact that a glance or word comes toward me, in order to decide that someone lies behind this expression. The word and the glance of the other make it immediately, ineluctably and almost obtrusively present (LC 41/20). Moreover, the primary, most fundamental content or message of its self-expression is nothing else than the essential quality of the other, namely its absolute alterity and irreducibility. It is not *what* the face expresses that is of importance here, but *that* it expresses itself. The *fact* of its expression is the announcement of its very presence, of its appearance *as* other, whatever the content of its expression may be (TI 170/196).

In terms of the marginal and the poor this means that they can never be an object for the ones who take care of them or approach them. The marginal other will always be a face that speaks directly to them. The poor person is not an object, but a subject: someone who gazes at me, touches me and speaks to me with the authority of an other who comes to me. In this respect the poor person is always the one who literally comes to us: the poor comes from elsewhere, from itself – its alterity – as someone over whom we have no power (nor can we exercise power over it, as we will explain from an ethical position later). Maybe we can even say that the poor are ‘strong as death’, in the sense that through their gaze and (often wordless) word, they break into our existence and from within their alterity address us directly. The face of the poor is an ultimate heteronomous experience that we have not foreseen or could not predict. We therefore have no control over it. It is an experience that comes from an other who addresses us!

That is also why Levinas labels the expression of the other as *teaching*. This can in no possible way be reduced to one or other form of (Socratic) maieutics or midwifery that only draws out that which was already contained within. The expression of the face comes to me ‘from elsewhere’. It introduces more into myself than that which I already contain slumbering within me, namely, the real ‘message’ or ‘revelation’ of the presence of the other (TI 22/51): “the absolutely new is the other” (TI 194/219). The other manifests itself in its face as a strong alterity that from its height or loftiness directs itself immediately and authoritatively towards me (TI 175/200). In that sense Levinas can say that the other is my *master*: “The absolutely foreign alone can instruct us” (TI 46/73). By means of its very appearance, the other teaches me about its irreducible alterity without my having already contained this teaching within the depths of my being. In this regard, the fundamental teaching of the face is not without any imposition, not without any form of unassailability and a ‘self-sufficiency’ that is to be taken literally (a teaching that is sufficient in itself). Levinas even speaks of a “cold splendour” (TI 175/200). I am not able to let the teaching of the face bubble up from within me. I cannot foresee or predict the word of revelation of the face; I do not have it at hand in any way whatsoever. I am not the

one who designs, but the one who receives, who listens, and who, by means of listening, obeys (T1 41/69, 73/99).

Continuing in this line we can say that the marginal and the poor are elevated above us, not because they are more powerful, but because as irreducible others they are our master and teacher. Mostly we assume that the poor is lesser than us, precisely because he or she is small and vulnerable. But thanks to Levinas it becomes clear how we are in an asymmetrical relationship to the poor, in the sense that the poor is more than us, and we are less than the poor. We do not first teach and instruct the poor. First the poor has to speak to us and teach us. Every relationship of helping the poor has therefore to begin – every time again – with a form of humility and obedience to the poor as our teacher. We are talking here about a different life from what in Greek tradition is called self-knowledge: “know yourself” (“*gnothi seauton*”). In relationship to the marginal and the poor, as in every relationship to the other, I do not learn by descending into myself and discovering in my innermost being wisdom over all things, but by going out of myself and being open to the other as the other reveals him or herself to me. The relationship to the poor as the ultimate other is no autonomous or heteronomous happening that rests on the realisation of my not-knowing. In the relationship to the poor I am not the one who designs and determines, but the one who has to receive and accept what the other ‘teaches’ me. In this respect the alterity of the poor as the starting-point for my learning is not only exterior, but also anterior and superior. As the radical other the poor brings me towards laying down all pretensions and to approach her or him with a certain meekness, so that the face of the poor can in all liberty reveal its alterity to me, and this on the basis of the authority of this alterity.

In this way, Levinas turns around the usual, traditional vision of ‘caring for the marginal and the poor’. We are not in the first place the helping persons who pass on their insights, wisdom and convictions to the ‘receiving’ poor. It is the poor themselves who come first in assistance: the radical priority of the other. The face of the poor that speaks, is and becomes the first teacher of the ‘assistant’ person. As the radical other the poor establishes its mastership in all works of aid and assistance. In this way the face of the poor also



establishes the learning process of all kinds of (professional) people and organisations 'assisting' the poor, and this not just for once, but time and again.

## 2. The vulnerability of the marginal and the poor

With this turning around of mastership in 'assisting the marginal and the poor', we arrive at the ethical relationship to them. For the marginal and the poor do not only reveal their mastership in terms of their radical alterity, but through their alterity they appeal to us to recognise, respect and enhance their alterity. For the explication of the concrete content of this ethical relationship to the marginal and the poor, we return once again to the general insight of Levinas about the appeal to responsibility that comes to us in and through the face of the other.

Upon closer inspection, the mastership that ensues from the alterity of the face appears to be a very exceptional mastership. It is a mastership that rests on the vulnerability of the other whereby the mastership of the face becomes precisely an ethical mastership. The face, according to Levinas, is the remarkable fact that a being touches me not in the indicative but in the imperative (LC 44/21).

In order to understand how this functions, we must reflect more deeply on the phenomenology of the appearance, or rather the non-appearance, or epiphany, of the other. This we began above. The strong alterity of the face, insofar as it presents itself as its irreducibility to one or other 'countenance', photograph or representation, has a reverse side. It has an extreme vulnerability. Levinas calls this also "strangeness-destitution" (*l'étrangeté-misère*) (TI 47/75) or the 'nudity of the face' (EI 90/86). As a *countenance* the other is vulnerable. It can quite easily be reduced to its appearance, its family, its social position and environment, its accomplishments, its health and clinical picture. As 'in-visible', that is as being irreducible to its face, the other appears by not appearing. In short the other appears as the one who does not belong in my organised world – a world that I begin to organise precisely as 'my world' on the basis of my natural 'care for myself'. The face of the other eludes not only my foresight, literally my 'pro-vidence', it also falls outside of it. It finds itself literally in 'extra-territoriality' and 'u-topia' or

‘non-place’. Precisely for that reason is the face so vulnerable: “The transcendence of the face is at the same time its absence from this world into which it enters, the exiling of a being, his condition of being a stranger, destitute, or proletarian. The nakedness of the face extends into the nakedness of the body that is cold and that is ashamed of its nakedness. Existence *kath’auto* is, in the world, a destitution” (TI 47/75). “The face in its nakedness presents to me the destitution of the poor one and the stranger” (TI 188/213). The gravity of the other’s nakedness, destitution, or hunger, freezes all laughter. In its ‘height’ (supra), the other reveals also an extreme ‘humility’ – not as a virtue but as a condition (TI 174/200). And this condition of defencelessness is revealed most sharply in its mortality and suffering unto death (EN 166-167/124-125).

Levinas characterises this humility in an evocative manner by referring to the biblical terms “widow, orphan, stranger, poor” (TI 5078). However, we must be careful in the use of these terms. We could consider them as kinds or genres or groups of people with certain social characteristics, which distinguish them from others. But then we would indeed go beyond the true meaning of Levinas’ use of the terms. After all it is not on the basis of their qualities and thus not on the basis of their differences that these people are bearers of the radical, vulnerable alterity, which is Levinas’ main concern (VA 97). The question, however, is why does Levinas give a certain preference to these categories of people? Upon closer inspection, he is not so much interested in their qualities as in their essential vulnerability. By means of their social ‘condition’ they make visible and tangible the vulnerable nakedness of the other (although alterity itself is not visible and tangible). By means of their poverty, rejection and exile they stand closer to death than the others. Their mortality is more evident and notable. And that is precisely Levinas’ main concern when he concerns himself with the nakedness of the other. By using the metaphorical reference to the biblical groups of those ‘rejected’ and ‘naked’, Levinas wants to make clear that he is concerned with the vulnerability of the other, which manifests itself unto the body. It is about their ‘nearness to death’, their mortality, the coming closer to their suffering unto death... They ‘display’, or rather they evoke the essential vulnerability of every face, of every other. It involves the ‘precarious’ character of the other, namely its

assailable nakedness. Hence the use of qualifications like fragility, nudity, suffering, destitution, and especially ‘mortality’, to be understood as being under threat and exposure to death: “Exposure, pointblank, extradition of the beleaguered, the tracked down – tracked down before all tracking and all beating for game. Face as the very mortality of the other person” (EN 206/160). In this manner, a relationship arises between me and the other, which situates itself beyond all rhetoric: a relationship that qualifies all flattery, and even all poetry, about the other as ridiculous, or rather as repulsive, inappropriate and despicable.

This relationship, however, displays a remarkable character. Upon closer inspection it is precisely the appearance of the face as vulnerable (unto death) that invites me, as it were, to reduce the other to be a function of my own being. In this respect, Levinas takes the paradoxical position that the other presents itself to me as the ‘temptation to kill’ (EI 90/86). The nudity of the face is not only an ‘uncomfortable’ nudity – one that testifies to an essential destitution, as we said – it is also a ‘touchable’ nudity. By its destitution it invites me, as it were, to violence. By the condition of its humility the face seduces me to ‘integrate’ or to imprison the other in my self-interested effort of existing (AE 113-115/89-91). It is thanks to the essential vulnerability of the face that I, in my attempt at being that strives for happiness and meaning, am tempted to draw the other to myself and do it violence. This happens concretely by attempting to make the other subordinate to me, to take it in service, to consume and to use it in one way or another. For that purpose I often make use of the wealth and power that I have accumulated for myself out of my expansionistic vitalism. I can use, or rather abuse, all possible means in order to reduce the other to myself, to blackmail, to intimidate or to bribe it, in short to subjugate it – without giving the direct impression of a brutal tyranny or slavery. In its extreme form, this will to power flows from the denial of the other. Of this, murder as the total negation or annihilation of the other, is the physical incarnation (TI 172/198).

What can we deduce from this position of the ‘attraction to kill’ with respect to the ethical relationship to the poor? It leads us to recognise that violence in relationships between people, is a realistic

possibility and may not be seen as an exception related to perverse and sadistic persons. Precisely on the basis of the nakedness and vulnerability of the poor the possibility for violence is real. Violence displays many faces. The extreme cases of the physical violence of murder and all kinds of abuse are not alone. There is also hate, tyranny, intimidation, blackmail, bullying and the refusal to give recognition, or exclusion and neglect. There is subjection, manipulation, oppression and slavery. Violence includes all forms of both direct and more subtle forms of indifference. There is the violence that flows from approaching the poor on the basis of perception and knowledge. It is precisely in the daily perception and exploration of the poor that the greatest risk for violence lies, in the sense that it does not take much to reduce the poor to its appearance, that means to its situation and reality of destitution.

### **3. The Heteronomous Responsibility for the Other Begins as a Prohibition**

In this very temptation to kill lies the ethical significance of the face. At the moment in which I am tempted to reduce the other to a means of my own existence, I simultaneously realise that that which can be, actually must not be. This is the core of the fundamental ethical experience beginning from the face of the poor as the other (LC 44/21-22). In my self-sufficient effort at existing, which on the ground of perception and representation aims to become the expression and realisation of individual freedom, I am not merely limited from the outside but in my deepest being. I am – in the very principle of my freedom – shaken and called into question (EI 129/120). In the face I discover myself as the potential murderer of the other. In this sense, through the destitution of the other I stumble once again upon its substantial strength. I come up against a radical resistance against my egocentric, reducing avarice. The face appears as the *opposite*: it takes up a position *before* me as a radical and immediate ‘stop’ or *no*, as an absolute opposition to all my capabilities (TI 173-174/198-199). The *logos* of this ‘no’, the first wordless word that ensues from the face of the other, namely the poor, is then also a prohibition: ‘You shall not kill’ (EN 48/30). You shall not make the other into a means for yourself. Moreover, this

resistance against the denial and instrumental reduction of the other is in no way coincidental or accidental. Indeed, it does not rest on a free decision of the other but on its essential alterity itself, which as vulnerability is at the same time an unparalleled protest against every grasp of this vulnerability by the 'I' and its attempt at being that is concerned for itself (HS 141/93-94).

From all this appears something very paradoxical. The ethical relationship with the other, the poor as the other, begins as a shock experience, namely, the possibility *and* the prohibition to do violence to the other in any way whatsoever. This implies that the ethical relationship with the poor does not begin with a positive commandment that determines what I *must* do, but rather with a negative intervention, a prohibition that questions the straightforward-without-beating-about-the-bush movement of the attempt at being. At the same time, it concerns an external law, which does not come up from within the dynamism of the 'living being' itself. The fundamental ethical sensitivity that is aroused by the external prohibition against violence is a remarkable form of fear. Not the fear or concern for oneself, but the fear of being after the blood of the other. Levinas in this regard also speaks of the scruple. Literally, the word 'scruple' means a 'pebble in one's shoe'. It becomes impossible to stand still, and instead moves or incites one to take another step. A scruple, therefore, is a disquiet that works its way through the soul obstructively. The scruple can likewise be understood as a form of shame and discomfort: I am apprehensive about the other, namely the poor, as to its irreducible being-other, whereby it is surrendered to me to seize and to do violence, to violate, to pest, to maltreat, to abuse, to deny or to destroy, in short to 'kill' in one way or the other and to do it injustice (DVI 254/169). We can then label this first ethical movement before the vulnerable other as an "apparently negative movement of restraint" (NLT 96/126). Confronted with the principal assailability *and* vulnerability of the other, I am called to restrain myself and to pull back – in other words, to *not* do something. The ethics towards the poor as the radical other begins as the paradox of 'restraint', curtailment or 'self-contraction' in the midst of the unabashed and energetic way with which our caring for ourselves rushes forward without looking right or left, without seeing the 'corpses' it leaves aside. Or to put it in different

terms, the ethical relationship towards the other begins as a hesitation, a shame over oneself, as a movement of withdrawal and self-questioning. I may feel inclined to ask myself questions along the lines of: “Am I perhaps too ‘vehement’, too self-assured and insouciant, only concerned about my own happiness, future and meaning? Do I perhaps ‘kill’ (i.e. not allow space for others to be) simply by being myself?” The appearance of the poor as the other touches and traumatises me to the very core of my heart, so much so that I am “suffering in my skin” (AE 66/51).

All of this implies that the ethical responsibility for the marginal and the poor has to begin with the respect for the commandment: ‘You shall not kill’. No form of violence towards poor people is acceptable, whether in the context of daily life, economics, or society. The demand for strict non-violence is the primary ethical task of people working with the poor. It is such a fundamental ethical duty, that it precedes all other ethical approaches to the poor. Its fundamental character is simultaneously utterly paradoxical. By not killing or by not using any form of violence one has in effect not yet done anything. Through obedience to the commandment not to kill the preconditions are created in which things still need to be done.

The fact in itself that we have in our societies the prohibition ‘You shall not kill’, ‘You shall not commit violence towards the marginal and the poor’, indicates not only the unacceptability of this violence, but also the fact that violence towards the marginal and poor other is not that strange or exceptional. There would not be an ethical prohibition as expression of practical ethical wisdom if there had been no violence towards people in general, and against the marginal and the poor in particular. Human civilisation exists precisely in recognising the potential of factual violence towards the poor (and all vulnerable others) so that something can be done about it, through sanctioning, for example, where the prohibition of violence is not respected.

By means of the prohibition and the ethical scruple or restraint awakened in me, the radical ethical asymmetry or ‘non-reciprocity’ between me and the other, namely the poor, becomes visible. In contrast to Buber’s idea of the reciprocity between ‘I’ and ‘Thou’, Levinas speaks about “the ‘curvature’ of the intersubjective space”

(TI 267/291). Through the prohibition the 'I' and the other or the poor are not only radically separated from each other, they are also distinct. And, note well, this discrepancy does not depend on their respectively distinct characteristics or on their coincidentally unequal psychological dispositions and moods during the encounter (TI 190/215). It lies in the 'I-other-conjunction' itself: through its demanding, prohibiting, character the face of the vulnerable other stands above me as an *authority* that comes upon me from its ethical 'height' making demands and claims. We can label this as the 'sacred' and 'divine' character of the face of the poor. As such the marginal as the other then is not my equal, but my *superior*: not only my master who reveals something radically new, as we have seen above, but also my 'lord' who as a 'Thou' commands me unconditionally from its eminently ethical height (TI 74-75/100-101). That is precisely the paradox of the epiphany of the face of the poor: as the factual inferior, the poor as the radical other is ethically my superior. In this way it refers to the sublime awe and majesty of God. Thus the mastership of the marginal and the poor as the other sketched above, is reinforced, or, rather, ethically qualified.

#### 4. The Emancipatory Dimension of Heteronomous Responsibility

Only through obedience to the prohibition of violence is space created for a positive filling in of a respectful responsibility that allows the poor and the marginal to unfold and raise their voice: the voice of the irreducible, exalted other. This responsibility is more than not killing or not making use of any violence. It is an attitude of acknowledgement and respect for the being-other of the poor. And it does not stop at this. It unfolds itself even further. It must be *more* than the 'appreciative respect'. It must develop into a responsibility 'in deeds and actions', meaning to say into a responsibility that expresses itself in concrete deeds of care that are directed towards the well-being of the other, namely the poor. Responsibility is thus neither the sentimentalism nor the naïve romanticism of being moved by the miserable and marginalised poor. Its affectiveness must turn into effectiveness, its dedication to the other into 'works' of care for the other (HAH 40-44/90-93). Without incarnation the responsibility

for the other is hollow and empty. Stronger still, it is a lie and denial of oneself. How can one be concerned for the other if one performs no concrete deeds as the expression of this concern? Or to put it in a rabbinical way: it is not enough to love the other with our heart and soul, when we do not also love the other with our money, and even more so, with our hospitality. It is so that when you let the naked into your house he makes the floor mat dirty. In short, our yes-word must become flesh – in and through our body – and that in economic-earthly, appropriate forms (AS 81).

Applied to the responsibility for the marginal and the poor, this means that one must take up concrete care for the ‘being’ of the other, in this case the poor and excluded other, meaning to say for their life and ‘well-being’ (to be understood literally as the tangible unfolding of being). As a bodily other, the poor is in the first place a needy and finite and thus vulnerable creature, who needs others for its survival and good life. This flows forth directly from one’s essential nakedness and vulnerability, that expresses itself in an extreme manner in one’s mortality, as was sketched above. Or to put differently still: the essential alterity of the other takes place and reveals itself in the other’s factual shortcomings and injuries of one’s ‘conatus essendi’. “The other’s hunger – be it of the flesh or of bread – is sacred; there is no bad materialism other than our own” (DL 12/XIV). It would be a hypocritical form of spiritualism if in the responsibility for others, namely the poor, one would not take up any care for their nourishment and clothing, their protection against heat and cold, disease and accidents, “as if the entire spirituality on earth did not reside in the act of nourishing” (DL 12). The unrelenting suffering, that incarnates in a concrete way the essential nakedness of the poor and the marginal other, requires what Levinas calls “the severe seriousness of goodness” whereby the fate of the misery that the other meets loses its inhuman character (TI 175/200). Hence Levinas cites in this context the ‘hard’ words of the Jewish Rabbi Jochanan: “To leave men without food is a fault that no circumstance attenuates” (TI 175/201). Towards the hunger of people, our responsibility is unrelenting! In this regard, the ‘rich’ are objectively and fully responsible for the elimination of poverty. The ethics of heteronomous responsibility of the one for the other has a very ‘worry-some’ and disturbing meaning, namely to confront



the 'well-to-do' with the vulnerable, marginal and poor others. To relieve the others with food and drink is not a question of non-committal or gratuitous charity, meaning to say of good intentions and good resolutions, but an inescapable duty of justice. And this duty to responsibility goes so far, says Levinas, that when giving food and drink no longer helps, one still does not leave the other to its fate in its irreversible suffering and dying. Herein lies the most tangible and ultimate criterion of the responsibility for the other, and thus of human civilisation: "facing the face, in its mortality" (EN 206/160). This even leads Levinas to formulate a new categorical imperative: "You shall not let the other alone, be it in the face of the inexorable" (EI 128/119).

There is more, however, than this incarnation of the responsible care for every other, in particular the marginal and poor other. Not only do we have to answer for their bodily being and well-being, but also for the unfolding of their 'attempt at being' into an independent and free existence. Oftentimes, the poor – especially when the excluded are concerned – avail of only a very limited freedom, which they only are able to receive and develop thanks to the responsibility of others in society. In that sense, the promotion of the poor into independent and active persons does not contradict the heteronomous responsibility for the other; the responsibility for the self-unfolding of the other flows forth directly from heteronomous responsibility. The responsibility by and for the other sees to it that 'mastership', which was discussed above in our description of the radical alterity of the face of the poor, acquires its true ethical form. By means of our responsibility for the naked and sidetracked poor, we effectively make possible their ethical mastership. The responsibility for the poor after all implies essentially the care for their becoming independent and mature. Stronger still, without the asymmetrically responsible care by-and-for-the-other, the marginal and the poor cannot even grow into active, able persons. The heteronomous responsibility for the poor as the radical other is the condition of possibility for the development of that poor other into a subject responsible-for-oneself. According to Levinas this is precisely the paradox of the heteronomous responsibility for the poor: it is a strongly concrete responsibility, in the sense that it is geared towards the being and self-development of the other. To take heteronomous

responsibility for the poor concretely means to create space and possibilities for the growth of the poor to independence and responsibility for itself. This means anything but a negative or suspicious approach to the weak and the poor in their attempts to take their own responsibility. If the poor and marginal person is not an object, but an other, a subject, then we have to treat the poor as a full human person. When necessary, we will make critical remarks, so that poor and marginalised people can adjust their active responsibility and develop it better.

Furthermore, the heteronomous responsibility for the poor also means that one should pay attention to the many hurts that alienate marginalised persons from themselves so that, through caring closeness, they can heal sufficiently from these wounds. In this way a poor person can become the best possible responsible 'I': a responsible self that not only asserts itself, but also acts and speaks from within itself. In this sense, we are responsible for the responsibility poor and marginal people should have for themselves. With Levinas we can here even go further and speak of a substitute responsibility. During the decisive moments of growth and development, and from within our own task of responsibility, we take the lack of responsibility of the vulnerable, the weak and the poor unto ourselves. In this way, too, responsible ones for others recognise and promote the uniqueness of the poor and marginal other. We can call all of this the emancipatory aspect of each and every responsibility by and for the poor other: the possibility to enable and promote the responsibility of the poor for and by itself and through which it becomes an active responsible agent. In this manner, the marginal and poor others are no longer reduced to 'target groups' and 'objects', meaning to say to 'beneficiaries of development', but are transformed into 'subjects' and agents of their own development. The marginal and the poor are not only 'recipients' of development aid; they are also responsible for their own development.

## **5. Responsible for the Responsibility of the Marginal and the Poor for Others**

We do wish to go even one step beyond Levinas' philosophical vision of heteronomous responsibility, though we remain indebted

to him for our inspiration. We wish to turn around the asymmetrical responsibility by and for the other and look at it from the perspective of the responsibility of the marginal and the poor for others. We call this a chiasmic responsibility, in the sense that we are speaking of two types of responsibility that cross one another. Our responsibility for others, namely for the marginal and the poor, is only integral if it grows into the responsibility for the responsibility of poor people, not only for themselves (cf. *supra*) but also, and especially for, others. If we then only apply the idea of responsibility for the other to the people taking care of the poor and the marginal, our analyses is lacking. It will give rise to a partiality that leads to disastrous results.

It is very well possible that people caring for the marginal and the poor, with all their commitment and energy, end up in an egocentric result with the ones they take care. The caring responsibility for the other can be very altruistic and unselfish, but this can imply that the other – the object of this care – is promoted into a self-complacent life, wherein only the care for oneself is important. To put it in paradoxical terms, the altruism of the one can lead directly to a promotion of the egotism of the other. We should not be blind to the fact that hunger, poverty and exclusion, in short all sorts of forms of deprivation and need, drive people to a hard and unrelenting ‘struggle for life’. Poverty brings back the person to one’s ‘natural existence’, in the sense that by means of one’s fragile and finite being one is incited in ‘life and limb’ to be concerned about one’s own being. The more acute the needs, even more the needy person becomes an ‘impassioned’ person, meaning to say a creature that is concerned for its own being and sees everything and everyone in the light of the satisfaction of its own needs. With Levinas we can label this as an unavoidable, natural selfishness, in the sense that the poor – precisely as poor – approach everything and everyone out of themselves and their own survival. In this regard poverty manifests itself as ‘animal existence’. This ‘banal’ approach of poverty, that throws back the needy to the (at times fanatic) care for their own being, implies a direct critique on the idea of ‘self-actualisation’, which in Western late-modern thought was developed by a number of authors (Rogers, Maslow, ...). The link between poverty and the egocentric struggle for life unmasks the thought on self-unfolding as naïve, stronger still as typically Western, in the sense

that it expresses *and* justifies the Western context of wealth and welfare. That is why the manner in which Levinas speaks about the natural striving of humans to be ('conatus essendi') seems more honest and more realistic than the 'romantic' discourse about an 'aesthetics of Self-Cultivation' (Foucault).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the emancipatory promotion of the poor, sketched above, into a free self-determining and creative agent should never have the final word. The heteronomous responsibility by and for the other must go further. It must not only be an expression of the self-transcendence in the caring person, but also in the one taken care for, namely the poor. In society we are responsible for the responsibility of the marginal and the poor, in the sense that they must invite and provoke them into responsibility for others, and not only into responsibility for themselves. The one being responsible for the other is faced with the task to take up in such a manner its heteronomous responsibility for the other so that the other is guided and stimulated likewise to acknowledge, to take up and to develop its heteronomous responsibility by and for the other. When this does not take place, heteronomous responsibility contradicts itself. It even destroys its own dynamism and meaning: out of an extreme attention to the one affirmed as the radical other, that other is then brought to a place in a central position, at the cost of others.

This also concretely implies that in society the marginal and the poor are confronted with a number of boundary rules. Of these, 'You shall not kill' is the most fundamental. It is the minimal but strictly necessary condition for humane social life and for the creative development of the responsibility for the other, to which the poor must precisely be appealed. In a humane society we have the ethical mission to initiate and to introduce everyone, and therefore also the marginal and the poor, into the major importance of this prohibition, and also into a fundamental respect for it. All that was said above about the prohibition to violence can be applied without hesitation to the marginal and the poor as active agents. To put it in the words of Levinas: "The *vital* life, the natural life, perhaps begins in a naiveté and in repugnancies agreeing with ethics; it ends in compliance with loveless debauchery and looting erected into a social condition, into exploitation. *Human* life begins where this vitality, innocent in appearance, but virtually destructive, is mastered by interdictions.

Does not authentic civilization, whatever be the biological echoes or the political defects it brings to pass, consist in holding back the breath of naive life and thus awakening 'for posterity and to the end of all generations'?" (NLT 25-26/61-62). All persons, without exception, must be guided in order to transcend their natural, vitalistic existence towards the other and for the sake of the other: a limitation through which life awakens from its somnambulant spontaneity, sobers up from its nature, and interrupts its centripetal movement, to open itself to the otherness of the other (NLT 23/60). When this is neither the goal nor the result of interpersonal and social responsibility, then we fail in our task. Taking of the marginal and the poor even ends up in an anti-society, in spite of all the possible means and forms whereby the marginal and the poor are made capable of leading a happy and prosperous life as active agents. Then they have not yet grown beyond the level of their natural urge-to-be and urge-to-live into the level of humane civilisation. In short, a humane, ethically qualified society consists in this that we appeal to the responsibility of the marginal and the poor, not only for the cooperation in the unfolding and possible healing of their own freedom and attempt at being, but also, and especially, in order to take upon themselves, and creatively substantiate, the responsibility for other.

Finally, if the idea of the marginal and the poor as responsible and active agents is disconnected from the concept of the heteronomous responsibility for others but itself, it will flow into all sorts of conflict, aggression, threats and violence. If the free exercise of independence is left to its own, and so can not be inspired from within by the responsibility for the other, it easily becomes a insolent demand for freedom that thrashes about wildly and actively terrorises others. Only an inspired freedom, that is, a freedom that allows itself to be inspired by the other, is able to transcend self-centredness and to enter into true humane relationships with others. This is also the case for the marginal and the poor in all their interpersonal and social relationships.<sup>4</sup>

## Conclusion

To re-imagine and reinvent development as a transformative practice, Giri proposes to “reconstitute development as responsibility, which can provide a self-critical and transformative supplement to the contemporary definitions of development as freedom”.<sup>5</sup> We have attempted to demonstrate how the ethical thought of Levinas about the other and the heteronomous responsibility for the other, achieves this in an eminent manner. However, so that this responsibility would not lapse into the one-sidedness of the old altruism, whereby the marginal and the poor would only be the objects of personal or organisational aid, we have developed out of Levinas’ thought itself the idea of an emancipatory responsibility. The responsibility for the development of the marginal and the poor other essentially implies the idea of self-unfolding and thus of responsibility for oneself. But in order that this emancipatory responsibility in its turn would not turn into a new and disastrous one-sidedness, we have indicated with Levinas how the heteronomous responsibility for the other implies a responsibility for the responsibility of the other. Only by applying Levinas’ idea of heteronomous responsibility to the marginal and the poor as well, is full justice done to the thesis that they are not only objects but likewise subjects of responsibility.

## Notes

1. See among others his study “Rethinking the Imperative of Responsibility: Development Ethics, Aesthetics, and the Challenge of Poverty,” in A.K. GIRI, *New Horizons of Social Theory. Conversations, Transformations and Beyond*, Jaipur/New Dehli/Bangalore/Mumbai/Hydrabad, Rawat Publications, 2006, p. 199-221, esp. pp. 207-211.
2. The cited studies of Levinas are listed below in alphabetical order. Citations in our text are indicated with an abbreviation of the original French edition, along with the cited page or pages. The cited page from the available English translation is indicated after the forward slash (/). Abbreviations used:

AE: *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence*, La Haye, Nijhoff, 1974.  
[English translation (ET): *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*,

translated by A. Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London, Nijhoff (Kluwer), 1981.];

AS: *Autrement que savoir* (Interventions in the discussions and Débat général), Paris, Osiris, 1988;

CPP: *Collected Philosophical Papers*, translated by A. Lingis. Dordrecht/Boston/Lancaster, Kluwer/Nijhoff, 1987;

DL: *Difficile Liberté ; Essais sur le Judaïsme*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1976 (2nd ed.).

ET: *Difficult Freedom. Essays on Judaism*, translated by S. Hand. Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1990.];

DVI: *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Paris, Vrin, 1982. [ET: *Of God Who Comes to Mind*, translated by B. Bergo, Stanford, University Press, 1998;

EI: *Éthique et Infini. Dialogues avec Philippe Nemo*, Paris, Fayard & France Culture, 1982. [ET: *Ethics and Infinity. Conversations with Philippe Nemo*, translated by R.A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1985.];

EN: *Entre nous. Essais sur le penser-à-l'autre*, Paris, Grasset 1991. [ET: *Entre nous. Thinking-of-the-Other*, translated by M.B. Smith and B. Harshav, London/New York, Continuum, 2006];

HAH: *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1972. [ET: The three essays are taken up in CPP, respectively "Meaningful Sense" at pp. 75-107, "Humanism and Anarchy" at pp. 127-139, and "No identity" at pp. 141-151.];

HS: *Hors sujet*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1987. [ET: *Outside the Subject*, translated by M.B. Smith, London, Athlone, 1993.];

LC: "Liberté et commandement" (suivi de "Transcendance et hauteur"), Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1994. [ET: "Freedom and Command," in CPP, pp. 15-45.];

NLT: *Nouvelles lectures talmudiques*, Paris, Minuit, 1996. [ET: *New Talmudic Readings*, translated by R.A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 2000.];

TA: *Le temps et l'autre*, Montpellier, Fata Morgana, 1979 (2nd ed.). [ET: *Time and the Other*, translated by R.A. Cohen, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1987.];

TI: *Totalité et Infini. Essai sur l'extériorité*, La Haye, Nijhoff, 1961. [ET: *Totality and Infinity An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by A. Lingis, The Hague/Boston/London, Nijhoff, 1979.];

- VA: "La vocation de l'autre" (interview with E. Hirsch), in: E. HIRSCH, *Racismes. L'autre et son visage*, Paris, Cerf, 1988, p. 89-102.
3. A.K. GIRI, Art. Cit., pp. 207-208.
  4. This requires the further elaboration of the social, economic and political dimension of the Levinasian concept of the heteronomous responsibility by and for the other. For that purpose we refer to our studies: 'The Other in Me: Interpersonal and Social Responsibility in Emmanuel Levinas', in *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 62(2006), pp. 631-649; *The Wisdom of Love in the Service of Love. Emmanuel Levinas on Justice, Peace, and Human Rights*, Milwaukee, Marquette University Press, 2002, 2003 (2nd ed.), 213 p.
  5. A.K. GIRI, Art. cit., p. 208.



## The Understanding of “Development” in the Documents of the Magisterium

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**Abstract:** The deepening of the understanding of ‘development’ in the Church as well as outside has been slow. Initially, the emphasis was more on economic development. Gradually the emphasis shifted to integral development or social development. Through social analysis we came to know that poverty in the world is purposely maintained by the vested interests of a few wealthy individuals or nations. Hence, economic development alone will not be able to address this issue of poverty and under-development. There are various forces working against the integral development of individuals and nations. Faulty religious beliefs and practices, wastage of money in prestigious programmes, exaggerated defence expenses, structural adjustment policies, new economic policies, globalisation, invasion of multinational companies, voluntary retirement scheme, utter selfishness, large scale corruption, unequal treatment of women, high illiteracy rate, lack of health facilities for the poor, unemployment, underemployment, child labour, etc., are some of the factors which hinder the growth process. India as a nation is moving towards becoming a developed nation, but wealth is concentrated in the hands of the top ten percent of the people. As a result the gap between the rich and the poor is steadily increasing. The Church in India has been successful to a great extent in its attempts at education and health care. Since there are many landlords and politicians who are opposed to education and development, the Church personnel are facing strong opposition by way of persecution, false legal cases, intimidation, etc.

**Keywords:** The Church, Vatican II, poverty, education and development, *Gaudium et Spes*, *Populorum Progressio*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*.

## Introduction

The question of development is a complex issue: who decides what development means and for whom. The idea of 'development' has undergone change and development over the years. The first part of this article deals with the attempts at development in India. This will give us the context in which the growth in the understanding of development in four major Church's magisterial documents of the past fifty years is discussed.

Initially, the term 'development' was used mainly to denote economic development. Thus, many social activists tried to bring about development by introducing modern methods of agriculture and other economic activities to improve the standard of living of the rural poor. According to them, lack of capital was the cause of underdevelopment. "The solution, therefore, was to promote economic growth by an infusion of capital, which would lead to industrialization and eventual prosperity."<sup>1</sup>

But those third world countries which adopted this model ended up with 'economic stagnation coupled with political and social unrest'.<sup>2</sup> The main reason for this was the unjust trade relations between the developed and the underdeveloped nations.

Many of these projects were funded by the government and some foreign funding agencies. But since these activities failed to achieve the desired aim, the need was felt to give importance to the fields of health and education. Again, the rapid rate of population growth hindered any attempt at development. So family planning programmes were also introduced as part of the process of development.<sup>3</sup>

Now we are slowly moving away from and beyond purely economic development to social development. "The concept of social development is inclusive of economic development but differs from it in the sense that it emphasises the development of the totality of society in its economic, political, social, and cultural aspects."<sup>4</sup> Social development basically means an integrated development of the whole person. This concept does not accept that economic development is the basis of other forms of development. It stresses the simultaneous development of the different areas.

## Development in India

A country like India is on the road to becoming a developed nation and its GNP is going up rather rapidly. At the same time a large number of people in our country continue to remain below the poverty line. Due to the effects of globalisation and other similar trends many have lost their jobs and remain unemployed or underemployed. Hence, a small percentage of people are becoming very rich at the expense of the development of the majority.

India is said to be a rich country with poor people residing in it. India has very rich resources, but somehow these resources are not well utilized. The 'mixed economy' policy did not bear the desired result. "Coupled with these economic problems were the mismanagement of funds, consecutive elections, corruption of high magnitude at all levels, inefficiency, clamour for higher wages not backed by productive increase, high military expenditures, and expenses on populist programmes."<sup>5</sup> Due to large scale corruption the facilities meant for the poorer sections often ended up in the hands of the well-off people. When India requested the IMF help to recover from the economic crisis, we had to accept their conditions of economic liberalization and Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP). These policies include 'encouraging greater participation of the private sector, disinvestments in state owned public sector enterprises, deregulation of industries, liberalisation of foreign trade and foreign investment and changes in fiscal policy'.<sup>6</sup>

The consequences of liberalisation are very damaging to the general public. A large number of people have lost their jobs under the names of 'Golden Handshake' and the 'Voluntary Retirement Scheme'. "Between 1991-94 it is estimated that about 75,000 in the public sector and 1,25,000 in the private sector have been sent out."<sup>7</sup> When more and more people are losing their jobs, even if the industries make profits, this cannot be seen as integral development. In order to keep them economically viable, Industries have to go in for modern technologies with less employees. The agriculture sector will not be able to employ many more people if it has to run profitably. "Therefore, the unorganised sector, with its large scope for self-employment, must expand rapidly in order to create the additional jobs."<sup>8</sup>

One sign of economic development is the movement of the labour force from the unorganised to the organised sector, where they form their own unions and their interests are taken care of. But in India, due to the New Economic Policies, the reverse process is taking place creating more and more casual labourers. Among the casual labourers, the number of women and children are on the increase. “Multinational companies are keen in exploiting such cheap labour by sub-contracting the various production processes.”<sup>9</sup> The developed countries are making use of India for their continued wealth accumulation.

## **The Church and Development**

Till the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Church was involved in preaching the gospel to those who had never heard of Jesus and in the work of charity, education and health care. To be concerned about developmental activities was not considered part of its mission. Today the Church accepts developmental activities and promotion of justice as part and parcel of its evangelising mission. The synodal document, ‘Justice in the World’, considers “action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel”.<sup>10</sup> In the recent past the Church has been very active in Northeast India with a view to evangelisation. Along with evangelisation, the Church was very active in the apostolate of human development.<sup>11</sup>

Though many Church documents deal with the topic of development, I like to restrict myself to the study of only four documents: Vatican II’s Pastoral Constitution on The Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), the encyclical of Pope Paul VI on The Development of Peoples (*Populorum Progressio*) and his Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelisation in the Modern World (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) and the encyclical of John Paul II on Social Concern (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*).

## **Magisterial Teaching on Development**

### ***Gaudium et Spes***

*Gaudium et Spes* of Vatican II (1965) seems to give the impression that ‘development’ would be able to solve the problems of poverty.

Many of the bishops and experts at the Council might have believed that the best way to promote international social justice and overcome poverty was to opt for a Western-style development. The assumption behind this approach is that Western-style 'development' can be imitated. Developing nations could follow the same path of development as the developed nations during the last two centuries.<sup>12</sup> Yet this may only lead to the creation of a Fourth or even a Fifth World.

The responsibility for development of the underdeveloped nations is laid both on the developing as well as on the developed nations. Developing nations need to be concerned about the complete human fulfilment of all their citizens as the explicit goal of progress. "Let them be mindful that progress begins and develops primarily from the efforts and endowments of the people themselves. Hence, instead of depending solely on outside help, they should rely chiefly on the full unfolding of their own resources and the cultivation of their own qualities and tradition."<sup>13</sup>

The document also points to the responsibility of the developed nations. "The development of any nation depends on human and financial assistance... The developing nations will be unable to procure the necessary material assistance unless the practices of the modern business world undergo a profound change. Additional help should be offered by advanced nations, in the form of either grants or investments."<sup>14</sup>

*Gaudium et Spes* recognizes that a major source of injustice in international trade is the inequality in power between trading partners. In order to regulate this inequality, the document calls for the setting up of effective institutions to promote a just economic order.<sup>15</sup> "Let adequate organizations be established for fostering and harmonizing international trade, especially with respect to the less advanced countries, and for repairing the deficiencies caused by an excessive disproportion in the power possessed by various nations."<sup>16</sup>

GS is not content with a conversion in the mentality and attitudes of peoples, but also calls for reforms in the socio-economic realm. "Numerous reforms are needed at the socio-economic level, along with universal change in ideas and attitudes."<sup>17</sup> The Council says

that in many situations there is urgent need for a reassessment of economic and social structures.<sup>18</sup> The term 'reassessment' suggests that the Council does not identify itself with those who fight for the overthrowing of the existing structures. But what is significant is that the Council Fathers did not shy away from calling for a reassessment. They did not start with the assumption that any fundamental restructuring is unnecessary, nor did they rule it out on the ground that it might lead to some confusion in society.<sup>19</sup>

GS also cautions against sudden technical solutions at the cost of the priceless heritage of the non-Western cultures. "But nations must beware of technical solutions immaturely proposed, especially those which offer man material advantage while militating against his spiritual nature and development. For, 'Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God' (Mt 4:4). Each branch of the human family possesses in itself and in its worthier traditions some part of the spiritual treasure entrusted by God to humanity, even though many do not know the source of this treasure."<sup>20</sup>

GS speaks of deep compassion for the poor, but gives no clear indication of solidarity with them. It seems to be more concerned about doing something for the poor rather than being with the poor. GS presents poverty as an urgent problem which is to be overcome mainly by 'development'.

### *Populorum Progressio*

*Populorum Progressio* was issued on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1967 by Pope Paul VI barely sixteen months after the Council Document, *Gaudium et Spes*. This shows his great commitment to the problem of development. This encyclical deals with the relationship between rich and poor nations. Pope Paul VI is concerned about the problem of poverty and he wants to find out its basic causes before he suggests any solution. He points out that the main causes of poverty are the negative effects of colonialism in the past, neo-colonialism and the huge difference of wealth and power between nations.<sup>21</sup> Though he speaks of the negative effects of colonialism as one of the reasons for poverty, he mentions that colonialism has also done some good to the people by way of diminishing ignorance and sickness. He is of the

opinion that colonialism has also brought better communications and improved the living conditions of the people.<sup>22</sup>

The Pope is of the opinion that the social problems cannot be solved at the national level alone. PP deals with the challenge of integral development. He condemns unbridled liberalism. “However certain concepts have somehow arisen out of these new conditions and insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society. These concepts present profit as the chief spur to economic progress, free competition as the guiding norm of economics, and the private ownership of means of production as an absolute right, having no limits, nor concomitant social obligations.”<sup>23</sup>

He emphasizes the role of the Church in the process of development and gives a Christian vision of development. The Pope envisages a well integrated development of everyone. “What must be aimed at is complete humanism. And what is that if not the fully rounded development of the whole man and of all men?”<sup>24</sup> The development of a nation is to be judged by the level of development of the last and the least. This calls for a commitment to justice and equality for all the citizens. “This commitment is to the historical project of the poor, whereby the non-persons become persons and agents or subjects of their own history and cease to be objects of exploitation and manipulated history.”<sup>25</sup> The development of every person is mediated by the option for the development of the last and the least.

Jesus is our model for commitment to the development of the poor and the marginalized. Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God to the poor. He had a preferential love for the poor and this was shown by his close association with them. His personal life and ministry were directed towards the liberation of the oppressed and the downtrodden. He reinterpreted the Sabbath for the benefit of the poor and the heavy burdened. Jesus’ commitment to everyone was mediated through his preferential option for the poor.

He suggests economic planning and aid to promote development<sup>26</sup>. He concludes by terming ‘development’ the new name for peace, and exhorts all Christians to strive for true development. “For if the new name for peace is development, who would not wish to labour for it

with all his powers?"<sup>27</sup> He feels that revolution is not the right means to bring about human development, but he points out that if the interests of the poor people are not given proper importance, they may be forced to have recourse to violence.<sup>28</sup> At the same time he also mentions that a revolutionary uprising will only produce new injustices, imbalances, and disasters.<sup>29</sup> The Pope is quite optimistic when he says that despite all its failures, the world is in fact moving towards greater brotherhood and an increase in humanity.<sup>30</sup>

We cannot expect integral development to take place from the top. "We have a tendency to consider the poor as the problem: the fact is that they are emerging as the solution!"<sup>31</sup> Many groups are slowly emerging all over the world which challenge the oppressive forces. We need to look up to these groups and support them so that they may bring about meaningful changes in the society.

### ***Evangelii Nuntiandi***

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), Pope Paul VI deals with the controversial theological question raised by the document of the Synod on 'Justice in the World', when it said that action on behalf of justice is a constitutive dimension of preaching the Gospel.<sup>32</sup> According to EN, the Church is a community of believers gathered 'in the name of Jesus so that they may together seek the Kingdom, build it up and implement in their own lives'.<sup>33</sup> Building the Kingdom is not confined to the so called 'religious' or 'spiritual' activities. It also requires secular activities such as working for the integral development of people and struggling against the oppressive and inhuman structures in the society.

In *Gaudium et Spes* and *Populorum Progressio* the main emphasis is on development rather than liberation. Starting from the Medellin documents there is a shift from development to liberation. Pope Paul in writing *Octogesima Adveniens* in 1971 was very cautious in his use of the word 'liberation'. In EN he provides a thorough theological analysis of the concept of liberation. He writes that the main purpose of the coming of Jesus was to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God. He summarises the content of the Good News: "As the main point and the very centre of his Good News, Christ proclaims salvation; this is the great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses people, particularly liberation from sin and the Evil One..."<sup>34</sup> It is not



possible to preach the Good News without questioning the dehumanising structures of society. The Good News about the risen Lord is the news of liberation from poverty, oppression and injustice. Even though the word liberation goes beyond economic and political liberation, it cannot replace the word 'salvation'. Salvation is a gift of God. It begins in this life but is fulfilled only in eternity.

The Pope gives an overall vision of evangelisation, one that transcends any division such as 'religious versus secular' or 'spiritual versus temporal'. All the same the mission of the Church should not be reduced to merely a temporal project.<sup>35</sup> If that were not the case, the Church would have nothing more to offer than the social activists or political movements. EN understands evangelisation as bringing "the Good News into all the strata of the human race so that by its power it may permeate the depths of humanity and make it new".<sup>36</sup> There is a need for inner transformation. External transformation brought about by force will not be lasting unless it is supported by love and concern for fellow human beings. It means "affecting the standards by which people make judgments, their prevailing values, their interests and thought-patterns, the things that move them to action, and their models of human living".<sup>37</sup>

Preaching of the Good News is to be done by all Christians. This task involves working for an integral development and liberation of all peoples. Every Christian has to use his special God-given talent and charism for the betterment of the whole society. Every one is called to contribute his/her might for the building up of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus came to establish.<sup>38</sup>

### *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*

Dated December 31, 1987, published in February 1988, the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* by Pope John Paul II commemorates the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*. Its purpose was to re-examine attempts made in the field of development during the intervening twenty years. The Pope comes to the conclusion that the efforts at development failed in many areas. The Pope says that education and easy access to information are among the most positive means of achieving development. He also feels that there is a need for radical political reforms in order to achieve them. He finds the conflict between East and West

of over forty years has been a cause for the Third World to remain underdeveloped. The resources that could have been used for the development of the Third World countries were used for the accumulation of weapons.<sup>39</sup>

The Encyclical points out that integrated development can take place only in a culture which promotes initiative. Of course the Pope has in mind the situation of the Eastern block, which was suppressing personal initiatives. Democratic forms of government seem to be the best for true development of all people. The people become the subjects rather than the objects of development.<sup>40</sup> In order to get participation of the general public, they have to be somehow made participants in decision making and implementation. The Indian government's attempt at *panchayati raj* is a good starting point. At the same time it is very difficult to get the support of all the people due to various reasons. "In India, the existence of religious minorities and the claims of regional linguistic loyalties have created difficulties at the national level and the differentiation based on caste has vitiated local regional politics."<sup>41</sup> Because of the very low percentage of literacy, the illiterate masses tend to believe in the false promises made by politicians for their own political advantage.

The Pope gives a broad meaning to development and he says that the poor as well as the rich need development. Along with economic and social development there is a need for moral development. This means that the attitudes of people have to be changed along with the external manifestations of development. It is a pity that underdevelopment goes hand in hand with superdevelopment. Those who enjoy superdevelopment become slaves of their possessions and they cultivate a culture of consumerism and 'throw-away'<sup>42</sup>. Pope John Paul II uses the term 'solidarity' in order to explain the duty of the developed nations to come to the aid of the developing nations and to treat them as their 'neighbours' and 'helpers'.<sup>43</sup> The Pope insists that one's neighbour is 'the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit'.<sup>44</sup> Solidarity also implies that the material goods as well as the products of human industry should belong to everyone without distinction.

## Conclusion

There has been a slow progress in the understanding of 'development' in the Church as well as outside. Initially the emphasis was more on economic development. Gradually the emphasis shifted to integral development or social development. Through social analysis we came to know that poverty in the world is purposely maintained by the vested interests of a few wealthy individuals or nations. Hence, development alone will not be able to address this issue of poverty and underdevelopment. There is a need to work towards liberation, which involves a fight against oppression, injustice and the unjust distribution of wealth.

There are various forces working against the integral development of individuals and nations. Faulty religious beliefs and practices, wastage of money in prestigious programmes, exaggerated defence expenses, structural adjustment policies, new economic policies, globalisation, invasion of multinational companies, voluntary retirement scheme, utter selfishness, large scale corruption, unequal treatment of women, high illiteracy rate, lack of health facilities for the poor, unemployment, underemployment, child labour, etc. are some of the factors which hinder the growth process. India as a nation is moving towards becoming a developed nation, but wealth is concentrated in the hands of the top ten percent of the people. As a result the gap between the rich and the poor is steadily increasing. The politicians, who are supposed to be living exemplary lives, are often leading scandalous lives and as a result they do not have any moral authority to lead the country to be a prosperous nation.

The Church in India has been successful to a great extent in its attempts at education and health care. After Vatican Council II, it is moving in the direction of identification with the poor, conscientizing the marginalized, integral development of the masses, etc. Since there are many landlords and politicians who are opposed to education and development, the Church personnel are facing strong opposition by way of persecution, false legal cases, intimidation, etc. The Church needs to involve itself in a more scientific manner. Though some have done studies in social work, more people need to be equipped with the tools of social analysis and organizing people.

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## **Development as Quasi-Religious A Critical Appraisal**

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**Abstract:** By analysing the idea and practice of development as they emerged during the different phases – such as the enlightenment phase, the post-World War phase, and the present-day globalisation phase, – the essay underlines some of the features of development which make it quasi-religious. It concludes by observing the limitations of the reigning understandings and calls for a critical approach to both development and religion. A broad based approach to development needs to be supported with new forms of religious interventions too. Liberation theology that emerged within Catholic Christianity is one such example of critical intervention of religion in societal transformation. Basing itself on a critical analysis of the structural dimensions of injustice, this theology as a religious intervention rallied the people against oppressors and dominators. This manner of critical religious intervention is a matter of necessity today. Liberation theology must be reinvented. The major religions of the world must give birth to such liberation theologies in order to take on the hegemonic agenda of domination and exploitation couched in the present-day market-led development.

**Keywords:** Resistance, tyranny of market, Development as Embodiment of Enlightenment Rationality, Development as quasi-religious, development and teleology, ethics, conversion, self-negation, broad-based development.

## 1. Introduction

We are living in an era of market-led development. The Market has become all encompassing, and has even gone to the extent of exercising a ‘tyranny’<sup>1</sup> over the thought and activity of humanity. Development thinking, perhaps, is the most affected. The turn the Doha rounds of talks at WTO in July 2006 took by abandoning the agenda of overall development in favour of creating access for the market is a case in point.<sup>2</sup>

We find developmental projects undertaken disproportionately. Andhra’s tryst with hi-tech industries is a good example. On the claim of development, Andhra’s ruling elite took the state to the ‘dizzy heights’ of hi-tech development. But the project remained lopsided, and the victims of neglect are the farmers who continue to experience acute frustration (as evident in the cases of suicide). The welfare of those involved in the agricultural sector was sacrificed on the altar of hi-tech development. The huge dams built by throwing the ecosystem out of gear and displacing recklessly the inhabitants of the area of the dam are other examples.

While such experiences of development in a third world country like ours produce moral compunction in our hearts, the so-called ‘developed’ countries are following unethical and questionable means to support their developed status. Production of arms and dumping them on underdeveloped countries, exporting unstable nuclear plants to poorer countries, producing narcotics and smuggling them out to developing countries – are only some examples of the questionable means some countries follow to maintain their developed economy. The news that America produces marijuana as the top cash-crop, more than traditional harvests of wheat, corn, etc is symptomatic!<sup>3</sup> That is a window to the kind of dubious practices a recklessly hi-tech developmentally oriented country can involve itself in.

Over against these cases on the ground, a section of developmental theoreticians – postmodern ones – have come to speak about the ‘end of development’.<sup>4</sup> This manner of speaking goes along with similar discourses as ‘end of history’, ‘end of

the human', 'end of metaphysics', etc that have come to occupy the postmodern discourses. These discourses place a basic mistrust on development, calling it one among the 'metanarratives'. According to them, there is no universal knowledge or pattern of development.

While this apparently is the 'state of affairs' as regards development, it must be stated that it is again only a lopsided representation of the reality of development. Because a vast majority of humanity still remains involved and committed to development. The attempts to eradicate poverty, provide basic amenities, spread education, etc undertaken by sincerely motivated agencies that work among the masses are good examples of the other side of the story of development. Looked at from the 'developing' Indian context, the idea of development and its associated projects still grip the creative dimension of human living. As observed by Rudiger & Heiko, development-theoreticians, "... speaking with people in developing countries, development is still very much alive."<sup>5</sup>

It is against this backdrop of the diverse perceptions of development that this essay intends to look at the interface between religion and development. It makes an appraisal of the question, 'whether development can be treated as a form of religion. If so, in what sense? And, especially from the perspective of the marginalised people, what does it mean to say 'development is analogous to religion or quasi-religious'? This essay does not deal primarily with the question of whether religion impedes or promotes development. This has been discussed for a very long time. Richard Tawney's (*Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, 1926) or Weber's (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 1930) theses are a few of the pioneering answers to such a question. This essay does not primarily concern itself with such a question.

## **2. Development as an Enlightenment Project**

Humanity has experienced several great civilizations. They all have been, in a fundamental sense, the expressions or manifestations of the basic human urge for 'bettering' of human living. By



‘bettering’ I mean, taking inspiration from Adorno, a ‘dialectic’ of comparing and confronting ‘what *is* with what *could be* or what fits better.’<sup>6</sup> Bettering of modes of productive activities, patterns of sheltering, dietary systems, systems of social interaction, aesthetic creations, artistic expressions, and so on have been part and parcel of these civilizations. Embedded in them are also concerns for the betterment of ‘self’ and ‘society’. These are but different aspects of the sense of ‘bettering’. Such a sense and its associated activities have been, thus, part of human living all along its history.

However, this urge for betterment and the civilizational activities have not been taken to constitute the meaning of what is known presently as ‘development’. Development is a modern concept, born during the post-Second World War decades, when the European concern to overcome the impact of devastations and distress ran very high. It was also the period when most of the erstwhile-colonised countries were disentangling themselves from colonial yokes and searching for ways and means of building up their countries. Welfare nation states were the phenomena of this post-colonial era. Several countries became welfare nation-states, and embarked upon a project of state-led development. India, for example, set off on the course of development with the programme of five-year plans. The Green revolution and similar transformations in India owe their origin to the idea of development as conceived by the modern state makers of India.

Though development as a project unfolded during the post-war constructive phase, the roots of the idea lie within the European Enlightenment revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The idea got constituted through the combination or configuration of several elements of modernity like social modernisation, industrialisation, urbanisation, enhanced communication technologies and transport facilities, Enlightenment philosophies, etc. Of them, the Enlightenment philosophies of the self and society played an indispensable role in the construction of the idea and practice of development. Enlightenment rationality, for example, was the core element of this development.

## 2.1. Development as Embodiment of Enlightenment Rationality

The modern concept and practice of development is an embodiment of Enlightenment rationality. Basing itself on such strong foundations as Descartes' *cogito*, which assumed the superiority of the thinking self and Kant's vision of the autonomous agent and instrumental reason, the idea of development has flourished as a modern concept, cultivating the modern self and society. It has incorporated within itself such features of rationality as cause-effect logical reasoning, subject-object scheme, faith in value-neutral objectivity, the unity of the human thinking self, fundamental faith in futuristic progress, etc. Rationality was the defining feature of what came to be known as 'scientific thinking'. The scientific reasoning deployed the instrumental reason to experiment and overpower the forces of nature and matter. Logical positivism, the high product of scientific rationality, came to exert much influence not only in the world of science, but also in social 'development'. Basing on this rationality, theoreticians began to claim with absolute certainty and confidence the course of social evolution, and began to advocate social engineering too. Development became the most favoured child of this positivistic enlightenment rationality.

Enlightenment rationality worked on the basis of a binary of the subject and the object. The subject was a secularly triumphant self that expressed itself in systematic planning and execution of scientific projects. It was a self which had 'freed' itself from, in the words of Kant, 'self-incurred immaturity', i.e. the ability to act on its own, without being guided by an external agent. This self was the autonomous agent, which undertook several scientific rational projects, and 'accomplished' them. Development became, eventually, the site wherein this rational subject actualised itself. The object of the binary was anything external to the self. Nature, the social reality, the emotions, art and culture, – everything became objects of experimentation and utilisation. Human labour too, in and through the process of industrialisation, became objectified and eventually got commoditized.

The autonomy and liberty of the individual are some of the important products of enlightenment thinking. It stressed the importance of the independence of the individual as against any collective that may hold up the individual. The feudal economic system and its attendant consciousness, which stifled the individual, gave way, in the heat of Enlightenment thinking, to capitalist liberal ideas, which ‘freed’ the individual. These liberal ideas impacted upon the economic, political, and social systems. They, in a unique manner, influenced and transformed the religious and ethical systems and behaviours too. The idea and practice of development that arose within this Enlightenment paradigm, with its own specific care of the self and society, began to acquire religious characteristics. In other words, they became quasi-religious.

### **3. Development as Quasi-Religious**

The Enlightenment-tinted interface between development and religion can be analytically explored at different levels. At a very surface level, one can think of religion as providing platforms for developmental activities. It is a fact of history that several religious organisations, structures, and institutions have been involved heart and soul in undertaking developmental projects. These activities aimed at ameliorating or mitigating social evils like poverty, social backwardness, etc. As noted by Rudiger and Heiko, at one phase during the history of development, “development intervention was largely the provision of capital to build up industries, while other aspects of underdevelopment like poverty etc. were left to charitable organisations of the churches, NGOs, etc.”<sup>7</sup> Thus, by providing a platform for developmental activities, religion interfaced itself with the project of development, but at a very surface level.

A deeper level of interfacing would be the way both exhibited similar characteristics and, in a sense, cross-fertilised each other by playing complementary roles. Exploring this level would mean taking a more philosophical look at the way both these ideas have fecundated each other in relation to historical actualisations. The present essay would like to make some heuristic explorations

on this level and see how development could be understood as a quasi-religious phenomenon.

### 3.1. The Teleological Element

Teleological thinking, i.e. thinking geared to an end (*telos*) and orienting human potentialities towards achieving that end is one of the anthropological capabilities that distinguishes human beings from others. In the classical metaphysical age, both of the West and East, religions offered the *telos*. Embedding them in mythological language, they presented different eschatological visions as the 'ends' of life, towards which the followers of the respective religions had to orient their lives. These eschatological *telos* were, perhaps, the sources for the emergence of the historical thinking on a unilinear pattern of progress towards a future. In the classical religions, the soul was believed to progress towards the eschatological end. Since religions always linked the attainment of the eschatological future with certain conditional 'preparedness' ('forgiveness of sins' in Christianity) in the present, they also perhaps induced a synchronic moralistic thinking among the religious followers. Thus, in a scheme of faith, the future and the present were linked. This linkage was perhaps the remote origin of the historical thinking that implied a progress towards a future. It can thus be said that unilinear historical progress towards the future, thus emerged out of religious beliefs and behaviours.

During the modern era, the language changed, but the schema remained. Teleological thinking got expressed in secular idioms. Instead of the soul, the self was considered to be progressing along a history. When the human and social sciences were born, they imagined this progression in terms of what is known as *evolution*. Anthropologists thought of progression in terms of human evolution, and social thinkers thought in terms of social ideologies. Socialism, for example, spoke of the *telos* of history as evolving towards the state of socialism.

After the era of ideologies, what fills the vacuum of *telos* thinking is that of development. As noted by Rudiger Korff & Heiko Schrader, "Development ... translates 'reason and

revolution' into 'development'.”<sup>8</sup> Development, in its unique manner, integrates this teleological thinking. It replaces the old metaphysical comprehension and eschatology with more concrete achievements of the present. And yet, it orients the modern self towards a 'developed' future. As noted by Anton van Harskamp, “it (development) has replaced the idea of a comprehensive, coherent 'grand' narrative of social 'evolution', while at the same time retaining the idea of a linear, progressive advancement apparently necessarily involving all social and living entities.”<sup>9</sup> As noted by Harskamp again, it may be said that “Development has become a concept – and a moral appeal – functioning as the substitute for the 'old', even old-fashioned, concept of history.”<sup>10</sup> This progressive linear advancement, inherent in development, may be deemed as one of the important elements that make development a quasi-religious phenomenon.

### 3.2. Unity of the Self

Progress in history implies an agent that is progressing. “Development refers to the idea of a progress that can be applied to nearly *every* social system and *every* social agent, the human self included.”<sup>11</sup> The human self, in turn, implies a unity which can progress spatio-temporally. Any development thinking or project, in order to occur, must have an agent who is the source not merely of creativity, but also of continuity. Continuity across time and space, through the endless changes, provides the foundation also for moral responsibility of the act and the actor. All these postulate what is known as 'the unity of the self'.

In this aspect too, it can well be surmised that development functions as a quasi-religious phenomenon. Any religion has at its core a vision of the unified human self. The Upanishadic religion of India speaks of *atman*, Buddhists speak of *jiva*, and Christians speak of the soul. All these are but religious representations of the unified human self. And, this human self progresses towards what is known as the ultimate reality, be it salvation, *mukti*, *nirvana*, etc. What is implied is that the human self provides continuity and responsibility for the actions undertaken by the human beings.

Unity of the self is nurtured by religions also by cultivating a comprehensive vision of life. It combines the past, the present and the future in a religious scheme and presents a religio-moral universe, which serves, in the words of Peter Berger, as the 'sacred canopy'. A 'comprehension' is a must at all levels and in all spheres. By comprehending the external universe, the internal self is also believed to have been comprehended. The Vedic and Upanishadic philosophers saw an external *rta* (regularity) in the cosmos, and transferred it to the internal *atman*. A comprehensive vision of the external world and the unity of the self reinforced each other mutually. And these two elements are shared both by development and religions.

### 3.3. 'Expansion of the Present'

Govert J. Buijs finds a convergence between religion and development in the manner in which both of them 'expand the present.' According to him, "...religion expands the visible present in order to endow it with the force of non-visible realities... (it) gives 'inspiration': orientation (when choices have to be made), legitimation (when choices are made) and empowerment (to carry on with the choices made). This 'expanded reality' can not be counted mathematically or tested empirically."<sup>12</sup> However, the impact of this is evident in the lives of the practitioners of religions. It serves therapeutically during such negative experiences of life as conflicts and frustrations.

While this is so, Buijs alerts us, religion can also run the risk of alienating human beings from the present:

Religion always runs the risk that the expanded reality not only permeates the present but that it somehow even lets the present almost vanish. The present can be suppressed by the expanded reality. People for example can withdraw themselves into what to the outsider must look like a fantasy-world. Or they act as if the expanded reality is the only thing that counts and become fanatics or even commit violence. So religion does have the inherent risk of making people less attentive to the specific situation they are in.<sup>13</sup>

That being the case with religion, development, in a comparative perspective, functions more moderately and realistically. With its horizontal focus, development thinking and practice expand the present more context-sensitively. The expanded present becomes a site for concrete activities, which in turn, keeps expanding the possibilities of the present in a more gripping manner. Being engaged with the present, thus, is one of the core elements of both religion and development.

### 3.4. As Applied Ethics

Economics and ethics, in spite of the recent academic interest shown in their inter-relationship,<sup>14</sup> have disparate areas of interest in the conventional understanding of a modern perceiver. While economics is taken to concern itself solely with pure economic growth in terms of production, distribution, consumption, etc, ethics is considered to be a far-away discipline concerned with morality, conscience, will, etc. While this is the apparent understanding, we are able to identify, on the other hand, a strong interest shown in the relationship between ethics and economics right from a very remote past in history. In the Indian context, we have Kautilyar's *Arthashastra* speaking about economics and ethics even during the fourth century B.C. Aristotle and other philosophers of the same era have reflected on the linkage. During the modern era, the father of modern economics, Adam Smith, titled his first book (written in 1759) as *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The scholarly connection goes on. But perhaps the linkage has remained primarily at the scholarly level, leaving the masses to guide their economic decisions with their own intuitions.

But it was the discourse and practice of development which combined in a singular manner the scholarly and the practical interests. Both the intelligentsia and the commoner got convinced of the rationale of development and involved themselves in applying the principles of development in their practical living. Development became one of the taken-for-granted assumptions of the common sense of the modern era. This modern concept served as 'applied ethics' in the realm of human conduct. By

providing a vision for the ‘development’ of the self, it required the individual to discipline his/her activities so that the vision could be achieved. The care of the self along the path of modern education and industry took place under the dictates of development. Development made a moral appeal to involve and commit oneself for the betterment of others too. As observed by Anton van Harskamp, “development is a moral appeal – obviously urging us to help people living in miserable economic and political conditions – as well as a kind of ideology.”<sup>15</sup>

Development, having become a principle of applied ethics, came closer to the realm of religion. Religions promoted development in their practical guidelines and legitimised it in their theologies. As far as Christianity is concerned, developmental activities became its soul force. In the Indian context, during the post-independence era when the countries involved in building up the nation, Christianity was a trusted partner in the project. Developmental activities were undertaken in the name of social services. Theological anthropological visions, which dwelt upon the progress of the self and society flourished. The whole missionary enterprise, especially of the Protestant missionary movements of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries, justified their work on the principle of ‘civilising mission’, a concept quasi-religious in nature. The missionaries of the colonial era thought that God had entrusted them with this task of ‘civilising’ the people of the colonised countries. A section of the colonial officials too legitimised their colonial presence on the basis of this civilising mission. This mission combined the vision of human development (through education and industry) with the religious calling. We can identify other historical projects of a similar nature. Such endeavours go to underline the relationship religion and development as ‘applied ethics’ had in history.

### **3.5. Development as Secular ‘Conversion’**

A call to conversion demands a transformation ‘here and now’. The present moment gets radically detached from the past at the experience of conversion. Religions, especially the missionary



ones, have always stressed this element of conversion. So too development... It challenges the human person to take a decision here and now in favour of a 'bright' future. As perceptively observed by Ufford, "in development, the future is declared to begin *now*. It is opposed to the past and must in fact be 'rescued' from it... The idea of a future severed from the past allows us to see the constitution of development more clearly as a work of hope."<sup>16</sup> It is in these ways development functions as a secular conversion.

It converts the people, almost in a religious mode. Oscar Salemink speaks of the kind of conversion taking place in capitalist development as one of 'religious conversion'. Speaking from his Vietnam situation, he observes that, "this massive *religious conversion* to a creed which sets them apart from the ethnic 'viet' lowlanders sacralises a new lifestyle imposed by the exigencies of capitalist development – austerity, moderation, frugality, thrift, calculus, and individual responsibility – under the auspices of transnational modernity."<sup>17</sup> Development, according to him, is "part and parcel of the multi-dimensional conversion ... along different tracks and ultimately involving a quasi-religious moral conversion to a capitalist ethos as well."<sup>18</sup>

Thus, we have seen some of the aspects in which development functions as religion. The religious elements in these aspects play more of a conformist role, supporting rather uncritically the projects undertaken by the development machine – an instrument smeared with the capitalist grease.

#### **4. The 'Achilles Heel'**

##### **4.1. The Self-Negation of Enlightenment Development**

The Enlightenment development discourse has changed its course. It has taken new attributes of market economy due, as Horkheimer and Adorno would claim, to its own inner self-negating features. The mathematical thinking inherent in development discourse makes it suffer from its self-negation. Mathematical thinking, devoid of all passions, works to reduce the world to mere mathematical formalism, "whose medium is number, the most abstract form of the immediate," and it "holds

thinking firmly to mere immediacy” (246). It means Enlightenment development has been ‘imprisoned’ within the logic and dynamics of self-preservation.

By doing so, it enters into a dialectics of ‘self-negation’ in the sense that even when it builds itself up to preserve it, it empties itself of its own supports. It for example, as noted by Horkheimer and Adorno, “empties itself of all religious and metaphysical sources of value, leaving only power and self-interest as its goals.”<sup>19</sup> Under its grip, human existence sheds its value on its own rights, and acquires value only in terms of what it produces. This self-preserving and self-negating dialectics has led, as a natural result, to the emergence of the market economy. The process started with the beginning of modernity. Descartes’ *cogito* was an important moment of its genesis. Apffel’s observation is pointed:

Decartes’s *cogito* articulates a new style of thought, one disengaged not only from particular social contexts – from the world – but disengaged also from passions. The world is now disenchanted matter, no longer the source of humans’ moral guidance... The emergence of a form of rationality where instrumental control of passions was a constitutive feature was a necessary requirement in the commoditization of labour. The latter development, alongside the commoditization of the other two factors of production, namely land and capital (Polanyi, 1944), was essential to the full-fledged development of a market economy. With the establishment of a market economy, a Cartesian *cogito* harnessed to the pursuit of self-interest deployed itself throughout the public sphere.<sup>20</sup>

## **4.2. Globalisation and Development**

Led by the Bretton Woods Institutions – WB and IMF – and the WTO, the countries of the world have opened up their markets through structural adjustment programmes during the last quarter of the twentieth century under the project of globalisation. The so-called developed countries were presented as the models of development, and other countries were expected to follow them. As pointed out by Rudiger, “all nations were to follow in the footsteps of the advanced or developed nations, especially the

USA.”<sup>21</sup> India followed suit during the early nineties, and adopted the structural adjustment programmes. Liberalisation and privatisation have been the sublime policies of these programmes. Through these policies and programmes, markets of different countries have been opened up to MNCs. Correspondingly every economic institution has promoted a culture that places a high premium on consumerism.

Globalisation, the embodiment of market economy, has made development acutely market oriented. It has obtained the shrill voice of extreme commoditization of labour and marketisation of goods. It has left behind the comprehensive vision of human development, in favour of expanding the capitalist market. In accordance with these changes, development has also become a ‘religion of consumerism’ by preaching the ‘gospel of the market’.

### **4.3. Gospel of the Market – Religion of Consumerism**

The market has generated a religion of consumerism today. An exuberant society that delights in consumerist goods celebrates the features of consumerism. It generates an effervescence from out of the consumerist sentiments. And the effervescence and euphoria created by consumerist culture makes it a religion. As observed by Oscar Salemink, the high noon of capitalism that we experience today “thrives on the promise of absolute wealth and the hedonistic fulfilment of desire – the promise of finding paradise in consumption.”<sup>22</sup> Oscar’s observation is poignant and pertinent. He continues to say that, “like transcendental religions such as Buddhism or Christianity and like secular religions such as Communism, capitalism requires a project of *quasi-religious, personal conversion* of reverse Weberian type.”<sup>23</sup> Oscar is of the firm opinion that the present capitalist regime, through the ‘gospel of the market’ converts everyone into an ardent consumer. “Development preaches the gospel of the market and holds out the promise of wealth,” and “because we cannot avoid capitalist development, we are all ‘converts’- as consumers and hence producers.”<sup>24</sup>

The institutions and organisations that speak of development today have come to promote market interests. Political institutions

like the erstwhile Welfare States have vouchsafed to safeguard the interests of the markets. They are no more interested in the welfare of the people. Socio-cultural organisations have come to celebrate it. Bureacracy is geared to clear the impediments. Educational institutions churn out professionals who will fly high the consumerist values. This kind of the shift is well portrayed by Ufford when he says:

The very notion of development as a project of political engagement and responsibility is increasingly seen as anachronistic. Confidence came to be placed in the *market* as a harbinger of development and in the role of free enterprise and free trade in the quest for development. ... This shift to the market is much more encompassing than it seems. It aims at transforming society as a whole into a 'market society'. The metaphor of the market deeply penetrates the conventions of steering, understanding and justifying modes of operation within the non-market sector also, public and private.<sup>25</sup>

This shift in the focus of development is mediated through the religiosity of consumerism. Everyone is converted to this religion.

## **5. Broad-basing Development**

Development as an Enlightenment project and development as expansion of market forces have serious limitations. The former, as we have seen, is the source of the latter. Both of them are on a continuum as regards the logic of self-preservation, which is at the root of Enlightenment rationality. Concurrent upon these stages of development, there are also corresponding functions of religion. While religion played a status-quoist conformist role during the first phase of development, it tends to play a promotion role favouring market forces during the contemporary phase.

These stages of development and functions of religions, which are dominantly visible, are being critiqued from more broad-based holistic understandings. In the Indian context, the voice of Amartya Sen intones a more holistic understanding. Amartya Sen speaks of development not merely as economic growth in terms of production output and consumption, but as substantive freedom, which he

defines as 'capability'. By capability he means the multiple capabilities of human beings to have long life, healthy life, ability to interact in the society, ability to be free of social inequalities and domination, ability for participation in political process, etc. Vocalising in favour of a people-centred development that focuses on human agency and social opportunities, Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze state that, "... we cannot interpret economic development merely as expansion in the production of inanimate objects of convenience – the goods and services that are (as Aristotle put it) 'merely useful and for the sake of something else'. We have to see what these goods and services do to the actual opportunities and freedoms of people, categorized according to class, gender, location, social status, and other relevant distinctions."<sup>26</sup>

## **6. Critical Intervention**

This manner of broad-based and critical understanding of development is a matter of necessity today. It is certain that only a broad based participatory development will increase the well-being of individuals and societies, and free them from convulsions. It is also certain that only a critical understanding of development will free the whole project of development from hegemonic agenda of domination. In the words of Ufford, "Development as critical understanding is vital to reconstituting development as a global responsibility, especially as it makes us aware of hegemonic intentions and relationships parading in the name of global solidarity, but itself it is not enough."<sup>27</sup>

This new approach of development needs be supported with new forms of religious interventions too. Liberation theology that emerged within Catholic Christianity is one such example of critical intervention of religion in societal transformation. Basing itself on a critical analysis of the structural dimensions of injustice, this theology as a religious intervention rallied the people against oppressors and dominators. This manner of critical religious intervention is a matter of necessity today. Liberation theology must be reinvented. The major religions of the world must give birth to such liberation theologies in order to take on the hegemonic agenda of domination and exploitation couched in the present-day market-led development.

## Notes

1. Cf. Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance Against the Tyranny of the Market*, New York: The New Press, 1998.
2. Cf. Martin Khor, "Impasse at the WTO: A Development Perspective", *EPW*, Vol. XLI, No. 45, November, 11-17, 2006, pp. 4659-4666.
3. "Marijuana is U.S.' top cash crop", *The Hindu*, Chennai edition, December 21, 2006, p. 20.
4. Cf. Trevor Parfitt, *The End of Development? Modernity, Post-modernity and Development*, London: Pluto Press, 2002.
5. Rudger Korff & Heiko Schrader, "Does the End of Development Revitalise History?", in Ananta Kumar Giri et al., *The Development of Religion – The Religion of Development*, Eburon Delft, 2004, p. 11.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Anton Van Harskamp, "Introduction" in Giri, Ananta Kumar, et al. 2004. *The Development of Religion, The Religion of Development*. Eburon Delft, p. 1.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. Govert J. Buijs, "Religion and Development", in Ananta Kumar Giri et al., *The Development of Religion, The Religion of Development*, Eburon Delft, 2004, p. 103.
13. *Ibid.*
14. There is an increasing academic interest shown on the interface on or relationship between economics and ethics today. Scholars are researching on aspects of ethics that contribute to the advancement of economic growth. Cf.
15. Anton Van Harskamp, "Introduction," p. 1.
16. Philip Quarles van Ufford, et al. "Interventions in Development", in *A Moral Critique of Development – In Search of Global Responsibilities*, Routledge, 2003, p. 13.
17. Oscar Salemink, "Development Cooperation as Quasi-Religious Conversion", Ananta Kumar Giri et al., *The Development of Religion, The Religion of Development*, Eburon Delft, 2004, p. 125.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
19. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, "Dialectic of Enlightenment," in Lawrence E. Cahoon (ed), *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, Blackwell Publishers, p. 243
20. Frederique Apffel-Marglin, "Rationality, the Body, and the World: From Production to Regeneration", in Frederique Apffel-Marglin and Stephen A. Marglin (eds), *Decolonising Knowledge*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 146.
21. Rudger Korff & Heiko Schrader, "Does the End of Development Revitalise History?", p. 10.
22. Oscar Salemink, p. 126
23. *Ibid.*
24. *Ibid.* p. 129.
25. Philip Quarles van Ufford, et al. "Interventions in Development", p. 5.
26. Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India Development and Participation*, OUP, 2002, p. 3.
27. Philip Quarles van Ufford, p. 17.

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# **Faith, Reason and the University Reflections on a Recent Address of the Pope**

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**Abstract:** In this article the author gives a creative and critical appreciation of the Papal Address at the University of Regensburg on “Faith, Reason and the University”. After studying the various reactions to the talks, especially from the Muslims, the author respectfully shares some of his reflections on the Address of the Pope, and deals with the issue of secularization. This analysis and the reflections are offered with frankness, honesty and respect, as part of the “dialogue of cultures” and religions, to which Benedict XVI invited us, in the last paragraph of his address at the University of Regensburg and in his subsequent apology, and for which he has since been repeatedly calling. May it be read in this spirit

**Keywords:** *Fides et Ratio*, *Nostra Aetate*, secularization, Regensburg Speech, faith, reason, university, Islam.

## **1. The Reactions**

I refer here to the Address which Pope Benedict XVI delivered at the University of Regensburg on 12 September, 2006. He had been professor and vice-rector here from 1969 to 1971. I use the Vatican translation of the address (entitled “Faith, Reason and the University”), which was available on the internet ([www.zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)). We know that addresses of this type are meant for a worldwide audience, especially since the Vatican immediately put it on its website in German and Italian and little later in English.<sup>1</sup> His comments on the prophet Mohammed and on Islam, in the form of a quotation from a 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine emperor, immediately ignited furious protests among Muslims worldwide. Several Muslims termed

his remarks blasphemous, some wanted him removed from office, and some Muslim clerics even called for his death, which is the penalty for such blasphemy in some Muslim countries.<sup>2</sup> Some saw a sinister “axis” between the U.S. President George Bush and the pope, with a view to some sort of crusade against Muslims. But in retaliation, no disparaging comment was made by Muslims about Jesus. In fact, to the best of my knowledge no such comments are found in all Muslim history, whereas very insulting comments have been made by Christians about Mohammed in the course of Church history.<sup>3</sup> The situation did not improve much, after the Vatican spokesperson and then the Secretary of State (Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone), issued a statement saying that the pope was “deeply sorry for the reactions in some countries to a few passages” of his address. Note that this statement does not express regret for the inflammatory quotation. Matters seemed to have calmed down only after the pope personally declared that the words he uttered in the form of a quotation “do not in any way express my personal thought”.

In India, Church personnel, who either commented in the newspapers or appeared on TV, tried their best to defend the pope, by stating that the remarks were taken out of context and that the quotation was of the emperor, not of the pope. They affirmed that the pope and the Church have great respect for Islam. Hence I attempt in this article to analyse the pope’s speech for what it really says. My effort is to try to understand the pope’s controversial comments *in their context*.

## 2. The Address

The theme of the address is that faith and reason belong together and hence should not be separated. He began by recalling his years in the university, where theologians inquired into the reasonableness of faith and sought to correlate faith with reason as a whole. The rest of his speech is devoted to indicating the harmful effects of separating reason from faith. He selects two examples of this: Islam (as a religion) and today’s Europe (as a continent). It would have been better if he had chosen the Christian religion, with which he and his audience was more familiar, rather than Islam, in order to illustrate his point. I shall return to this below.

## 2.1 Islam

In connection with Islam, he refers to a dialogue (edited by professor Khoury) which took place between “the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both”. Although the emperor made one point which “itself is rather marginal to the dialogue itself”, nevertheless the pope selects it “as the starting point for my reflections on this issue”. This shows the importance he attaches to the point made by the emperor and how much it is part of his own thinking. Before quoting the emperor, the pope makes his own exegesis of the Koran concerning holy war. He holds that in the early period, “when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat” he could afford to say: ‘There is no compulsion in religion’ (Sura 2:256). But at a later stage he developed instructions concerning holy war. He then returns to the emperor, “with the central question on the relationship between religion and violence in general, in these words: *‘Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached’*” (emphasis added). One wonders why, out of hundreds of possible quotations, especially about violence in the Christian tradition, the pope has chosen this particular one? Does it not show his purpose to reinforce the point made in the quotation of the emperor? This old quotation responds to the deep disquiet of his audience in Europe, over what they have come to dub as ‘Islamic’ terrorism. The pope does not express disagreement with this comment. In fact the context indicates that the emperor’s comment is also his own opinion. For immediately after this quotation he relates the emperor’s supporting explanation as to why spreading the faith through violence is something unreasonable, because violence is incompatible with the nature of God and of the soul; and not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature. In contrast, for Muslim teaching, God is so absolutely transcendent that he is not bound by any of our categories, even of rationality. (This would presumably explain Islam’s endorsement of violence, according to him, to spread religion). As an example of this point of view the pope picks up a reference which professor Khoury makes to Ibn Hazn who apparently

tried to stress the transcendence of God by saying that God is not bound even by his own word and could even ask us to practise idolatry. The pope adds that this position of Ibn Hazn “might even lead to the image of a capricious God”. When the pope refers to a similar position of Duns Scotus (‘voluntarism’) he takes care to balance it with the ‘intellectualism’ of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. No similar attempt is made by the pope to understand or balance the view of Ibn Hazn.

All this seems to be of a piece with some of the teachings he gave in 2000 as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in the Declaration “Dominus Iesus”; it was also signed by his then Secretary Tarcisio Bertone. Some passages there depreciate or discount other religions, which may not be very conducive to that inter-religious dialogue for which the pope has been calling after the recent furore over his remarks. The other religions are described as merely “the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration” (No. 7; see also: nos. 8, 21, 22).

## **2.2 Some Observations and Reflections**

The view expressed in the pope’s quotation, underscored above, is patently incorrect, lacking in sensitivity and respect. We know how Christian exegetes of the inspired word of God in the Old Testament struggle to explain how God could call his people to wars which were sometimes not only defensive but also cruelly offensive: as for example the conquest and occupation of the land of Canaan (“you must utterly destroy them ... show them no mercy,” Dt 7.2); likewise the slaying of kings Sihon and Og was followed by the extermination of men, women and children (Dt 2.34; 3.6). The concept of “jihad” is much more complex than is made out in the quotation which the pope chose; the primary meaning of jihad is to battle one’s own evil inclinations and sins; the concept of defensive war arose at a later stage (See: Bowker and Eliade). Catholic spokespersons should not have fought shy of expressing this immediately, especially since it does not involve a point of Catholic faith. We know that in a much more important matter concerning Catholic morals, namely the encyclical “*Humanae Vitae*” of Paul VI, several bishops’ conferences in Europe almost immediately

qualified and modified the teaching in that encyclical, through pastoral letters. The bishops' conferences of Asia, if at all they commented, should have been more forthright in expressing themselves in the present case. This is confirmed by the fact that the pope himself later tried to distance himself from what he had quoted. It is the duty of the local churches to give honest and frank feedback to the centre. If this has not been happening, it is in large measure due to the gradual centralization which has been taking place in the Church and which peaked during the last 25 years, to a degree never before seen in the history of the Church. Not many have realized this.

In Islam an insult to the prophet Mohammed is considered equivalent to blasphemy. Likewise we saw a lot of protests from Christians recently, upon the release of the film on "The Da Vinci Code". Some dubbed the film as blasphemous and one Catholic, a former Municipal Corporator of Mumbai, even announced a large monetary reward for anyone who would bring before him Dan Brown (author of the book) dead or alive. The Christian leadership in Mumbai issued no press statement distancing itself from this statement. Fortunately the Muslim reaction to the pope's comments was peaceful, barring a few stray incidents of violence. It is some extremist and terrorist fringe groups who sought to make capital of the pope's remarks to further their cause.

A quicker apology on the part of the pope, such as the one he finally made, would have helped to calm the atmosphere much earlier. Here one wonders why the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, instituted under another name in 1964 by Paul VI, was recently amalgamated by the present pope with the Pontifical Council for Culture. The head of the former Council was made a Nuncio elsewhere. This Council could have vetted all speeches or documents of the pope dealing with other religions; on occasion the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) should also be consulted. This brings up another point. The centre of gravity of the Church has shifted to the southern hemisphere (south of Europe and North America), where the majority of Christians are found and the Church is flourishing. Is this sufficiently reflected in the thinking and attitudes in the administrative centre of the Church? This is not a question of

merely increasing the membership of the Roman Curia with personnel from the 'South', but of reflecting the thinking of the local churches here. Perhaps then here in Asia we will feel better understood at the centre regarding the approach to evangelisation and other religions adopted by the FABC.

The pope apologized ("the words do not in any way express my personal thoughts") for his insulting remarks, but we know from the context of his address, that they did indeed express his views at least at that time. Nevertheless we may presume that his apology was not merely meant to stem the storm of protests, but that he has sincerely changed his view of the prophet Mohammed and of Islam. He will now need to tell us what he appreciates about the prophet Mohammed and about Islam. That is the approach which Vatican II adopted in "Nostra Aetate": After detailing common elements in Islam and Christianity, the Council pleads: "Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding" (No. 3). This is wise guidance from a General Council of the Church!

In the dialogue of religions, self-criticism is the best form of criticism. At least before making any critique of another religion, the pope could have cited many examples of savage violence practised during the course of Church history, with sanction from the highest authorities in the Church, including popes: the crusades, the inquisition, the use of torture, the execution of heretics and 'witches', the military orders; the practice of slavery until the Church gave in to the strong anti-slavery wave sweeping through Europe and the Americas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century; the denial of religious freedom by Pius IX as contained in the "Syllabus" of errors (1864). Threats and force were used on a massive scale by Christian rulers to bring the peoples of northern and eastern Europe to the Christian faith. Thus in his "Capitulatio" (A.D. 785) for Saxons, Charlemagne ordered the death penalty for refusal to receive baptism and for participation in non-Christian sacrifices. The conquest and occupation of South America by the Iberian powers in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was accompanied with the subjugation and destruction of entire cultures. The point is that the few clergymen or ecclesiastical

authorities, who spoke out against the violent measures of the Christian kings, were exceptional. A reference to these matters, rather than to Islam, would have gone down better as a preface to his point that violence is something unreasonable, incompatible with the nature of God and of the soul.

The pope seems to present the ‘intellectualism’ of Sts. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas as examples of the synthesis between the Greek spirit and the Christian spirit which should not be sundered: otherwise one would probably see the type of violence unleashed which the pope sees in Islam. Still, Augustine who was at first opposed to the use of coercive measures against the Donatists, like confiscation of property, later acquiesced. He felt that such persons who were unconcerned to inquire about Catholic truth, when pressurized by imperial decrees which threatened earthly loss, became Catholics and were glad to be so (*CSEL*, 34:461-463). Thomas Aquinas was of the opinion that heretics and all apostates “should be submitted even to bodily compulsion”. And Christians may “wage war with unbelievers, not indeed for the purpose of forcing them to believe ... but in order to prevent them from hindering the faith of Christ”. In general the rites of non-Christians (exclusive of Jews) must in no wise be tolerated by a Christian ruler (*S.T.*, II-IIae, q. 10, a. 8 & 10). No wonder non-Christian temples were destroyed on a large scale in Goa and all over the other European colonies in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In suggesting that Islam separates reason from faith, the pope has ignored a strong rational trend in Islam, which one sees already in the *Mu'tazila*, a theological school of thought, which flourished particularly from the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Embracing Greek rationalist modes of argumentation, the Mu'talizites advocated the use of reason in finding a middle way between unbelief and naïve fideism. In modern times we have Muhammad Abdul engaged in similar pursuits. *Ibn Sina* (980-1037), known as Avicenna, was a Spanish Islamic Neoplatonist philosopher, theologian and scientist. He mastered Aristotle's metaphysics, convinced that human reason could ultimately lead to the attainment of truth. He articulated the truth of Islam according to Aristotelian logic and Greek metaphysics. His work, translated into Latin, had great influence on Thomas Aquinas and others in the Middle Ages. His philosophy was banned for a

while in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but again permitted by Pope Gregory IX in 1231. *Abul Walid ibn Rushd* (1128-1198), known as Averroes, was an Arab philosopher of Spain who wrote a commentary on Aristotle. Some of his doctrines were neo-Platonist in origin. He aimed at harmonizing the Koran with philosophy and logic. It was a time of great cultural flowering in the Muslim world, with universities opened in Baghdad, Cairo, Tunis, etc. (Bowker; Eliade; Maqsood). Muslim scholars have developed a whole science of interpretation of the Koran.

## 2.3 Secularization

In the second part of his speech the pope is probably at his best, as he makes a welcome and ringing criticism of that approach to reality which “excludes the question of God, making it appear an unscientific or pre-scientific question”. As a result: “it is man himself who ends up being reduced, for the specifically human questions about our origin and destiny, the questions raised by religion and ethics, then have no place within the purview of collective reason as defined by ‘science’ and must thus be relegated to the realm of the subjective.” Consequently, “ethics and religion lose their power to create a community and become a completely personal matter”. The realm of reason must not be limited only to the empirically verifiable: “A reason which is deaf to the divine and which relegates religion into the realm of subcultures is incapable of entering into the dialogue of cultures.” The pope is aware that this criticism is applicable chiefly and primarily to the *Western world*, where “it is widely held that only positivistic reason and the forms of philosophy based on it are universally valid”. The West has failed to reflect on the questions which underlie its rationality. This would presumably include the question of why there is a “rational structure of matter” and why reason is reasonable? He concludes his argumentation: “For philosophy and, albeit in a different way, for theology, listening to the great experiences and insights of the religious traditions of humanity, and those of the Christian faith in particular, is a source of knowledge, and to ignore it would be an unacceptable restriction of our listening and responding.” No doubt, the world religions elsewhere would applaud these remarks. However, Catholic



theologians and editors of theological journals in India will mull over the irony of the pope's remarks, in the light of the atmosphere of fear which has today spread in theological circles.

One last point needs to be made, since it has special implications for the Asian churches. The pope's enthusiastic espousal of the rationality of Greek philosophy leads him to make a criticism of what "is often said nowadays that the synthesis with Hellenism achieved in the early Church was a preliminary inculturation which ought not to be binding on other cultures. The latter are said to have the right to return to the simple message of the New Testament prior to that inculturation, in order to inculturate it anew in their own particular milieux." These words supposedly are not meant to cancel out what his immediate predecessor wrote in the encyclical "Fides et Ratio: on the relationship between faith and reason" (1998, nos. 71-72); although this relationship forms the central theme of the pope's address, one searches in vain for any reference to this encyclical. John Paul II conceded that Christianity first encountered Greek philosophy, but added: "this does not mean at all that other approaches are precluded". On the contrary, "no one culture can ever become the criterion of judgment, much less the ultimate criterion of truth with regard to God's Revelation ... as if in engaging a culture the Gospel would seek to strip it of its native riches and force it to adopt forms which are alien to it." Already in 1975 pope Paul VI encouraged local churches to "translate the treasure of faith into the *legitimate variety of expressions of the profession of faith*, of prayer and worship, of Christian life and conduct...".<sup>4</sup> Returning to "Fides et Ratio": John Paul II notes "a great truth: faith's encounter with different cultures has created something new". This leads the pope to outline the challenge facing us today: "as the Gospel gradually comes into contact with cultural worlds which once lay beyond Christian influence, there are new tasks of inculturation, which mean that our generation faces problems not unlike those faced by the Church in the first centuries." Here in India we warmly welcomed the fact, that in this context "my thoughts turn immediately to the lands of the East, so rich in religious and philosophical traditions of great antiquity. Among these lands, India has a special place." He is aware of the spiritual impulse and metaphysical systems which have powered the Indian religious tradition for millennia.

Consequently: "In India particularly, it is the duty of Christians now to draw from this rich heritage the elements compatible with their faith, in order to enrich Christian thought." The Asian churches surely have no intention of jettisoning the definitions of Christian faith as spelled out, with the help of Greek philosophy, in the early General Councils of the Church, but only of "creating something new", as John Paul II desired. We therefore expect that the Roman centre will understand the difficulty of our task, respect the freedom required for it, encourage and accompany us with constructive criticism and sympathetic understanding of what we are trying to say and do, regarding our approach to local cultures and religions.

The above analysis, observations and reflections are offered with frankness, honesty and respect, as part of the "dialogue of cultures" and religions, to which Benedict XVI invited us, in the last paragraph of his address at the university of Regensburg and in his subsequent apology, and for which he has since been repeatedly calling. May it be read in this spirit!

## Notes

1. See the site [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va), accessed in October 2006.
2. An Italian nun was shot dead in Mogadishu, Somalia; this was most probably connected with the pope's remarks.
3. Grand-nephew of St Francis Xavier, Jerome Xavier's view was widely held at the time: he plainly told the Moghul Emperor Jehangir (ca. 1610) that Mohammed was in hell.
4. "Evangelii Nuntiandi", on evangelization in the modern world: n. 64; emphasis added.

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## **Effects of Sexual Abuse Data from Clinical Experience**

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**Abstract:** A survey of Catholic psychologists and counsellors in India shows that many psychotherapy clients report experience of sexual abuse. This article describes the effects of sexual abuse as reported by and seen in these psychotherapy clients. Data show that sexual abuse profoundly affects the survivors physically, psychologically and spiritually. Knowledge of these effects is useful for sexual abuse survivors in general and for their formators and spiritual directors.

**Keywords:** Self-concept, sexual abuse, physical consequences, psychological consequences, spiritual consequences.

An earlier article in this Journal (Parappully, 2003) presented data from a research study on sexual abuse. The focus of that article was the prevalence rate of sexual abuse among psychotherapy clients. This current article describes the effects of sexual abuse reported and manifested by the same clients. An earlier article in this Journal (Parappully, 2003) presented data from a research study on sexual abuse. The focus of that article was the prevalence rate of sexual abuse among psychotherapy clients. This current article describes the effects of sexual abuse reported and manifested by the same clients.

One hundred and fifty five Catholic psychologists and counsellors were mailed a three-page questionnaire (Parappully, 2003). In one section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to briefly describe the effects of abuse they noticed in their sexually abused clients in four areas: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Of the 60 (38.7%) questionnaires that were returned, 13 could not be in-

cluded in the study for a variety of reasons. Of the remaining 47 questionnaires included in the study, 25 were from female respondents and 22 from male respondents. The total number of clients about whom data were provided by these 47 clinicians was 17,522. Of these clients 12,304 (70.22%) were women and 5218 (29.78%) men. One hundred and fifty five Catholic psychologists and counsellors were mailed a three-page questionnaire (Parappully, 2003). In one section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to briefly describe the effects of abuse they noticed in their sexually abused clients in four areas: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. Of the 60 (38.7%) questionnaires that were returned, 13 could not be included in the study for a variety of reasons. Of the remaining 47 questionnaires included in the study, 25 were from female respondents and 22 from male respondents. The total number of clients about whom data were provided by these 47 clinicians was 17,522. Of these clients 12,304 (70.22%) were women and 5218 (29.78%) men.

Content analysis of the descriptions of effects of sexual abuse in the 47 questionnaires was done from a phenomenological perspective (Giorgi, 1970, 1985) following techniques suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Lists of effects in the four areas were created by writing out every effect mentioned. There were a total of 617 references in the four areas (physical = 112, mental = 226, emotional = 145 and spiritual 134) across respondents. References to similar effects in each area were then clustered together and labelled. These clusters were further integrated under more inclusive labels. As several similar effects were listed under mental as well as emotional, these were amalgamated during analysis into one new category – Psychological (including mental and emotional). Hence the effects reported are described below under three categories — physical, psychological and spiritual. All the effects enumerated by the respondents are listed below. It is important to note that not all the survivors of abuse are affected in the same way or have the same consequences. The numbers in brackets indicate the total number of times each of the effects were mentioned by the respondents. Content analysis of the descriptions of effects of sexual abuse in the 47 questionnaires was done from a phenomenological perspective

(Giorgi, 1970, 1985) following techniques suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). Lists of effects in the four areas were created by writing out every effect mentioned. There were a total of 617 references in the four areas (physical = 112, mental = 226, emotional = 145 and spiritual 134) across respondents. References to similar effects in each area were then clustered together and labelled. These clusters were further integrated under more inclusive labels. As several similar effects were listed under mental as well as emotional, these were amalgamated during analysis into one new category – Psychological (including mental and emotional). Hence the effects reported are described below under three categories — physical, psychological and spiritual. All the effects enumerated by the respondents are listed below. It is important to note that not all the survivors of abuse are affected in the same way or have the same consequences. The numbers in brackets indicate the total number of times each of the effects were mentioned by the respondents.

### **Physical Consequences (112)**

#### Appearance (27)

Survivors often present a sad, depressed or forlorn look (11). Their energy level is often low (7). They appear rigid and their ways of posturing and way of walking is affected (5). Some of them do not care for grooming and are untidy in their appearance especially in dress (2). Loss or gain of weight happens (1). Their physical growth is affected (1).

#### Sexual Behaviour (30)

Survivors experience hyperarousal and are often preoccupied with sex (5). They show hypersensitivity to touch (5). Need to masturbate becomes quite compelling (8). They go on to abuse others (3). They engage in sexual activities promiscuously (3). They encourage others into sexual activity (2). They get infected by sexually transmitted diseases (2). Women experience menstrual disorders and other gynaecological problems (2).

#### Psychosomatic Reactions (21)

Survivors experience psychosomatic reactions such as headaches, heaviness in the head, back pain, colds, allergies, and rashes (15).

Sleep is disturbed (3). Tremor of hands and fingers (1), excessive sweating of palms (1) and hyperventilation (1) are some other effects.

### General Behaviour (14)

Survivors are rigid and controlled in their behaviour (1). They are physically withdrawn (2). They are not able to face people (1). They find it difficult to speak loud if they had been told to keep quiet during the abuse (1). They manifest a hysterical and histrionic style (1). They engage in aggressive or passive-aggressive behaviour (2). They engage in compulsive washing (1). They run away from home (1). In facing situations or persons presenting themselves or imagined as potentially abusive or at the prospect of abuse coming to light, they experience panic attacks (1). Men develop feminine mannerisms (1). When abuse results in pregnancy women have recourse to abortion (2).

### Body Concept and Care (11)

Survivors neglect care of their body (3). They feel their body is unclean or dirty (2). They have a negative attitude toward their body and body processes (2). They have hatred toward their body (1). They have a preoccupation with being obsessively clean (1). They have uneasy experiences in the body (1). They are unable to experience pleasure (1).

### Addictive Behaviour (9)

In trying to numb their feelings, they have recourse to alcohol or drugs (5). They suffer from anorexia, bulimia and other eating disorders (3). They engage in hedonistic or pleasure-seeking behaviours (1).

## **Psychological Consequences (371)**

### Relationships (74)

Sexual abuse affects relationships negatively: in general (7), and particularly with those of the opposite sex (2). Survivors experience inability to relate deeply with others (10). They even avoid friendships with those of the same sex (1). Their ability to trust gets seriously impaired: the adult world in general (15), themselves (1), and

the opposite sex (1), particularly men (5). They experience aversion and hatred toward the abuser (1) and persons of the same sex as the abuser (9). They become overly dependent on others (3), unable to be assertive (2), oversensitive to social disapproval (1), as well as judgmental of others (1). They become timid in social situations (2). They have difficulty in confiding in others (1). They lie (1); manipulate (1); blame (1); and find fault with others (1). They try to protect the perpetrator and save his/her family from dishonour (1). They are unable to create new meaningful relations (4). They experience a craving for love and affection (3).

### Self Concept (72)

Survivors of sexual abuse experience poor self-esteem (24). They are plagued by feelings of inferiority (7), inadequacy (2) and insecurity (2) and rejection (1). They consider themselves "damaged goods" (3). They condemn themselves (2). They feel ashamed (7), dirty (3), used (3); no good (2); unlovable (2); something is wrong with them (2); cheated and taken as a plaything (1). They feel self-conscious (2). They lack trust in themselves (2). They feel lack of freedom to be themselves (2) and the need to "put on a mask." (1). They feel a great need for recognition and attention (4).

### Cognitive Functions (37)

Survivors suffer from poor concentration (12). They express extreme paranoia (6). They lose touch with reality (4). They appear restless and preoccupied (3). They appear blank and disturbed (3). They become very indecisive (2). They lose motivation (2). They are unable to think clearly (1). They develop problems with memory (1). They are extremely defensive to prevent the "bad me" coming into consciousness (1). They are given to excessive fantasy (1). They suffer nervous breakdown (1).

### Fear (36)

Survivors live a life of fear (11); fear of men (7); of the perpetrator (3); of the opposite sex (3); of being abused again (2); of one's own sexuality (1); of one's own body (1); of being taken advantage of (1); of being alone (1), of darkness (1); of noise (1); of strangers (1); and of exposure of the abuse (1). Fear finds expression in nightmares (2).

### Anger (35)

Survivors become angry persons (24). They are angry at the perpetrator (3) and angry at themselves (1). They become irritable for little things (3). They want to avenge the abuse (3). They express their anger in covert ways (1).

### Guilt Feelings (32)

Nature of the guilt was not specified.

### Depression (32)

Survivors feel depressed (14). They withdraw from life and tend to isolate themselves (10). They are pessimistic about the future (1). They experience feelings of hurt (2) hopelessness (1) and abandonment (1); and They brood over their abuse experience (1). They carry the burden of keeping the abuse secret (1). They cry easily (1).

### Disturbed Sexuality (21)

Sexual abuse survivors experience intense and sometimes uncontrollable craving for sexual intimacy (6). They are afraid of (2) and lack desire to enter marriage (2), and if they marry, find it difficult to settle down in marriage (1). They experience conflict (2) and guilt (2) over sexual desires and impulses. They develop homosexual orientation (2). They experience sexual identity confusion (1). They develop negative attitude toward sexuality and pleasure (1). They are vulnerable to further abuse (1). They are unwilling to talk about sexuality (1).

### Anxiety (14)

Survivors experience anxiety: generalized (10); being infected with HIV/AIDS/STD (2); about pregnancy (1); and illness (1).

### Suicidal (12)

### Feelings in General (3)

Survivors have difficulties with feelings (1). They experience extreme emotions (1). They repress feelings (1).

### Addictions (2)

Survivors get addicted to food (1), to drugs and alcohol (1).



## Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviours (1)

### **Spiritual Consequences (134)**

#### **Effect on Relationship with God (43)**

Sexual victimization negatively affects survivors' relationship with God in different ways. It leads to questioning and even loss of faith in God (5). A question that many survivors ask is "How could God allow this to happen to me?" Another is "Where was God?" Their faith in a loving, caring and provident God is profoundly shaken by their experience of victimization (6). Faith and trust is often replaced by anger toward God who permitted the victimization (3). They feel alienated and even rejected by God (2). Women survivors find it difficult to relate to masculine God (1).

Their strong sense of guilt leads them to doubt God's forgiveness (6). "Will God forgive me?" is a question heard from many survivors. They consider that they have sinned grievously and God will punish them for this (16). Moreover, the image of a punishing God gets fortified in their minds, making closeness to and intimacy with God difficult. Their inability to forgive themselves (4) makes acceptance of God's forgiveness all the more difficult.

#### **Feelings of Guilt and Unworthiness (40)**

Survivors are plagued by feelings of guilt (19) and unworthiness (16). Even though they have been victimized, they feel they have somehow contributed to it or brought it upon themselves. The fact that they experienced some pleasure (that naturally accompanies sexual experience) confounds the feeling of guilt. The high value that society and church accord virginity and chastity and which they have internalized makes them feel that they have soiled or lost something very precious and that they cannot be whole again. They experience themselves as sinners (5) and feel a strong need to make reparation. For some survivors becoming a priest or religious is one way of reparation.

#### **Effect on Prayer and Sacramental Life (28)**

Sexual victimization affects prayer and sacramental life. Survivors lose taste for and interest in prayer. Some are unable to pray. Day dreaming in prayer is quite frequent. Guilt and feelings of un-

worthiness keep them away from sacraments. Some are ashamed to go to confession and tend to neglect the Eucharist. Piety often becomes just an external show or observance.

Some take refuge and seek solace in prayer and devotional practices. They love to spend time in the chapel and can be seen as very prayerful. However, much of their prayer is self-accusatory and pleading for forgiveness. Many survivors frequent Retreat Houses seeking healing, solace and as way of reparation.

### Vocational Disillusionment (7)

Victimization leads to loss of purpose and meaning in their religious vocation. Feelings of guilt, impurity and unworthiness lead to their experiencing the making and/or living of the vow of chastity as a living lie. They feel hypocritical and doubt the genuineness of their vocation. Some decide to leave religious life for this reason. For others commitment to chastity becomes superficial in the sense it is limited to avoidance of further victimization than to growing in genuine love.

### Disillusionment with Church Authority and Institution (7)

When the victimizer is an authority figure in the Church the attitude of anger, resentment and inability to forgive the victimizer gets generalized to authority figures and institutions they represent. Survivors get disillusioned with Church and religious institutions and authorities. They experience loss of trust in their religious superiors because survivors believe that they are in connivance with or protect Church personnel. They see celibacy as a hoax and believe that many in the Church lead a hypocritical life.

### Perfectionism and Scrupulosity (5)

Guilt and fear of punishment lead to scrupulosity and perfectionism. Survivors live a very controlled and fearful life so as to avoid failure and wrongdoing. On the other hand, the feeling "Everything is lost, so why bother!" leads to an attitude of "Anything is okay!" and consequent indifference and re-victimization.

### Other (4)

Survivors experience difficulty in internalizing spiritual values. They have difficulty in community living. They experience loss of

purpose and meaning. They are in permanent mourning, grieving the loss of their virginity.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Data from this study show that sexual abuse profoundly affects survivors—physically, psychologically and spiritually. It affects particularly their self-concept, emotions, attitudes, mental functioning, sexuality, relationships and their spirituality. This study confirms that effects found in various studies in the West on effects of sexual abuse (Briere, 1992; Browne & Finkelhor, 2000; Wolfe, 1999) are prevalent among abuse survivors in this country as well. These western studies have consistently found that sexual abuse has a negative impact on self-concept, affect, mental functioning, sexuality and relationships. This study has provided data on the effect on spirituality more in detail than those usually found in those other studies. Sexual abuse affects one's relationship to God, prayer and sacramental life in significantly negative ways.

Data from this study do not highlight some of the post-traumatic stress symptoms such as complex re-experience of the abuse in flashbacks, dysregulation of affect, and dissociation that other studies (Briere, 1996; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993) have shown as major effects of sexual abuse. However, the physical consequences found in this study are like those of persons traumatized by mutilation or loss of limb (P. Lourdes, personal communication, April 25, 2005). This shows that survivors have experienced their abuse as a traumatic violation of their bodies, even if classic symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are not evidenced or reported by subjects in this study.

The results of this study can be a source of knowledge and relief to survivors of sexual abuse. They can recognize that the experiences they have are not unique to them but are common consequences of sexual abuse. Sometimes survivors are bewildered by their experiences and wonder if they are crazy. Data from this study are useful for formators and spiritual directors as well. This data can help them to better understand, and consequently be more helpful to their formees and directees who have been sexually abused.

A previous article (Parappully, 2003) in this Journal based on the same study showed that there is a high prevalence rate of sexual abuse in general Indian society and among those who have opted for a vocation in the Church. It is important to recognize that these survivors need help to put their lives together. They need healing and help to cope with the adverse effects of their traumatic experience. A forthcoming article in this *Journal* will describe what can be done to help survivors of sexual abuse.

## Notes

1. Dr. Jose Parappully is a clinical psychologist and Founder-Director of Bosco Psychological Services in New Delhi and Founder-Secretary of Salesian Psychological Association. His research areas include transformation of emotional trauma, and integration of psychology, sexuality and spirituality. He is grateful to Dr. Peter Lourdes and Dr. Joe Mannath who made valuable suggestions on an earlier draft of this article. He can be reached at boscopsych@vsnl.net.

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## Book Review

**Jeff Knaebel, *Experiments in Moral Sovereignty: Notes of an American Exile*, Friends of Gandhi Museum, Pune, 2006, pp. 230 +x; price. Rs. 325.**

The year 2006 marked the 100th anniversary of the commencement of Gandhi's Satyagraha addressing truth and non-violence. Since then his teaching example has spread round the world. Today, many Americans are attempting to live by his principles. One them is Jeff Knaebel, a member of Friends of Gandhi Museum living in Pune. The book reviewed here is his first, in which he presents his case for expatriation from his country of birth.

The book expresses three main themes:

(1) A call to people of the world to generate an evolutionary quantum leap into a higher consciousness of nonviolence in order that we may survive as a species. This call is for a revolution from fear to love, from greed to generosity, from cruelty to compassion, from deceit to truth, from dependence to self reliance, from war to peace, from corporate enslavement to individual liberty.

(2) An appeal to India to help raise humanity to a more sacred destiny – not as a nation state, but as a people - to guidehu mankind to that spiritual unity which alone can bring peace on earth.

(3) The story of one man's quest for individual moral sovereignty in a world of institutionalized structural violence imposed by the corporate warfare state. This struggle - within himself as well as with powers that be – led him to the renunciation of and severance from his native land.

The book offers a set of simple yet horrifying observations. During most of the past century, USA has been engaged in foreign warfare. Within the past century, nation states have murdered at least 200 million people in wars and internal conflict. The modern corporate warfare state has wrought such vast wanton ecological and cultural destruction as to threaten survival of human species. We live under threat of an insane political theory of nuclear deterrence through mutually assured destruction.

The book attempts to describe what the State really is and how it actually operates, stripped of propaganda and delusion. It points out the

fatal ethical design errors of system. It shows how power structures attract the most corruptible of men: those who will to ruthless murder in order to accomplish their evil ends. At the peak of its growth cycle, the State becomes a gang of criminals ruling by a mix of force, deceit and manufactured consent. Gandhi is quoted, "The individual has a soul, but as the State is a soulless machine, it can never be weaned from the violence to which it owes its very existence."

Using Gandhi's demonstration of means is to end as seed is to tree, it is shown how an institution based upon the fundamental moral flaw of a monopoly on violence can never lead to peace. The State is likened to a machine which has run amok - out of control. The relevant operational fact is that State-sponsored endless war is no more than a profiteering racket. War is health of State. War is profit to the big corporate money interests. Loss of life does not report to the corporate balance sheet.

The nature of power relations which create the operating dynamics of the State is examined. The author concludes: "For power, there is no tomorrow. There are no grandchildren. Even of earth, there is none. There is only power." The relationship of individual to State is examined. How did it come to be? Is it a valid relationship in terms of reason, law, common sense, and conscience? The author asks basic questions of the State and his relationship to it. Does it murder? Am I financing this murder? Am I therefore responsible? Do I finance murder voluntarily? Am I therefore a slave?

Perceiving the American state to be a criminal operation of nigh incomprehensible scale - having perpetrated innumerable heinous crimes against humanity - and having executed no contract by which it has any jurisdiction over his life, Jeff Knaebel declares his right to renounce and depart from it without obligation. He presents for our consideration a personal Declaration of Severance and Independence from the United States. It says in part: I hold these to be self evident truths, that all people are endowed at birth with equal, inalienable and independent rights, among which are sole possession of their own life, liberty and the seeking of happiness in their own way. That men may secure these rights by forming such associations as they choose, which must operate by non-coerced full consensus, and from which any member is free to secede.

Gandhi's example of Satyagraha (strong adherence to truth) with Ahimsa (non-violence) points the method. "We must be the change we wish to see." A simple first step is to tell the truth in every transaction,

to every person, at all times, in every situation. When we begin to call things by their true name – for example, “collateral damage” is murder pure and simple – we will begin to wake up to the reality of the human condition created by *The Powers That Be*.

He concludes that there is no political institution/ism, no authoritarian person, no economic policy, and no government that can save us from the self-inflicted disaster bearing down upon us. Only the freedom to be in love with life - and to express that love in person to person natural relationship - can save us. This is a freedom to live in the original unconditioned character that is found deep within each of us - of total, s weeping, deep, overflowing, unconditional love of life, of this earth, of its creatures, of ourselves, of each other. He feels that to express this love, we must get the State out of our way. The book with its clarity of thought, passionate commitment and provocative insights is recommended for all the activists and alternative visionaries.

The book is available at a discounted price of rupees 150/- from <[www.otherindiabookstore.com](http://www.otherindiabookstore.com)>.

*Delia Thomas*

**Peter Broks, *Understanding Popular Science*, Open University Press: Berlhire, 2006, pp. 188 + xii,**

This book on popular science is a series in Cultural and Media Studies, that aims to “facilitate a diverse range of critical investigations into pressing questions considered to be central to current thinking and research.” (p. x). The authors reminds us in the introduction that the culture we live is “saturated with science.” He goes to the extent of saying that science might be taken as the “defining feature of modern world.” (p. 1).

In fact popular science is where most of us make sense of the facts of science. *Understanding Popular Science* provides a framework to help us appreciate the development of popular science and current debates about it. Peter Broks shows how popular science has been invented, redefined and fought over. From early nineteenth century’s radical science to twenty-first century of government initiatives, the author examines popular science as an arena where “the authority of science and the authority of state are legitimized and challenged.”

The book contains seven chapters, including “Uncertain Times,” “Progress and Professionalism” and “Science and Modernity.” The last

chapter is particularly insightful. In the section dealing with science and democracy, the author asserts: "It has taken centuries of cultural, social, economic and political struggle to develop the mechanisms and institutions that enable the sharing of power in a *democratic* society... We should, perhaps, expect an equally long struggle to develop the cultural, social, economic and political machinery for the sharing of knowledge in a *demosophic* society." And the author hopes that "a proper understanding of popular science will help us do that." (p. 154)

This book is not about the diffusion of knowledge, but the struggle over meaning; the separation of professional expertise from public experience, the relationship between science and democracy; the legitimization of scientific enterprise. (p. 6). Basically the book is about the role, function and capabilities of popular science in shaping and guiding the social forces determining us.

The author has truly succeeded in conveying these profound insights and this book is highly recommended for all those interested in issues of science and society. It is a must for those involved in philosophy of science and science-religion issues.

*Kuruvilla Pandikattu*



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