Syed Farid Alatas
Lim Teck Ghee
Kazuhide Kuroda

40879

Asian
Interfaith Dialog[ue:

*Perspectives on Religion,
Education and Social Cohesion*

RIMA

THE WORLD BANK

Asian Interfaith Dialogue:
Perspectives on Religion, Education and Social Cohesion

Edited by
Syed Farid Alatas
Lim Teck Ghee
Kazuhide Kuroda

RIMA
SINGAPORE

THE WORLD BANK

Cover Design by Wee Hong Loong, Temasek Polytechnic.

Printed in Singapore by COS Printers Pte Ltd.

CONTENTS

Foreword

In these times of visible potential and great challenges for a better world, marked by mounting calls for more "comprehensive," "holistic" and "integrated visions of development, religious communities can play a pivotal role in building bridges, contributing to change and continuity among communities, and addressing today's central development challenges. This book is an important contribution to the critical debates about what the role of religious institutions and actors can and should be and how they are part of the broad global agenda for the new millennium.

We live today in a complex and paradoxical world. No one can overlook the stark inequalities that exist. We live in a world of plenty, while more than 1.2 billion people live on less than a dollar a day. Educational institutions in many parts of the world offer remarkable courses and more people than ever before have access to learning and the wealth of ideas and information on the Internet, while 0.9 billion people are still illiterate and have little access to educational resources. Food resources abound in infinite varieties, at all seasons of the year, but we estimate that 0.8 billion people suffer from hunger or malnutrition. We face a global challenge where every region, country and community has a unique history and character, yet is bound to others far away in ways we could not have envisaged even 50 years ago.

Over the course of the last few years, international development, financial and corporate organizations have come to see with increasing clarity the importance of global partnerships. They have also come to realize that development (in all its complexity) cannot be undertaken by governments alone, but must catalyze the active and engaged efforts of individuals, business enterprises, financial institutions and civil society organizations (including labour unions, nongovernmental organizations or NGOs, religious organizations and others). Development actors are focusing on the need for more "comprehensive" or "holistic" approaches to their trade. This move towards a more integrated, multisectoral approach is the product of much bitter experience and a process of learning that the earlier, and seemingly straightforward, visions of linear progress towards "development" need rigorous and "comprehensive" rethinking. The challenge for these inclusive and broad-ranging approaches is to surmount an overly narrow, segmented and sectorial focus, thus integrating the multifaceted and varying perspectives of all relevant stakeholders.

Nowhere has the tide towards building new and broader partnerships and visions been more complex, yet visible and vital, than in the wide territory between

religious communities and the traditional development world. Among the most perceptive and vocal voices calling for broad and comprehensive approaches to development are faith institutions, which often rebel at narrow visions of human endeavours. Religion has, through history, had wide and profound influence across many spheres of daily life. Religious leaders and scholars speak week in and week out with both moral authority and local credibility. Faith institutions and leaders have been central actors in many of history's great shifts in values, behaviours and policies. Yet, many western societies have followed a model where there was a distinct separation between "church" and state. The two worlds have often been viewed as divergent: where the world of religion deals with spiritual and esoteric matters, and the world of the state (and by extension, development) encompasses the material world. Today's events and challenges present new questions about these divides and walls, and call for a new series of bridges.

In August and September 2000, in two separate but abutting meetings, world leaders and leaders of the world's major religions and spiritual traditions met at the United Nations. At the turn of the millennium, they were drawn to a far-ranging stocktaking of earlier progress and promises. A central conclusion from both meetings, deeply held and movingly conveyed, was that the global community was doing far too little to address the problems of global poverty. Projections of what lay ahead were both frightening and unacceptable. This was set against an unavoidable awareness of the abundance of resources and consumption, which highlighted the possibilities: the global community had ample resources and the know-how to change the picture of persisting poverty and misery. From the Millennium Summits emerged a global consensus, articulated around what are called the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs represent a quantified and time-bound set of ambitious goals linked to fighting poverty and enhancing social justice on topics ranging from education, health and social development to gender and the environment.

Since the Millennium Summits, development and faith leaders have focused more and more on the range of questions about the roles of religion and interfaith dialogue in the critical areas identified as those which must be addressed to end poverty: education, delivery of healthcare services, water and sanitation, the roles of women and men in society, social cohesion and other areas. They put a spotlight on questions about faith leaders as agents of change, and the lessons to be learned by and from different partners in addressing society's challenges. Coupled with the objectives of social and economic transformation that we term development, the overlap and common ground of shared interests are woven in countless ways.

The basic issues central to the global agenda – poverty alleviation, health and education, social justice, welfare and the meaning of progress – are core issues in

major religious traditions, with intellectual and moral roots that can be traced back for thousands of years. Theologians from every religion have grappled with the why's and how's of poverty and misery. For centuries, faith institutions have played a pivotal role in providing services to the poor, and in working to overcome the underlying roots of poverty. As an illustration, the Islamic injunction against interest and usury has its origins in ancient principles of social justice that call on those with resources to share them with those without; charging interest was seen as fundamentally conflicting with this basic social obligation.

Scholars and practitioners also point to new and altered partnerships propelled in part by the events of September 11, 2001. This period may well mark the start of important paradigm shifts in thinking about the links among globalization, international relations and religion. We have witnessed in the post-9111 period an extraordinary outpouring of thinking in all areas of endeavour. This has brought the links between religion and development into much sharper focus, brought the dialogue to the mainstream, and given new impetus to the global development agenda. Above all, questions about social justice – what it means, how it can be achieved, how it is tied to peace and stability, and who is responsible – are central in global debate and dialogue.

One important effort to bring these worlds together is the dialogue initiated by James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, and Dr George L. Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1991 to 2002. They saw the strength of common purpose among world faith institutions and leaders and development institutions in bringing voices of poor communities to the international agenda and fighting against the scourge of poverty. They also saw the painful disagreements that called for more thoughtful dialogue and heightened communication. What does dialogue mean? Not debate, not explanation, not just words, but a real effort to understand and find better ways to work in partnership. Since this first meeting, the World Bank and other development institutions have engaged in a "world faiths development dialogue" aimed at enhancing understanding among many partners and opening doors to better programmes and richer partnerships among faith institutions, networks and government leaders. The need for broader and clearer sight, and for creative and dynamic efforts to see and understand the whole, emerged as fundamental lessons of recent decades of development experience.

Efforts to bridge the vast differences in the vocabulary and tone that prevail in institutions of religion and development can stir strong emotional reactions. Despite this, leaders on both sides place their faith in a strong common body of ethical values that bind most civilizations and most people. Among the challenges the world faces, those that touch on education may lend themselves most readily to faith development dialogue, as they call both for effective joint advocacy and

tangible programmes to address issues that block progress. Education is clearly a central concern for faith institutions, as it is for those engaged in development agencies. It is a topic on which, at many levels, there has been long-standing consensus on priority and needs, yet results have fallen short. The new focus on education reflects a renewed determination to overcome obstacles and ensure real progress toward tangible objectives.

This book discusses the relationship between religion, the role of education in generating social capital and its impact on the development of society. It draws on papers presented at an interfaith workshop co-hosted by the World Bank and the Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA). The dialogue took place in Singapore on 27-28 October 2001, with the participation of some 50 experts from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The book describes the rich group of partners associated with this dialogue, their call to move beyond the discourse of dialogue and the imperative to start practising it. It conveys an effort to learn from both sides. It lays out the debates of scholars who see education as a major instrument for fostering knowledge and skills – with the purpose of improving knowledge sharing, teaching methodologies, and bolstering mutual development efforts.

We hope that it will inspire ongoing efforts by both the development and faith communities to continue to dialogue and learn from the one another's strengths and areas for development. The importance of community institutions (of which faith communities are a part) has never been greater. It is such institutions that can ground development in local culture.

As my colleagues and I at the World Bank have learned, we cannot approach the world's problems without appreciating and respecting their complexity and the powerful links among different issues and problems. It is vital that we work towards a stronger global dialogue, a compassionate, open and demanding quest, with more appreciation for the complexities and dilemmas that face us and more respect and humility in the face of differences and difficulties. We all face the challenge of a lifetime of learning. Learning is to stretch, to understand new cultures and disciplines, and to adapt to new realities. We all need broader visions, and the ability to see and embrace different perspectives and to act with these imperatives in our hearts and minds. We share the same world, so we share the same challenge.

Katherine Marshall
Director and Counselor to the President of the World Bank
Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics

Preface

This book is part of an effort to stimulate reflection on religion and its role in education and development in Southeast Asia. Earlier versions of the papers collected in this volume were presented at the "Asian Interfaith Dialogue: Perspectives on Religion, Education and Social Cohesion." This was a dialogue on values and development in multireligious Southeast Asia, organized by the Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA), Singapore with sponsorship from The World Bank Post-Conflict Fund. Held on 27 and 28 October 2001 in Singapore, the dialogue was a follow-up to the Asian Regional Consultation on Social Cohesion and Conflict Management held on 16 and 17 March 2000 at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Manila. The consultation was jointly organized by the Social Development Department of the ADB and The World Bank.

The World Bank is the world's largest source of development assistance. It employs its financial resources, staff and extensive knowledge base to help developing countries move onto a path of stable, sustainable and equitable growth in the fight against poverty. RIMA is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP), Singapore and is dedicated to conducting research on issues affecting Islam, Muslims and Malay society. Together, the two meetings represent an attempt to generate a better understanding of the major social forces that are shaping societies and communities in profound ways that are not easily measurable by conventional social and economic indicators or research.

The Dialogue witnessed individuals from various religious groups in Southeast Asia coming together to network and exchange views on issues of education, development and social cohesion in a multireligious Asian region. The meeting and resulting work found in this volume was made possible by the efforts of many friends and supporters in Washington, D.C. and Singapore. First and foremost, we would like to express our appreciation to Dr Sharon Siddique, Director of Sreekumar Siddique & Co. Pte. Ltd., for her contribution in the initial efforts that brought the World Bank and RIMA together to undertake the activity. We would also like to express our special and sincere thanks, in particular, to Ms Elinah Abdullah, Senior Research Officer of RIMA, for her commitment and the considerable time and energy she put into the meeting and follow-up work. Our thanks also go to Mr Muhd Nazzim Hussain, Executive Director, AMP; Ms Jamaliah Mohd Saleh, Research Officer, RIMA; and Ms Anny Roezza Abdul Aziz, Senior Corporate Communications Officer, AMP for their crucial

roles in the organization of the Asian Interfaith Dialogue from which the papers of this volume have been drawn. Finally, special mention should be made of Dr Nat Colletta, the Manager of the Bank's Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit (then Post Conflict Unit), who encouraged the organization of this meeting.

Syed Farid Alatas
Lim Teck Ghee
Kazuhide Kuroda

Abbreviations and Acronyms

A.	Anguttara Nikaya (one of the major Buddhist scriptures)
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMP	Association of Muslim Professionals
BEM	Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa (Students' Executive Body)
CBSA	Cara Belajar Siswa Aktif (Active Student Learning Process)
D.	Digha Nikaya (one of the major Buddhist scriptures)
DD/CT	Deep Dialogue/Critical Thinking
Dhs. A.	Dhammasangani Atthakatha (one of the major Buddhist scriptures)
DIAN/Interfidei	Institut Dialog Antar Iman Indonesia (Institute for Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia)
DI/TII	Darul Islam/Tentera Islam Indonesia (Islamic State/ Indonesian Islamic Military)
EMAS	Elective Programme in Malay Language for Secondary Schools
GCF	Graduates Christian Fellowship
GDI	Global Dialogue Institute
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HAB	Hindu Advisory Board
HEB	Hindu Endowments Board
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICMI	Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslim SeIndonesia (Association of Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals)
ICRP	Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISAI	Institut Studi Arus Informasi (The Institute for the Studies on Free Flow of Information)
KKG	Kelompok Kerja Guru (Primary School Teachers' Working Group)
KOMNAS Perempuan	Komisi Nasional Anti Kekerasan Terhadap Perempuan (National Commission on Violence Against Women/ National Commission on Women's Rights)
M.	Majihima Nikaya (one of the major Buddhist scriptures)

MADIA	Masyarakat Dialog Antar Agama (Society for Interreligious Dialogue)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
Mendikbud	Menteri Pendidikan dan Budaya (Minister for Education and Culture)
MMI	Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Mujahidin Council)
MUI	Majlis Ulama Indonesia (Council of Indonesian Islamic Religious Leaders)
MUIS	Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura (Islamic Religious Council of Singapore)
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
PPKN	Pendidikan Pancasila dan Kewarganegaraan (Pancasila and Civics Education)
PPPG-IPS	Pusat Pengembangan Penataran Guru-Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial (Teachers' Development and Training Centre-Social Sciences)
RIMA	Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs, Singapore
SAP	Special Assistance Plan
SARA	Ethnicity (*suku*), religion (agama), race (ras) and social stratal group (*antar golongan*)
Seruni	Seruan Perempuan Antar Iman (The Call of Indonesian Women)
SIP	Suara Ibu Peduli (Voice of Concerned Mothers)
SKB	Surat Keputusan Bersama (Joint Decree)
TNC	Transnational corporation
TOT	Training of Trainers
TWG	Technical working group
UNICEF	United Nation's Children's Fund
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCEP	Whole Child Education Project
WTO	World Trade Organization

Introduction
Syed Farid Alatas

The events of the last few years have directed even more attention to the relationships among religion, education and social cohesion in the context of development. The Asian financial crisis of 1997, the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the Bali bombing of 12 October 2002, and the recent United States-led war against Iraq all demonstrate that economic growth alone, within a context of extreme national and global inequality, results neither in development in a broader sense of the term nor social cohesion. There is, therefore, a need to consider the combined role of religion and education in fostering a more holistic form of development without concurrently fanning flames of ethnic, religious and other kinds of conflicts.

Events like September 11 and the war in Iraq may lead to or exacerbate already existing interethnic and interreligious sentiment. There is, therefore, clearly a need for dialogue between non-Western civilizations and the West. The year 2001 marked the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.' Yet, much of what we have seen and heard in the media concerns conflict, and there is very little mention of 'dialogue.' Since the September 11 attacks, major media sources in the world have been emphasizing the dimension of conflict rather than that of peace; voices of harmony and dialogue have failed to gain the attention they deserve. Sometimes, seeds of conflict are planted in the public mind by the ignorant and the misinformed. In this regard, the role of the media in terms of both fostering dialogue among religions and civilizations and creating misunderstanding and potential conflict situations, is crucial. I would like to give two examples from Singapore.

First is an article by Farrukh Dhondy which first appeared in the *City Journal* and was reprinted in Singapore with the title "Muslim Misfits in Britain."[2] The article drew severe criticism from the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore for what it regarded as objectionable and inaccurate statements on Islam. For example, Dhondy suggests that "if you prostrate yourself to an all-powerful and unfathomable being five times a day, if you are constantly told that you live in the world of Satan, if those around you are ignorant of and impervious to literature, art, historical debate and all that nurtures the values of Western civilization, your mind becomes susceptible to fanaticism. Your mind rots." In other words, being religious and ignorant of Western culture breeds fanaticism. This is a fatal combination of Eurocentrism and shallow knowledge on the nature of religious

experience. Even a less educated Malay farmer or Bangladeshi construction worker knows that there is no correlation between religiosity and fanaticism. Many Muslims in Singapore were unhappy with Dhondy's article. For example, Saharudin Kassim, then Special Assistant to the President of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, wrote a very articulate critique of the Dhondy piece and suggested that such "a malicious piece of writing" should not have been published in The Sunday Times.[3] I have a different view. It is precisely such articles that create conditions for encouraging dialogue. Singaporeans would not have benefited from Saharudin Kassim's critique of Dhondy's views if the latter's article had not been printed locally. Many Singaporeans may have held erroneous views similar to Dhondy's, and an opportunity presented itself for these views to be corrected. In a sense, the printing of adverse opinions serve a function as well. I would encourage more of such discussion in the media.

The second example is the article by Asad Latif, "Secularism Protects All Faiths."[4] This is another misleading article as it gives the impression that the virtues of secularism are helping Singapore withstand the shocks emanating from the September 11 terrorist attacks. While this is an erroneous view, it does provide us with an opportunity to correct it and, in doing so, enter into dialogue with both religious as well as secular groups. The view needs to be corrected because it is such strains of thought that deflect our attention from historical realities. If we understand secularism as being an attitude underlying various ideologies and hostile or indifferent to religion and the religious outlook and world view, logic would have it that secularism is not free of ideology any more than religion is.

Furthermore, experience shows us that the worst cases of genocide in recent history took place in the name of secular ideologies, namely, fascism, liberal democracy and socialism. I am referring to the Nazi Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and genocide under Stalin and Polpot. Of course, it would be as illogical to conclude that secularism is the cause of such genocide as it is to conclude that secularism is the reason behind religious harmony. I feel it necessary to clarify these distinctions because there is a dominant perception that religion is the cause of many problems. There is a view which is founded on the notion that religion breeds intolerance. It is more accurate to say that all belief systems are corruptible and can be perverted, and that there are specific social and historical conditions that result in these perversions.

The purpose of this dialogue, from which the papers in this volume were drawn, was to bring together voices to consider arenas of action that would be effective in conscientizing people about the need for interfaith dialogue. This need comes about from the fact that religion is one of the few institutions in

society that strengthens both horizontal and vertical associations between people, associations which are vital if the voices of social harmony are to be heard beyond the confines of seminar rooms and conference halls.

One of the main challenges to social cohesion in multireligious Southeast Asia is the question of containing and reducing ethnic and religious cleavages. Many scholars, activists and organizations have recognized the importance of social cohesion, and conflict management or prevention as an essential element in achieving greater participation, good governance and democratization. One way of minimizing the possibility of conflict is to create more interest in, compassion for and understanding of the culture and civilization of the other. This is the goal of dialogue among civilizations. Yet, dialogue among civilizations ought not to be carried out solely among the religious elite and the already 'converted.' It should be a regular feature of public discourse. This volume contains the works of Southeast Asian scholars and activists in the fields of religion and development, and represents the combined efforts of RIMA and the World Bank to bring certain issues into the domain of public discourse. In this volume, the focus is on education, broadly defined, and its interplay with various religious forces relevant to the development process.

Part One on "Religion, Education and the Development of Society" examines religious views on education, covering such issues as the necessity of a religious outlook on life for scientific development, the three-way relationship among education, development and religious values, and the development of cosmopolitanism. Above all, Part One is concerned with the role of religion in both scientific and societal progress.

Syed Hussein Alatas' opening chapter on the theme of religion and science, which also constituted one of two lectures delivered at the dialogue, addresses the need for a religious outlook on education and offers a framework to understand the role that religion plays in scientific progress. The chapters by Somparn Promta and Pracha Hutanuwatr are informed by the idea that religion and its various branches of inquiry, such as theology, have practical consequences for the study and ordering of society. Promta discusses Buddhist economics in terms of two approaches – what he calls the software and hardware approaches – while Hutanuwatr discusses a Buddhist model of education which he believes can be implemented within the present schooling system in Thailand. Hasan Madmarn, on the other hand, seems to be less optimistic about the possibility of merging so-called secular and Islamic education in Thailand and discusses the disjuncture between the two. In the final chapter of this section, Saranindranath Tagore draws on the work of the thinker and poet Rabindranath Tagore to argue in favour of the value of a cosmopolitan education and for a broadening of university

curriculums to allow for greater exposure to the variety of civilization and their cultural productions.

Part Two on "Religion, Education and Women" raises various problems relating to religious education and gender as well as to the role of women in religious organizations.

Parichart Suwanbubbha focuses on women in religious institutions. She looks at the difficulties of female ordination in Thailand. Sr. Mary John Mananzan discusses the role of religious education in women's lives and identifies oppressive as well as liberative elements that coexist in Christianity While these chapters specifically address the status of women in religious establishments, the chapter by Lies Marcoes looks at the role of women in the development process, discussing women's movements at the grassroots level in Indonesia and the extent to which they support development programmes.

Finally, Part Three on "Religion, Education and Interfaith Dialogue" discusses the obstacles to and prospects for interfaith dialogue. Patricia Martinez argues for a pedagogy of interfaith encounters and stresses on education for tolerance, drawing on the example of the Whole Child Education Project in Indonesia. Along similar lines is the chapter by A.N. Rao, which draws on the Hindu tradition to make a case for interreligious education. The question of tolerance is also taken up by Franz Magnis-Suseno and discussed in more conceptual terms by C.L. Ten, whose chapter was also delivered as the second lecture of the dialogue. The first four papers of Part Three are complemented by the last two, which focus more on obstacles to interreligious dialogue. Vineeta Sinha suggests that such obstacles have to do with an emphasis on the theme of "difference" rather than "sameness," while Syed Farid Alatas discusses the need for a more multicultural vision of history and of the development of modern civilization so that genuine dialogue can take place.

While there appears to be great diversity in the issues and topics discussed in the fourteen chapters of this volume, there is a logic that binds them. The chapters range from a consideration of specific, concrete issues relating to the problems of religion and education to more general, abstract problems concerning the philosophy of education and the concept of tolerance. For the more specific issues such as gender and Buddhist economic practices, many of the chapters in this volume have shown that it is necessary to go beyond simply describing a problem and then prescribing religion as a solution. Instead, we must investigate real-life attempts. For example, we need empirical studies on the problems of communities that operate along the lines of Buddhist economics, not just abstract accounts of Buddhist economics or normative statements on how a Buddhist economy might function.

Furthermore, it was noted by many participants at the dialogue and also implied in the chapters in this volume that it is necessary to go beyond mere considerations of religion as a normative system and to look at religious traditions in terms of their various fields of knowledge for the study of contemporary problems. Liberation theology is one example.

Finally, there are the more general problems relating to the philosophy of education and the role of religion in education, and the nature and practice of interfaith dialogue. Indeed, it is these more general issues that unite the concerns of each chapter in this volume. These issues include the need for universal values, toleration, and emphasis on sameness rather than difference, and should be the central concerns of interfaith dialogue. They are discussed in some detail in Chapter One as well as in Part Three. Yet, it is strongly felt that we needed to stop talking about dialogue and start practising it. So, the question became: how do we equip both laypersons as well as experts and activists with sufficient social capital to engage in dialogue, that is, to debate and discuss at the interreligious level? What is the role of education in generating this social capital? These are some of the questions that have emerged in this volume. A serious reading of this volume would suggest the following points of consensus that could also be considered as courses of future action in the area of interfaith dialogue:

1. School and university curriculums should be revised to include history and social scientific study of religions; of religious struggles founded on universal values; of tolerance and mutual understanding; of coexistence between religions; and of religious extremism.

2. There should be a reconstruction of history in curriculums to reflect the true nature of conflicts. For example, the Crusades could be presented as a series of conflicts between Europeans and Arabs rather than as battles between Christians and Muslims.

3. In order to foster understanding and respect for other religions, texts should be rewritten to show the multicultural origins of modern Western civilization. Children should be educated from a young age to realize that modern civilization owes its origins in no small measure to the contributions of Chinese, Indians and Muslims.

4. Efforts must be made to work out how the study of world religions and universal values can be introduced into the schooling system in such a manner that a mutual understanding of religions, and not the strengthening of religious prejudices, may be brought about.

5. The understanding of religion should not be restricted to values. Religion should also be considered as a mode of knowing, consisting of various branches of knowledge. In many religions, fields such as theology, logic, biography,

history, the science of interpretation and so on, have been cultivated. These are valid fields of knowledge that could be integrated into our curriculums to introduce people to different religious traditions, defined in the broad sense as ways of life.

6. For interreligious dialogue to be genuine, it has to go beyond the sphere of people talking about their own religions. Based on the current world division of labour in scholarship, social science scholars in the North generally specialize in theoretical and comparative works, and study countries and religions other than their own. Scholars in the South, however, generally conduct empirical studies, single case studies and work on their own countries and religions. This division of labour must be broken for there to be genuine interfaith dialogue and education.

The question of peace and harmony among the various civilizations and religious communities in the world can be approached in two broad ways. One is to engage in conflict resolution after conflicts have broken out. The other is to engage the other civilization in constant dialogue to minimize the intensity or quantum of conflicts that are, at any rate, inevitable.

Dialogue among civilizations can be defined as conversation or discussion between representatives of two or more groups that may differ along the lines of religion, ethnicity or other markers of distinction. What we have in mind in this volume, however, is more than just that. What we have in mind is conversation on a subject of common interest, between two or more individuals or parties whose beliefs are informed by differing world views. The ultimate aim of such dialogue is to inculcate an attitude founded on appreciation, understanding interest and compassion for the cultures and world views of the other. But the consideration of such dialogue should not be confined to its literal sense; dialogue among civilizations is also a metaphor for the process of implantation and cultivation of an orientation and attitude that is founded on the attributes of tolerance, mutual understanding interest, compassion and love. This amounts to no less than the inculcation of the spirit of multiculturalism, that is, the celebration of cultural variety and diversity.

Notes

1. See *http://www.un.org/Dialogue/*
2. *The Sunday Times,* 23 December 2001.
3. "It's a malicious piece of writing, not a critical exposition," *The Straits Times*, 2 January 2002.
4. *The Straits Times*, 31 December 2001.

Keynote Address
Guest-of-Honour
Mr Chiang Chie Foo
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education

Mr Darke Sani,
Chairman, Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA);

Dr Lim Teck Ghee,
Senior Social Sector Specialist, Environment and Social Development Sector
Unit, East Asia Region, World Bank;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. I wish to commend RIMA and the World Bank for your foresight in organizing this conference which focuses on interfaith dialogue.
   This focus on dialogue and building bridges of understanding will go a long way to building the social consensus so critical to support economic and social development of the region.
2. In view of recent events unfolding in the world, this conference is also a timely reminder of the need to reach out, to forge understanding, and to strengthen social cohesion.

Interfaith Dialogue – The Singapore Experience
3. Singapore is fortunate in being the meeting place of major civilizations, not just in terms of religions but also in terms of races and languages.
   On any average day, about 190 foreign newspapers circulate in Singapore, in multiple languages including English, Malay, Chinese, Tamil, Korean, Thai, Japanese, Tagalog and German.
   Places of worship of different major religions are sited close to one another; some are even next-door neighbours.
4. Such a mix can have the potential to lead to strife and disorder, *as* tragic events from different parts of the world throughout history so amply illustrate.
   It is a tremendous challenge to turn what could potentially be divisive factors into a source of strength.

Several countries in this region have done so using their own models, each tailored to the unique circumstances of their societies.

Singapore, too, has evolved its own social system and norms to help us to turn diversity into a strength, and to create a unity of purpose and aspirations from diverse strands of customs, beliefs and values.

5. This morning, I would like to share with you our perspectives on these issues, bearing in mind, of course, the dangers of extrapolating from the experiences of a single country, and a very small one at that.

   I hope that these perspectives will help to show how interfaith dialogue can move from scholarly discourse to daily action, perhaps serve as a reference for adaptation, and, at the very least, provide food for thought and further research.

6. We sometimes think of Singapore society as being represented by four overlapping circles, each representing one of the major ethnic groups.

   Within this overlap area, there is national treatment for all, be it opportunities for higher education or access to healthcare services.

   Each community, however, retains the freedom to practise its own religion and customs.

   This is represented by the space outside of the overlap area.

   The common area of overlap and the spaces for each community together form the anchors that give our society the stability and resilience we need.

7. The reality is even more complex.

   There are overlapping circles for the different races and the different religions, and these do not always coincide.

   A Chinese Singaporean can be a follower of any religion, and a Muslim Singaporean can be of Malay, Chinese or Indian ancestry.

   But the principle remains the same – we seek to enlarge what is common while respecting differences.

8. We see our challenge in nation building as trying to enlarge the area of overlap among the four circles, gradually, and at a pace which the different communities are comfortable with.

   The Singapore experience of enlarging the common areas is built on three pillars.

9. Firstly, we decided very early on in our nation building that we should focus on our common hopes and aspirations as human beings, irrespective of whether we are Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Muslims or Taoists.

   It is, therefore, important for Government, in drawing up its development goals and plans, to distil these from the aspirations of our people.

   These are universal aspirations of ordinary citizens all over the world – to live

in a safe and secure country, to lead a better life, to provide for one's children, to plan for the future because there is a future worth planning for.

10. Secondly, we have built up institutions that help develop "social capital" – the glue that binds people together.

The key national institutions are public housing, education and National Service.

11. The public housing programme under which the Government acquires land and builds low-cost housing for sale to citizens has achieved several social objectives at once.

It has improved housing conditions for our citizens, bringing modern sanitation to many for the first time in their lives.

Through the Home Ownership Scheme, every citizen has a personal stake in the nation's progress.

From the nation building point of view, it has allowed us to overcome a legacy of the "divide-and-rule" approach of colonial town planning which also proved to be an expedient way to keep the peace among the communities, not by interaction, understanding and the exercise of tolerance, but by segregation and avoidance of contact.

At the outset, the public housing programme sought to bring the different communities into close contact with one another, as they go about their daily lives, and practising their traditional customs and religious observations in proximity to others who are different.

12. Housewives exchange cookies which they make for their respective festive occasions.

A Singaporean family need never run out of "goodies" to enjoy because all year round, some family in the apartment block will be celebrating a religious or traditional festival – Hari Raya Puasa, Deepavali, Christmas, Chinese New Year, or a birthday.

13. In many of our public housing apartment blocks, the ground floor has no dwelling unit.

This is known as a "void deck," a utilitarian description in an architectural plan which has become standard parlance in Singapore.

Many community events are held on these void decks.

During a weekend, it may be a colourful Malay wedding, complete with temporary cooking facilities, the attendance of many relatives and friends, and a dais for the happy couple.

Perhaps, in the following week, the void deck would become the location for a funeral wake for a Chinese family, complete with wreaths, chanting monks and mourning relatives.

And the next weekend, it could be transformed into a playground for a children's party organised by the Residents' Committee to bring together children of all ethnic groups, and their parents.

14. No matter what your race or religion, you begin to see how others live their lives and practise the important rituals at key milestones in the journey of life. And you have the opportunity to interact at community functions and get to know your neighbours.

15. While the public housing programme has been successful on many counts, the challenge is to keep working on it.

If we simply leave things as they are, there is a natural and perfectly understandable tendency for the different communities to live apart and drift apart.

Indeed, this was our experience in our public housing estates.

Over time, with secondary market transactions, different communities began to congregate in different estates.

This was not because they wanted to deliberately segregate themselves or live apart.

Small innocuous individual preferences, such as wanting to live close by to your parents and siblings, or to your place or worship or favourite market, over time accumulate so that communities tend to re-congregate again.

Again, there was a need to put in place new measures to prevent the formation of racial enclaves.

In 1989, the racial quota scheme was introduced, setting caps on the percentage of the different races living in a particular apartment block and in a neighbourhood, which is a collection of about 30-60 blocks.

The quota scheme has made it a more complex affair to buy or sell a public flat on the secondary market, but it has played an important role in keeping our housing estates racially mixed.

16. Let me now talk about our experience with schools.

When we became independent, we inherited a patchwork quilt of several different education systems, many adapted from the countries of origin of our forefathers.

There were Malay, Chinese and Tamil schools, and some English-medium schools set up by missionaries and the Government.

It was quite a task to integrate the different language medium schools, and to accord each of the four official languages equal status.

Over time, the various communities were more prepared to hand over the schools founded by them to meet the specific needs of their communities, and turn these into Government schools catering to all Singaporeans.

They were prepared to do so in order to enjoy substantial funding from Government, and also because they were reassured that the interests of their communities would be provided for in the Government schools.

17. Today, we have a national school system that does more than provide a solid foundation in the values, skills and knowledge necessary to meet future challenges.

    The schools are critical institutions in which our young enjoy a common educational experience, of growing up together, of finding out about our history and heritage, and of working towards a common goal.

18. We use English as our common language and the main language of instruction in schools.

    Apart from its value as a neutral language that is not native to any of the communities, the use of English has proven to be a good choice in other ways. Literacy in English has helped to plug Singapore into the global economy and allowed Singaporeans to have direct access to most of the content on the Internet and the latest scientific and technological innovations, with no loss for translation time.

19. Mathematics, Science, the Social Sciences and Humanities are taught to all Singaporean students in English.

    But we also make room in our schools for our young to learn about their own cultural heritage and to learn their mother tongue languages to as high a level as they are capable of.

    We want to be able to retain the enduring values and ethos of our Asian heritage while embracing the best of Western ideas.

    We want to nurture core groups of young Singaporeans who are knowledgeable in their own mother tongue languages and cultures to preserve the uniqueness of their respective communities.

20. While our strategic goal remains the same for the different communities, the exact way in which we have operationalized our intent is customized to the unique circumstances of each community.

    Chinese students who wish to study Chinese at a higher level than the standard level achievable by most students can opt to do so either in Special Assistance Plan or SAP schools where all students offer Chinese as their mother tongue language, or in other schools where different mother tongue languages are offered.

21. The existence of SAP schools has at times created concerns among the minority groups and also among some Chinese Singaporeans that students attending these schools will not have the opportunities to interact with students of other communities.

This concern is not to be dismissed.

Even as we remind ourselves of the larger strategic reasons for allowing each community room to practise its own customs, our SAP schools need to continue to work on increasing their linkages with other schools and community groups, so that their students will have opportunities to learn about the other communities.

Beyond the school, SAP students also have the opportunity to interact with students from other communities in the public housing estates, during National Service, and at co-curricular activities.

22. For the Malay community, the SAP school model is not practical due to a lack of critical mass.

Higher Malay is available for students who wish to take it.

The introduction of an Elective Programme in Malay Language for Secondary School (EMAS) at Bukit Panjang Government High School and the introduction of the Malay Language Elective Programme at Tampines Junior College provide Malay students with special interest and aptitude the opportunity to offer Malay at a higher level and to deepen their understanding and appreciation of Malay history and culture.

23. For the Tamil-speaking community, the Ministry of Education has invested over $2 million in upgrading the Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre into a national Tamil language resource centre.

The Centre provides facilities, including IT resources, for the use of teachers and students.

It also organizes various enrichment programmes and cultural activities for Tamil language students.

24. Even after we have put in place the different pieces for a national education system, we recognise that we cannot leave everything to chance or to natural forces.

Members of the same ethnic community may simply feel more comfortable with each other, because they speak the same language and like the same food.

Through a systematic National Education programme, we remind our children about the multiracial and multireligious character of Singapore, and the importance of harmony.

Each year, on *21"* of July, all our schools commemorate Racial Harmony Day, as a reminder that we cannot take racial harmony for granted.

The date was chosen with some care – this was the day in *1964* when Singapore saw race riots, which we hope not to have to experience ever again.

25. National Service, the two to two and a half years of conscription for our male citizens, bonds them as only a deeply formative experience can.

Our young men not only eat, sleep and train alongside others of different races, religions, educational backgrounds and experiences, they must learn to fight as a team and learn to trust each other in a matter of life and death.

26. Through public housing, national schools and National Service, we have institutions that promote interaction, dialogue and understanding.

Social capital is best built when the different communities meet, come together, and have common interests.

These institutions allow us to transform a high ideal of religious and racial harmony into a series of daily routines.

While respect for the beliefs and practices of different groups is safeguarded in the Constitution, it is in the experience of daily living experiences that people learn to manage differences.

27. Thirdly, when different groups interact, there must be clear rules of engagement.

Here, the Government plays an important role in "holding the ring."

It has to adopt an even-handed approach to dealings with different communities.

This is a tight-rope to walk.

28. There will always be calls and demands from different groups for special or differential treatment, and for very good reasons, too, from their point of view.

The challenge is to always keep a steady course, with an eye firmly on our common goals, without tipping to one side or the other.

29. In education, the Singapore national curriculum seeks to emphasize the ties that bind, so that we can widen the areas of commonality among the different communities.

This is complemented by the space for each community to learn its mother tongue language in school.

30. The role of spirituality in public-funded education is an altogether more challenging task, especially in a polyglot society.

There is no one suitable model to use.

It would be unthinkable, for example, if we choose to use a model which the majority of our population can identify with without taking into consideration the needs of the minorities.

31. Government or its educators cannot claim to be experts in each of the major religions.

Using the approach of emphasizing commonality, we teach civics and moral education in national schools, without recourse to religion, by emphasizing moral values which all major religions expound.

The families then play a bigger role in complementing the role of schools by providing or arranging for spiritual or religious education.

32. By keeping the state secular but tolerant and accepting of the positive role that religion plays, we have evolved a stable system in which there is room for all groups to practise their religions and, more important, a social consensus about where we are going as a nation and the assurance that all groups have a place "under the sun."

   This assurance and confidence is very important.

   It provides every group, large or small, with a predictable set of rules of the game to live by.

33. Singapore's experience has served to illustrate two important points.

   The first is that it is not just a matter of high ideals, but how a society arranges its daily affairs that determines if its people of different religions and races live harmoniously with each other.

   The history of mankind contains many examples where the formula for living together on the same piece of territory has just not been found.

34. The second is that there is a need to constantly work at maintaining racial and religious harmony.

   Even if a policy or an institution has been successful in increasing dialogue and understanding, it is up against very strong centrifugal forces which tend to pull communities apart.

   Refinements in policies are needed continuously.

Conclusion

35. Over the next two days, you will be having scholarly discourses and discussions.

   Through this, I hope you will gain a deeper insight into how different communities have tried to keep religious forces relevant to development.

36. On this note, I wish you a very fruitful conference.

Welcome Address
Mr Darke M. Sani
Chairman, Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA),
Singapore

Mr Chiang Chie Foo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education;

Dr Lim Teck Ghee and Mr Kazuhide Kuroda, The World Bank;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning.

Firstly, I would like to thank Mr Chiang Chie Foo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, for his presence here this morning on behalf of RAdm Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence.

On behalf of RIMA, the Centre for Research on lslamic and Malay Affairs, Singapore, I would like to express our sincerest gratitude and appreciation to The World Bank Post-Conflict Fund for supporting this interfaith dialogue.

That a dialogue of this nature should be organized at a time like this, a time when the world is facing a crisis and a multitude of challenges in terms of religion and ethnicity, seems coincidental. But we have been preparing for this dialogue since early in the year as we saw the urgent need to get peoples of different faiths together to sit and talk about how each other's religion promotes development and social cohesion amongst peoples of various backgrounds.

Since Singapore, as well as other Southeast Asian countries, is multireligious, interfaith dialogues of such a nature become even more meaningful. They are important in ensuring that the social fabric of our society remains intact or at least is prevented from fraying further. It is good to see activists, academics, civil servants and the like participating in an event like this, to share one another's views and experiences. There has generally been a dearth of such dialogues, so we need to take every opportunity possible to participate in one when the opportunity arises.

We hope this dialogue will bring about greater networking and exchanges between members of different religious backgrounds. This will contribute towards enhancing the solidarity and harmony between us, especially in difficult times as

this. Such solidarity and harmony should not be taken for granted; we need to work hard to maintain that and enhance it deeper.

Before I end, let me also express our thanks and appreciation to all our esteemed paper presenters and guests speakers from around the region and here in Singapore, and, of course, to Dr Syed Farid Alatas, our Convenor, for all his effort in making this dialogue a success.

Thank you.

Welcome Address
Dr Lim Teck Ghee

Senior Social Sector Specialist, Environment and
Social Development Sector Unit,
East Asia and Pacific Region, The World Bank

This conference has two sources of inspiration. Firstly, it is a follow-up activity to the Asian Regional Consultation on Social Cohesion and Conflict Management held in March 2000 in Manila which was organized by the World Bank. That meeting arose from concerns that issues of social conflict and social cohesion were being neglected in the development agenda of countries in the region, even though these have clearly been critical factors impacting on the stability and well-being of nation states. In Southeast Asia, a region which is the crossroads of many cultures, ethnic groups and religions, neglect of the importance of social cohesion has been especially telling during the financial and economic crisis of 1997, when social stress and strife reared its ugly head in some countries of the region. Not only are the reverberations of the 1997 crisis still with us today, but the September 11 terrorist attack in New York and the war in Afghanistan have added another set of contentious dynamics and a further layer of complexity to the relationship between cultures, religions and societies all over the world, including in Southeast Asia. How are economic and political events and changes affecting social cohesion, including religious cohesion, and in what direction is social cohesion moving? These are key questions that all of us – not only development planners – have to be concerned about.

During the Manila Consultation on Social Cohesion, the importance of a better understanding of the moral and religious basis of development was underscored by many participants. This, in turn, has precipitated us working in the East Asia and Pacific region and the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit of the World Bank to support this follow-up work aimed at bringing together a group of experts and activists who span the spectrum of religious diversity in the region so that they can share with us their analysis of some key aspects of religion, education and development. In particular, we would like to understand how religion and the vehicle of religious education are interacting to promote or impede social cohesion and the implementation of the development agenda in countries. It is by no means clear that this interaction of religion and modern development – the latter, primarily a secular-driven force – is necessarily

harmonious or straightforward; in fact, recent events have led many people to question whether there needs to be a clearer divide between the realms of religious faith and secular systems.

For staff at the World Bank, there is a growing recognition that the development agenda is by no means solely or mainly an economic driven one. Rather, most see it as one marked by the interdependence of many elements – social, human, governance, financial and cultural. This recognition has provided the second source of inspiration for this meeting. In 1998, the first interfaith consultation took place in London. It was during that meeting that the World Faiths Development Dialogue was established as a process to facilitate structural interaction between the World Bank and the faiths. It was decided to establish a dialogue that would be impartial and demand-driven so as to create an environment which allows for constructive exchange of experiences and cooperation between the faiths themselves – and this needs to be underlined – and between the faiths and the World Bank.

During the first year, the focus has been on a conceptual contribution by the faith communities to the Bank's *World Development Report 2000* focusing on effective ways to combat poverty. This exercise resulted in a challenging interfaith statement available on the website at http://www.wfdd.org.uk/ as "Poverty and Development: An Interfaith Perspective." Other initiatives have been action-oriented and they have sprung up in Ethiopia, Tanzania, India and other countries where the Bank has a presence, involving interfaith groups working together on health, education, food security, environmental and a host of other practical concerns. In November 1999, a second World Faiths Development Dialogue was held in Washington and attended by leaders from the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Islamic and Sikh faiths. The religious leaders present at that meeting expressed the urgency to provide help to the poor and give them the opportunity to live a life of dignity. They expressed particular concern about the effects of corruption on the most vulnerable people and the importance of nurturing diverse cultures in the face of globalization. Other key messages that emerged from that meeting, which this dialogue group may wish to note, include:

1. The commitment to improving the lives of the poor can bring about the bridging of cultural and religious divides and it is crucial to replicate this in as many country settings as possible.
2. There is a need to formulate an overarching set of development ethics on which the faith communities are in broad agreement. It is also necessary to articulate the values and ethics in development programmes for examination and reflection, not just by donors but by the people affected by such efforts.

3. Representatives of the faith communities need to devote greater attention to mobilizing volunteers for the dialogue. These should be people who are rooted in work with the poor and who understand the nature of poverty and the changes needed.

These are messages that I am sure few will disagree with, but there are many practical considerations and constraints that stand in the way of disseminating these messages and accomplishing their ideals in multireligious and multiethnic societies. There are also contentious areas which these initial dialogues of faith representatives and organizations appear to have decided not to engage in or have given cursory attention to, not least of which are the deep differences that exist amongst the various faiths themselves on how they view the role of religion and its integration with the way that modern societies are organized. I am sure this meeting will produce much food for thought, not only for the World Bank and other international development agencies engaged in helping developing countries, but also for the stakeholders in countries that are participating in the global development dialogue.

Welcome Address
Mr Kazuhide Kuroda
Senior Knowledge Management Officer,
Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit,
Social Development Department,
The World Bank

Permanent Secretary, Mr Chiang Chie Foo,

Distinguished Guests, Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My name is Kaz Kuroda of the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit of the World Bank. With my colleague, Lim Teck Ghee, we are very pleased to be here today to join you in this most timely dialogue. As you can imagine, much hard work over several months has gone into preparing this dialogue. For this, I am most grateful to Mr Darke Sani, Mr Muhamad Nazzim Hussain, and their colleagues at the Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA) and its parent organization, the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP).

At the World Bank, our mission is to reduce poverty by building the climate for investment, jobs and sustainable growth, and by empowering poor people to participate in the economy and society.

While the World Bank was established in 1944 to support the reconstruction of post-war Europe, the Bank, in recent years, has played a key role in post-conflict reconstruction in many parts of the world, such as in the Balkans, Cambodia, East Timor and in the Horn of Africa. In so doing, we have become keenly aware that poverty is both a cause and a consequence of conflict and that conflict is a major impediment to development. The Bank has progressively broadened its response to conflict, from an approach focused on rebuilding infrastructure, to a comprehensive approach including initiatives to promote economic recovery, restore social capital and build institutional capacity. This comprehensive approach became the basis for a new landmark Bank policy called Operational Policy on Development Cooperation and Conflict and it was approved by the Bank's Board of Executive Directors in January 2001.

In this context, we, at the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit of the Social Development Department, are responsible for policy development, knowledge management and partnership on conflict-related issues. In addition,

the Unit manages the Post-Conflict Fund which is a grant facility to strengthen the Bank's ability to support countries in transition from conflict to sustainable peace and economic growth, and to deepen our overall understanding of development and conflict prevention. We have begun to explore social cohesion and conflict management issues in Asia and this has led to a conference in Manila with the Asian Development Bank in March 2000. One of the key results of the Manila conference was the consensus among the Southeast Asian participants for the Bank to convene an interfaith dialogue which would provide an opportunity for representatives of various religions and faiths in the region to share their views on the dynamics between religion and development.

I would like to conclude by expressing my thanks to you for coming here to participate in the dialogue. I look forward to your contributions and discussions.

Thank you.

Part I

Religion, Education and the Development of Society

1
Religion, Science and Education
Syed Hussein Alatas

Let me explain what is meant by religion, science and the philosophy of education. What I mean by religion is not historical religion. I am not talking about Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism but the core concept of religion, of what they have in common. The same applies to science. When Bertrand Russell talked about science, he did not mean the actual practical institutions of science. He was not talking about the practical aspects of scientific institutions. He was talking about science in the general conceptual sense. He did not mean the activities of science in Czechoslovakia, Soviet Russia or Nazi Germany, where science was distorted. These were the misapplications of science. He was not talking about the practical implementation of science.

In following the same level of reasoning, I am also not talking about the practical manifestation of religion. I am talking about the concept of religion and the concept of common values. To begin with, all religions – all great historical religions – show unity and express the universality of certain values. They all reject relativism. As to the alternate to religion, I would not like to use the term "non-religion." "Irreligion" is more accurate than "non-religion." When you use "non-", it could refer to a variety of things, but when you use the prefix "ir-", it refers to the opposite of the concept. For example, when you say "irrespectable," it is the opposite of "respectable." When you say "respectable" and "non-respectable," "non-respectable" means that which is not to be "respected but it does not mean "irrespectable." So, "ir-" is more accurate than "non-" in our discourse. I use "ir-" to show the opposite.

As far as our way of life is concerned, we do not have a choice. Either you have a religion or you do not. There is no other choice. It is like saying, either you have fire or you do not have fire. You cannot say that you have something else that is not fire but is able to burn. You cannot do that. In our choice of belief, we either have a system with religion or a system without religion. The ultimate choice made by Russell for the community is based on the claim that religion is in conflict with science, that religion is not logical and has a terrible history. The arguments that declare it to be in conflict with science are not correct. Certain practices of religion and certain practical religions may be in conflict with science,

but not the core concept of religion throughout the world. What I mean is this: the conceptualization of certain religious thought might be in conflict with science and modern knowledge. For instance, if I have the idea that God is helping my family and is responsible for my rich harvest and requires that I make human sacrifices, this comes into conflict with rationality and science. Yet, the basic idea that there is a supreme being does not. The conflict is in the practical manifestations.

The relation between religion and science, and science and philosophy, is the same. In this sense, science is the method of knowing. Science has certain objectives having to do with the understanding of the phenomenal world. Science, however, has to be linked to a philosophy for its application. Science can be applied in various ways but it cannot originate values. Science cannot be the basis of your valuation. It can only be the test of a certain valuation. If a certain valuation is wrong, science may give you the proof that it is wrong. Yet, science by itself, and even Russell claims this, cannot be a total philosophy.

Actually, there is no conflict. The conflict is not between science and religion or philosophy. The conflict is among the various outlooks on science and the philosophical outlook of the scientist. For instance, there is no basis in science for the seduction of women by Bertrand Russell, as we shall see later on. The great ideal of life is not decided by science. Science, for instance, cannot be the basis of why you like to eat ice-cream, but science can help to make ice-cream and science can help you to know whether the ice-cream is spoilt. Science can tell you if the ice-cream is spoilt and what the effects on your body would be. So, it helps in certain areas but it does not make the decision on values.

The same is true of science. You have scientific theories and practices which are in conflict with the basic principle of science. For instance, for a long time in the past, people thought that the plague in Europe was caused by misfortune. They did not diagnose the cause. That error in explaining the cause of the plague, however, did not invalidate the scientific principle that there is a cause. It did not break the principle of causality; it only violated the application of that principle. Therefore, it is the case in science that certain applications and certain ideas violate the truth but do not invalidate the principles of causality. If you accept this in the realm of science, the same structure of reasoning can apply to religion, that is, that certain practical manifestations of religion in history were wrong. Yet, this does not violate the general religious principles. Coming back to the question of general religious principles, there are common values among mankind that belong to religion.

When we talk about values, there is an infinite variety of values. We are not referring to all values that are present in human society. We are touching only on

some fundamental ethical and moral values, and how these moral values – such as the Ten Commandments – are created. They are a human creation, according to the believers of secular humanism. I am referring to those kinds of basic values, not values connected with music or art.

Recently, I came across some information on the tragic fate of a former well-known actor. I remember seeing his films in my younger days. The actor's name was Robert Young. Robert Young was a very sympathetic actor. His roles were always sympathetic. He was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. There was a lot of neglect in looking after him. What happened to him was tragic because he was found in a state of starvation. One of his daughters lived not far from his house. Another daughter lived in another city. A group of actors discovered what happened to Robert Young and they decided to do something to look after him. Now, you ask people in the world, from whatever culture or religious group, whether they concur that Robert Young was cruelly neglected. Even the most isolated citizen in some remote island would be horrified that a father was treated like this. All moral scientists would agree that this is wrong. All religious groups will agree. The only exception of those who might not agree would be some philosophers and social scientists. They might say, "Ah, this is relative. The Eskimos abandon their old folk to die." Kindness and caring are examples of values that I refer to as the collective values of religion.

Bertrand Russell himself would not agree that Robert Young should have been treated in such a way. Every human being, whether they have a religion or not, can believe in these common universal values. It is these common universal values that are definitely the values of the present. Being common universal values, wherein is it necessary to link them to religion? According to Bertrand Russell, it is not necessary; it is better to separate them from religion. Why? He said that religious people have been violating those values. If you argue on the basis of violation, however, everything has been violated, not only religion. Science has been abused and violated by the Nazis and many governments. So many others have abused and violated science, such as the industrial capitalists and pharmaceutical companies. Science has been connected with such evil as poisoning people.

Let us not forget that the science of physics and mechanics has not only been applied to make useful tools for society, but also for purposes of torture. If you look at the mechanical inventions of the past, you do see some torture machines that apply mechanics and physics. Why did Russell not reject science because it has been abused? His preference, according to his own reasoning, is that your philosophy must be based on what you yourself desire. He was very much influenced by the youth whose philosophy was based on emotion and desire. He

is against religion because religion suppressed human desire. By desire, Russell means also the desire for freedom, and by freedom, he means – as part of the rights of humanity – the right to have what is called an open marriage. That is, two people get married but they have the freedom to have relations with other men and women.

In his application of his own philosophy, of irreligion, Russell got into several value complications. One of these value complications was with his fourth wife. Towards the end, his relation with her was not very good. He was not able to have physical contact with her. She wanted another child and Russell agreed, but suggested that she have the child with another man. So, she had the child with another man and later on, Russell adopted the child. Still on the topic of desire, there was another interesting incident. Russell seduced one of three sisters in a family. He visited the father; the daughter, he had just met, and she invited him over. He went, mind you, and first met the father, a professor of gynaecology. As a house guest and on the first night, Russell seduced the daughter. Not only did he seduce the daughter, there was an interesting turn to the whole event. The two other sisters guarded the room where the seduction took place. So, three sisters were involved to enable the great thinker and philosopher Bertrand Russell to seduce somebody's daughter in his own house.

This was perfectly all right with Russell's philosophy. It was part of the expression of his freedom. He did not consider the reaction of the girl's parents. He did not consider the later implications for the girl. His sole consideration was his interest. This is the danger when you allow yourself to be the arbiter of action, the supreme judge of everything. It is here that there is a different orientation as far as religious outlook is concerned. In religious orientation, there is always a set of rules governing individual freedom. What happens now, I do not know. Russell is no longer around.

After Russell passed away, his philosophy developed further in the Netherlands. The Netherlands is probably the only country in Europe that expressed the kind of freedom espoused by Russell. In the Netherlands, students are free to set up a brothel and to advertise it. Two years ago in Brussels, I turned to the back of a newspaper and saw the advertisement pages. Sexual freedom through prostitution was a legitimate social vehicle. Certain advertisements from students' brothels even offered different nationalities. There was an offer of an Arab girl and a Black girl as something special. Apart from this, there was also an advertisement placed by a housewife. This housewife advertised for free, non-commercial sex. She gave her telephone number and suggested that whoever was interested should come in the mornings because that was when her husband would not be at home. Now, this is the kind of freedom that is legitimate in Russell's philosophy.

So, the difference between me and Russell is not on the question of science or the respect for science as a very great and important aspect of life. It is in the area of values, in the area of conceptual freedom. For example, should one be free to destroy the marriage institution and the existing family institution? Russell, in his private life, did destroy his own family. He even tried to have his own elder son committed to another home. There were a lot of other problems. Yet, he was very sympathetic as a person because he was very energetic in terms of upholding social justice, eliminating poverty and advocating tolerance. He was a very clear writer and a very humourous person.

King George VI honoured Russell with a knighthood. When King George met Russell, he made a remark on Russell's life, more or less on the critical side, implying he should correct himself. Russell gave a very witty reply. King George was alluding to Russell's concept of freedom; I believe he was referring to his womanizing. Russell replied that not everyone could knock at every door like a postman. Postmen could knock at every door on the street, not that they wanted to. In other words, he considered himself as an exception for his ability to seduce women. The postman knocked at doors to deliver letters. The postman did not knock at doors to seduce women. This is a great difference. The analogy does not hold true.

Coming back to the philosophy of education, I see, as far as practical science is concerned, that the relation between religion and the philosophy of education is in the strengthening of values. By religion and the philosophy of education, I do not mean to suggest a particular philosophy of education based on a particular religion. I am not suggesting that kind of philosophy. I am suggesting that the philosophy of education, as far as religion is concerned, can be supported and strengthened by religion in the sense of cementing universal values. The reason why we need religion to cement universal values is very simple. If you want to seal anything, you need cement and you also know from common sense that there are different types of cement. You have a very strong one and you have a weak one, that is all.

If you use religion as a sealant, it is stronger than irreligion. Those values can be better strengthened by religion than by irreligion. Religion considers the fundamental human values as being created by God. Irreligion considers this as a creation of humans. If you consider those values as human creation, then it will be difficult to have a sacred attitude towards those values. It will be more difficult to respect the values because no creator can have that sense of reverence and respect, that sense of worship for the created objects, for the values he himself created. You cannot expect the carver of idols to be able to truly worship the idols he creates. Other people may be worshipping the idols, but he himself would not

be able to worship the idols because he knew he made them. If the values are considered creations of humans throughout history, then it will not have that powerful an influence as the values would be considered a created entity not above human interest. In other words, the religious approach to common universal values has a stronger cementing force. It is because of this, I think, that the philosophy of education has to seek the support of religion to obtain this cementing force.

I am perfectly in agreement that human values are also important, but I am referring to certain absolute values. If you feel that they are created by man, then you are more likely to transcend or violate them as a human creation and not something sacred. You cannot judge values on the basis of violation. The historical violation is there. The values of non-religion have also been violated, but you do not stop striving for them just because they have been violated.

The world is now facing all sorts of problems, such as poverty, corruption, decadence, crime, trafficking in children – name any problem you want. These problems we are facing now are in the era of non-religion. This is the age of the United Nations, the age of human rights, the age of the French Revolution. It is during this age that you have had two world wars, that you have had the weapons of mass destruction used on people. We have all sorts of instability. We have all sorts of poverty, civil wars, killings and massacres. We have all sorts of terrible problems precisely during this age of secular humanism, where international organizations are controlled by secular humanism.

By going back to a reflection on religious values, we are not driven by an idealistic utopia. We have to be optimistic. If we are not, and if we do not have an orientation for the future, then all struggles will be stifled. Why should we have the goal of fighting poverty? Why? There never was a situation on earth where poverty was completely eradicated. Is that a reason for us to say, why should we try? No, we should continue trying because we are thinking of the future. If we look at the past, everything is terrible. There is no goal that can be achieved if you look for justification in the past. Is it utopian if the World Bank is trying to eradicate poverty? It is considered non-utopian if *now,* the World Bank is trying to fight against corruption. It is not utopian if *now,* the international organizations recognize the problem of corruption, although there has always been corruption in the past; why should we consider it utopian if we want other kinds of changes? We are concerned with the future.

It is this optimism of the future that is strongly imbedded in religion. By religion, I do not mean religion as practised and distorted. Do you think we do not need a religious answer to the recent developments in science that are linked with a certain philosophy of life? For example, human cloning. Human cloning is

not a problem in Bangladesh. It is not a problem in the Third World. The masses are not aware of human cloning and it is not their problem. Yet, human cloning is a universal problem.

There are other side effects of science that are very important and have impacts on the rest of the world, such as environmental pollution. Certain ideas, however, are more serious than environmental pollution. One of these pollutant ideas is the non-limitation of the profit motive. When you have greed as your supreme value, that is a very dangerous pollutant. It is this idea of pollutants that causes the pollution of the environment and destruction of the environment, which in turn causes poverty and many other things. So, when we talk about physical pollution, we have to go to what underlies the idea of physical pollution. All the evils we find in the Third World go back to certain ideas and certain driving forces. It is here that religion as has just been suggested, in the universal sense, can help in informing our philosophy of education.

References

Alatas, Syed Hussein (1963). *Reflections on the Theories of Religion.* Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam.

Moorehead, Caroline (1992). *Bertrand Russell: A Life.* New York: Viking Press.

Russell, Bertrand (1949). *Scientific Outlook.* London: Allen and Unwin.

_____ (1954). *Human Society in Ethics and Politics.* London: Allen and Unwin.

_____ (1956). *Portraits from Memoy and Other Essays.* London: Allen and Unwin.

_____ (1961a). *Fact and Fiction.* London: Allen and Unwin.

_____ (1961b). *Religion and Science.* London: Oxford University Press.

_____ (1967/1967/1969). *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell.* Vols. 1, 2 and 3. London: Allen and Unwin.

_____ (1975). *My Philosophical Development.* London: Allen and Unwin.

Schoenman, Ralph, ed. (1967). *Russell, Philosopher of the Century: Essays in His Honour.* London: Allen and Unwin.

2

Economic Thoughts Based on Buddhism: The Case of Thailand

Somparn Promta

Historical Background

In 1981, a famous Thai scholar-monk, Phra Prayudh Payutto,' was invited to American universities to give lectures on Buddhism. After finishing his academic activities in America, he returned to Thailand. Shortly after, he published a very insightful book mainly using material accumulated during his visit to America entitled *Looking to America to Solve Thailand? Problems.* This book was intended to examine the Western paradigm of social and economic development as adopted by Thai society at the time. Following this publication, a series of similar books by the same author continued to appear, focusing on economic ideas based on Buddhism. It can be said that Phra Prayudh was the first person in Thailand to introduce what could be called Buddhist economics.

In Thailand, there are a number of Buddhist thinkers and some of them may be said to have made important contributions to the field of Buddhist economics. It all began with the work of the most famous Thai Buddhist thinker, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu. This scholar-monk is well-known as one of the most profound Buddhist thinkers in Southeast Asia. There are two kinds of work done by Buddhadasa Bhikkhu: first is the analysis and systematization of the teachings of the Buddha, and the second is the interpretation of the Buddha's teachings to answer newly created moral and social problems in the modern world. With regard to the second, Buddhadasa is well-known as the deliverer of radical Buddhist critique against science and technology Buddhadasa considers that economic thoughts prevalent in the world share the same nature, that is, all economic thoughts are based on the assumption that the consumption of material pleasure is the goal of human life. Buddhadasa advises us to return to a simple way of living. For him, this is not merely something that should be done, but must be done for the well-being of humanity and the world. Capitalism, the economic system in use today, is considered by Buddhadasa to be the main source for the exploitation of nature. The Marxist paradigm presents less danger, when viewed from the aspect of exploitation of natural resources, but this system has its weak point as it starts with anger. Buddhadasa seems to try to present what later came

to be known as Buddhist economics, but his presentation is not as clear as Phra Prayudh's.

Economics taught in Thai universities is traditional in that it adheres to the main paradigm adopted by humanity. Historically, there are two differing schools of thought concerning economic ideas – socialism and capitalism – and they both play equal roles in the world. Today, capitalism seems to have the edge as economic structures in Marxist nations based on the Marxist pattern are no longer considered to work. Economics taught in universities throughout the world, thus, naturally tend to focus on the capitalist paradigm. Teaching capitalist economics is not strange, but teaching it as if it were the only possible system is considered unsound by a group of Chulalongkorn University economics lecturers who call themselves Political Economy Group. It seems that one economic concern greatly stressed by this group is economic justice, which they regard as being non-existent in the capitalist mode. From an outsides's perspective, this group is firmly connected with Marxism as it usually presents its views on economic phenomena through Marxist theory. However, some of them also turned to Buddhism as they find that the Marxist paradigm may not be suitable for Thai society.

It is true that from a global perspective, the capitalist economy dominates the whole world. Breaking out of the global economy is an act that is unimaginable for most people, even university economics lecturers. The call for an alternative economic system, however, still continues. This comes mainly from a social awareness that the present system cannot answer the question concerning fair distribution. In 1999, a Buddhist studies centre in Chulalongkorn University hosted a seminar on Buddhist economics to which a small group of leading economics teachers and Buddhist scholars were invited. The major theme posted was: is Buddhist economics possible? And if so, how? The interesting output from the seminar is that it is possible to have an economic theory based on Buddhism, but whether this theory can be considered an economic theory in the same broad sense as capitalism or Marxism, no one can give the answer.

More recently, a famous Thai economist, Professor Abhichai Panthasen of Thammasat University, wrote on Buddhist economics. His book is considered to be the most complete account of Buddhist economic thought ever written in Thailand, even surpassing the works of Phra Prayudh. Phra Prayudh, however, plays the more important role in this paper as the advisor on Buddhist teaching, as Professor Abhichai was not trained in Buddhism. It should be noted in this paper that the author accepts that it is very difficult to create a new school of economics in the name of Buddhism. Professor Abhichai's approach is to apply Buddhist concepts of economy to the established economic system. In this approach, the role of Buddhist economics is not to create a new doctrine of

economics but, rather, to fill the gaps found in the present economic system.

It seems that there are two approaches to creating Buddhist economics. One is to set up a *software* of economic thought and apply it to the main economic structure already adopted by society as "hardware." This approach seems to be safer in terms of economic doctrine. Another approach is to set up a *hardware* of economic doctrine and present it as an alternative theory. As hardware, a theory of Buddhist economics stands; as software, it does not. The second approach to creating Buddhist economics is very difficult, but some Buddhist thinkers in Thailand find it necessary to think of a way to do so. Economic theories are not independent of social and political philosophies. A number of Buddhist scholars in Thailand believe that the social thoughts of Buddhism have been extensively explored and found to be unique, making it adequate to set up Buddhist social theories of politics, education, economics, and so on. Adhering to this line of thought, this paper is written on the assumption that there can be two paths to the creation of Buddhist economics. One will be called the *software approach,* and the other, the *hardware approach.* The first approach's strong point is that it can be applied immediately to the established economic system, but its weak point is that it cannot change the structure of the economic system on which it depends. Some Thai Buddhist thinkers have severely criticized the capitalist economic system practised in Thai society today as the main source of economic and social injustice. It must, therefore, be questioned if such a problem can be solved by merely using Buddhist economics as the software. The second approach's weak point is that it has yet to be applied in real-life. Some may argue that it is not hard to set up any economic theory, but the difficulty is in making it fruitful. The second approach, however, has a strong point as it can answer a number of serious questions, such as questions concerning economic righteousness.

Buddhist Critique of Western Economic Thoughts

The first step in creating Buddhist economics in Thailand usually begins with a critique of Western paradigms of economics, so it might be wise to start from this point. The idea of setting up Buddhist economics does not exist in a vacuum, but is derived from certain social phenomena. Around 1971, Thailand changed the national economic plan to focus on industrial development rather than agricultural. Since then, Thailand has adopted the capitalist pattern of economy and has gradually become a member of the global market economy. In the past three decades, it has been proven that the majority of Thais are still uncertain why only a minority of the population is rich. Over 80 per cent of Thais are peasants, and most are very poor. The national economic plan, which focuses on the industrial

sector, has led to a new phase of Thai history where farmers are overlooked by the state and naturally forced to leave their fields to become workers in city factories. These low-paid workers are immorally exploited, and the less they earn, the more the owners of capital fill their pockets. This situation led to an attempt to challenge capitalist economics through the opposition theory of Marxism. In Thailand over the past three decades, there have been a number of social activists who have endorsed the Marxist economic system. Some of these activists are students, some are professors, some are workers, some are artists, and interestingly, some are Buddhist monks!

It should be noted that Marxism came to Thai society in a *negative* way, that is, all the Thai Marxists really want to do is overcome the immoral structure of the economy. Marxist theory was adopted as it was believed to be the only system available. This may be demonstrated by the words of a famous Thai poet and singer, Pongthep Kradonchamnan, who once declared himself a Marxist and joined guerrillas of the Communist Party of Thailand during the great suppression in 1976. Said Pongthep, "I don't know who is Marx. I don't know who is Mao. I don't know who is Lenin. Only one thing I know is my family is poor!"

In 1981, a group of *sangha* university students was formed under the name Yellow Dove. Yellow symbolizes the colour of a Buddhist monk's robe and Dove represents the free spirit. These young monks felt the call of social justice and tried to apply Buddhist teaching to that end. Even though some of the monks were acquainted with the works of Latin American priests such as Father Camilo Torres, the dialogue between Buddhism and Marxism as undertaken by these student-monks cannot be compared to that between Christianity and Marxism as undertaken by Latin American Catholic priests. Yellow Dove could be cited as an example of the first attempt made by Buddhists in Thailand to challenge the capitalist economic paradigm, with Buddhist and Marxist teachings as the tools. Like Pongthep, many of Yellow Dove's members did not know who Marx was. They adopted Marxist ideas because they felt social justice in the theories of Marx.

The real critique of the Western economic paradigm occurred through the work of three of the most important Thai Buddhist thinkers: Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Phra Prayudh and Sulak Sivaraksa. Sulak was British educated and trained in Western philosophy; thus, he was sufficiently knowledgeable of the real nature of capitalism and Marxism. Sulak, however, was greatly influenced by Buddhadasa and Phra Prayudh in his understanding of Buddhist teaching, so the works of these three great Buddhist figures may be said to have a unity that contributes greatly to a critique of the Western paradigm of economic thought on the grounds of Buddhist teaching.

The Theories of Buddhadasa, Phra Prayudh and Sulak

Buddhadasa analyzes that Western culture is very much grounded in the *egoist*[2] attitude; therefore, the social sciences created in such a culture are primarily aimed at promoting well-being and happiness of the *self:* This formulation by Buddhadasa seems to be supported by the basic concepts that play major roles in Western social and political philosophy. For example, a concept of rights is accepted as one of the core concepts in political and social philosophy. Rights imply an area of individual life to be protected by law. The claim of rights is nothing but a claim over the self. Even the notion of human rights is considered by Buddhadasa as a self-centred concept.

Such statements do not mean that Buddhadasa considers Western political and social concepts to be wrong. Human rights is a concept that can be connected to the issue of morality, as someone who supports human rights is supporting morality, so to violate human rights is an evil in itself. One point given by Buddhadasa is concerned with the root of these concepts. There are at least two ways to protect people in society. First, a rule can be enacted by which individual life is protected. The concept of rights can be a starting point for such a law of protection. In this way, everyone has his or her specific area of life on which he or she can exclusively make reasonable claims. Buddhadasa analyzes that this leads to the separation of individuals from society as they are put into authorized areas within closed walls. Everyone lives in his or her own house of rights and enjoys his or her own happiness of the self!

The other way is normally one endorsed by religion. Christianity teaches us to love our fellow humans; according to Jesus, love will protect the world. The Buddha says that loving kindness *(metta)* supports the world. Comparing to having a law to protect people, some Buddhist scholars in Thailand point out that this way is based on a 'giving' thought while the former is grounded in a 'taking' concept. Ayn Rand, a well-known American social philosopher and writer, says that what is wanted in a liberal capitalist society is not love from other people, but respect for our rights. Conversely, Buddhadasa believes that in Buddhist communities, what is desired is not respect for our rights, but loving kindness.

In this line of thought, Buddhadasa says that capitalism and Marxism are equally based on the protection of the self. That is, one who endorses capitalism, such as Ayn Rand, tries to protect the self of the rich and the middle-class, while one who endorses Marxism tries to protect the self of the poor. Among those who study Buddhism, the concept of self is known to have been rejected by the Buddha as being the main source of wrongdoing in humanity. Buddhadasa explores the non-self theory *(anatta)* taught by the Buddha, which is meant to enable human

beings to overcome what Buddhadasa calls the self-instinct. The self-instinct taught by the Buddha contains two characters. The first one is the 'me' instinct, or *ahankara* in Pali. The second is the 'mine' instinct, or *mamankara* in Pali. As long as 'me' and 'mine' instincts are prevalent, suffering continues to exist in human life. The economic systems accepted in the world – capitalism and Marxism – cannot serve human beings because their most fundamental principles are derived from the 'me' and 'mine' instincts. According to Buddhadasa, self-instinct truly makes mutual aid impossible. Within self-based political and social theories, the best we can do is temporarily compromise. Solving problems in toto can only be hoped for when the self-instinct is overcome. This is precisely why a new social vision, not grounded in the self culture, is considered by Buddhadasa to be extremely necessary in our time.

Buddhadasa's view is a rather general one that does not give a detailed account of how to set up a Buddhist economic system as an alternative for those who want to escape from Western-styled economic systems. A detailed account, however, may be found in the works of Phra Prayudh and Sulak. In his early critique of Western economic thought, *Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems,* Phra Prayudh analyzes that unwise adaptation of Western economics into Thai society leads to a belief that the sole aim of life is to consume material pleasure. Phra Prayudh terms the main problem concerning Thai consumer behaviour *modernization without development.* The nouveau riche in Thai society are those who work hard and use their money to buy material pleasures such as expensive cars mainly imported from the West. One point presented by Phra Prayudh is that a lack of knowledge makes Thais unaware of two important matters. First, the West has accumulated the scientific knowledge to manufacture their consumables over centuries, and the Westerners are consuming material pleasures that are a result of their own work. Second, the Thais who consume these same materials did not contribute to the science and technology that leads to the manufacture of these pleasures, so Thai consumer behaviour greatly differs from those of Westerners. It seems that what Phra Prayudh intended to project in his early work that criticizes the Western-styled economic system of capitalism is the so-called *work ethics.* He mentions the work of Max Weber, pointing out that Protestantism played a major role in the accumulation of wealth by America. A similar phenomenon is, inevitably, required in the Thai context to make Thai society truly civilized.

Phra Prayudh's contribution in criticizing the Western economic paradigm seems to focus on the capitalist economic system. Even though Westerners are consuming the fruits of their labour, it does not mean that Buddhism agrees with such consuming behaviour. Phra Prayudh analyzes that there are two weak points

in capitalist economics. First, it believes that happiness in human life occurs through consumption. Second, increasing the amount of consumables is prioritized as one of the functions of economic activities, that is, the success of economics in the country is judged from the total number of things consumed. To consume, one must have money and to have money, one must produce something. In a capitalist community, people are advised to work and enjoy the fruits of their labour by consuming. Phra Prayudh notes that this finally leads to an exploitation of natural resources. He also notes that behind the capitalist economic system, there is a moral thought that could be called the hedonist principle, as it deems that happiness can never be achieved without having pleasurable things to consume.

Like the two scholar-monks, Sulak also stresses on the moral implications of capitalist thought. He goes further than Buddhadasa and Phra Prayudh, however, by stating that capitalism is used by the West to dominate the East. In Sulak's view, economics is a modern tool used in a modern form of international warfare. In this sense, capitalism is not merely an economic means that connects people through free choice, as believed by capitalist thinkers such as Adam Smith and Ayn Rand. For Sulak, capitalism seems to be a kind of ideology. The West is the ideology maker and this ideology is normally propagated as the most rational way to deal with economic life as it gives us the free choice to accept or deny anything presented in a free market. To dominate the East, the first step is to convince it that the West is the model of civilization. Science and technology are other tools used in the process of the *westernization* of the East. In an attempt to modernize Thailand over the past three decades, a number of its traditional sciences, such as medical science, and technology have been considered by the state to be irrational and unscientific. A number of traditional doctors in the distant villages, for instance, are prohibited to play the roles their predecessors have assumed for centuries. Traditional medicine has been replaced by modern medicine imported from the West. Who gains and who loses in this economic game? The answer is evident.

The Essence of Buddhist Economics, Its Real Application in Thai Society and Its Possible Role in the Future

The Essence of Buddhist Economics

The rise of so-called Buddhist economics in Thailand could be considered an accumulative reaction against Western economic thought, especially the capitalist mode. Some Buddhist economists in Thailand seem to accept that capitalist economics will remain firm in the future as it is the tool the West employs to dominate the whole world in the name of globalization, and that the best alternative

for Buddhist economics is to merely apply it at a software level (perhaps to be used in small villages, while the cities remain firmly connected to the world economy). Yet, there is the hope to apply Buddhist economics at a hardware level, as imagined possible by some radical Buddhist thinkers. It is not the objective of this paper to judge which of these two theories is more rational. Theoretically, Buddhist economics as presented by Thai Buddhist scholars is worth considering in itself regardless of whether or not it can be applied to the real world. The following are some basic features of Buddhist economics.

Economic life is just apart of the whole life
Buddhism considers human life as being full of mysterious complexity, which means that exploring life from only one dimension will never give a complete picture of it. According to Buddhism, life is an integrated entity comprising a material part (body) and an immaterial part (mind). Life has its own objective, and it is the duty of each person to search for that aim. Buddhists consider *nirvana* the ultimate aim of human life. In the worldly context, *nirvana* may be translated as a state in which human beings are free from oppression. Western economic paradigms, both capitalism and Marxism, are criticized by Buddhist economists to only look at human life in a single dimension – an economic dimension. In the case of Marxism, a Marxist could argue that Marx himself talks about a state of life in which man and his work are not connected by a chain of alienation, thereby indirectly implying that Marxism does not consider human life to have only economic dimension. It is so obvious in Marxist states, however, that the well-being of humanity is defined as a state of life which provides people with materials to consume. On the other hand, capitalist economics has a more obvious connection to consumerism. So, the difference between capitalism and Marxism is a difference in the idea of distribution, not in the idea of the meaning of life. Philosophically, it could be said that both Marxism and capitalism are *hedonistic* principles as they aim at material things and define happiness in terms of objects of consumption.

Buddhism is not a doctrine of hedonism. This does not mean that Buddhism rejects all sensual pleasures. There are a number of levels of happiness mentioned in the Buddhist scriptures. Sensual pleasure is counted as the first step of happiness in the Buddhist perspective, so sensual pleasure that can be attained through working is not rejected by Buddhism. On the contrary, Buddhism considers this level of happiness the basic condition of human life, and the Buddha himself said a great deal about working, and consuming the fruits of labour. Human life, however, needs other more profound kinds of happiness. Buddhism considers the sensual pleasure instinct to be shared by both humans and animals, but a

desire to attain higher forms of happiness is a special characteristic of human beings. The Buddha mentions two levels of happiness greater than sensual pleasure. The first is happiness from peace of mind, and the second is happiness from a total absence of wrong views. It should be noted that the higher forms of happiness are those of immaterial bliss; to consume only sensual pleasure is considered by Buddhism to be a basic instinct pursued by humans and animals. But humans differ from animals in that we have wisdom.

Consumption is the most fundamental principle

In Buddhist economics, consumption is considered the most fundamental principle. In Western economics, consumption plays a major role in the economic system. It is sometimes believed that greater consumption indicates economic growth. This belief is criticized by Phra Prayudh through his theory of the two kinds of human demand. The first he calls true demand and the second he terms as false demand. True demand comprises basic needs mentioned in Buddhist texts as the four supporting conditions of human life – food, clothing, medicine and housing. False demand comprises things that do not directly support physical life but, rather, serve psychological states. As Buddhist teachings focus on the importance of the idea of the self as the centre of human psychological states, false demands function mainly to serve the idea of the self. Phra Prayudh observes that between these two demands, modern economy focuses more on the false. For instance, the real value of clothing is to protect our body from oppressive environments, but on television, clothing advertisements try to convince us that by consuming a particular kind of clothing, we will be special. Being special has nothing to do with the utility derived from clothing, but it is the focus of advertisements as advertisers are aware that people are directed by self-instinct. Through this instinct, one feels good if one believes he or she is in a higher state than other people; false demands can serve this instinct.

In Buddhist teaching, human beings are sometimes directed by desire and sometimes by wisdom. Usually, desire is the most basic urge as it has the strongest hold on human beings. Buddhism is well-known as a religion that says a lot about human suffering, and in the Buddhist perspective, suffering is mainly created by human beings out of desire. Buddhism posits that, ultimately, human beings can fight against desire and then against suffering. In economic life, desire plays an important role in directing human beings into false demand. And since desire always causes suffering, the false demand finally causes suffering to human beings even though it might initially produce pleasure. In the context we are considering, Buddhism analyzes that there are two kinds of suffering. The first is individual suffering and the second, societal suffering. False demand produces individual

suffering as one who is directed by desire is inclined to be a consumer. This implies that he must work harder to earn money, and working hard means having no time for other valuable activities in life. Societal suffering is caused in that a community that has a large number of consumers is inclined to exploit natural resources. The modern world is now witnessing that a large number of natural resources are being destroyed by human beings to serve their desire. False demand in itself is not responsible for anything. Natural resources cannot always be replenished, so wise use is extremely necessary. It has been said that the next generation has the same right we have to natural resources, so this right should be protected through a reduction of irrational exploitation of natural resources. Consumerism, which results mainly from false demand, will cause suffering for generations to come if we are not aware of its power. Buddhists are advised to consume on the grounds of right demand.

The theory of right demand in Buddhism is sometimes misunderstood as it is understood as an ethical principle which states that the value of life is judged by strict consumption. Two ethical theories are criticized by the Buddha in his first sermon, the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta.* The first is hedonism, a doctrine which states that sensual pleasure is the aim of human life, thus, implying that consuming pleasurable objects is good in itself. The second is asceticism, a doctrine which firmly rejects sensual pleasure. The true demand taught by Buddhism may best be understood as an ethical doctrine placed between these two extremes. That is, Buddhism does not reject reasonable sensual pleasure especially in ethics for laypersons (we are discussing worldly ethics in this paper). The term *reasonable pleasure,* however, may cause confusion if it is not clearly defined. In Buddhist canon, laypersons are called *kamabhogi*, a term meaning those who consume sensual pleasure. Laypersons who practise the *Dhamma* are call *kalyanaputhujana*, a term that refers to those who are involved in worldly affairs but practise the *Dhamma.* Normally, laypersons have a life that is naturally concerned with sensual pleasure, and Buddhism admits that as far as the degree of consuming sensual pleasure does not exceed the middle way principle proposed by the Buddha, it can be accepted that to be Buddhist and to consume sensual pleasure are not contradictory notions. The middle way principle states that an action which does not harm oneself and others is good, otherwise, it is bad. Thus, consumption of natural resources that does not cause suffering to oneself and to society can be admitted by Buddhist ethics. Sometimes, the consumption of natural resources does not cause suffering to oneself (as in the case of rich people who have enough money to buy natural resources for unwise consumption) but causes suffering to others as it exploits natural resources. In such a case, the consumption of sensual pleasure is frowned upon by Buddhism.

Consuming sensual pleasure is not an end in itself

As life is considered by Buddhist ethics to be a process aiming at the highest perfection, anything performed during that process is considered to be merely a means to an end. So, economic life is not the end-all in the Buddhist perspective. Western theories of economics are mostly divided from religion, but Buddhist economics can never be considered separate from Buddhist ethics. In an earlier section, we considered that the rational consumption of sensual pleasure is not prohibited in Buddhism. This statement, however, is not without conditions. In the Buddhist perspective, even though laypersons are involved in worldly affairs, they are advised to look forward to the higher goal of life. Those who are involved in worldly affairs and who do not think of going beyond consumption can never be considered good Buddhists. Although Buddhism differs from Hinduism in various aspects, they share some common notions about the aim of life. In Hinduism, life should be led by the *purusartha,* the four stages of life. In Buddhist canon, no such thing is directly mentioned, but Buddhist traditions as found in Buddhist texts and among the Buddhist community indicate the same thing. Sensual pleasure in the Buddhist perspective, though considered not to be immoral in itself, should be viewed as merely a temporal means to be utilized as the very first step toward something more valuable. Phra Prayudh states that in the Buddhist perspective, money is not an evil in itself, so it can be used to support both good and evil. Wealth gained from pure means and used to support the poor, as found in the story of Vessantara, may be cited as an example of wealth used in a good way.

Theoretically, the Buddhist concept of sensual pleasure as the means to something more valuable could be viewed as having some ecological implications. Mahatma Gandhi says that the wealth of the earth can be distributed to everyone but not to those with insatiable desires; this can also be applied to Buddhist teaching. Natural resources are much exploited these days and the main reason for their destruction is simply human desires. Modern consumerism, introduced to humanlund through the capitalist economy – considered the major factor for the exploitation of natural resources – is firmly rejected by Buddhist scholars in Thailand such as Buddhadasa, Sulak and Phra Prayudh. The main logic used by these Buddhist thinkers is rather simple – fewer needs lead to lesser use, but fewer needs are not possible if we are not convinced that life offers more valuable gains than sensual pleasure.

The Real Application of Buddhist Economics in Thailand

Even though most economists in Thailand admit that Buddhist economics may best serve only as utopian economics that can be imagined but can never be

applied in the real world, there are some notable indicators that Buddhist economics can be and is applied in the real world. We should focus on Thailand, though it may be admitted that the things happening in Thailand may be found in other places. Two scenarios, at least, can be cited.

The Santi Asoka movement and its Buddhist community

The Santi Asoka is a modern Buddhist movement in Thailand established by Samana Bodhirak about thirty years ago. Its main mission is to prepare the Buddhist community to challenge the modern world. In Bodhirak's view, to challenge the modern consumerist world, Buddhists must give real examples to the world, to assert that Buddhist economics can really be applied. The basic assumption of the Santi Asoka is that the practice of *Dhamma* can never be done separately from economic life. This seems to be adopted from Buddhadasa, who usually says that to work is to practise the *Dhamma*.

In the Santi Asoka's view, Buddhist ethics is the ethics of more work but less consumption. Buddhist economics, as interpreted by the Santi Asoka, is based on work ethics. The Santi Asoka criticizes the capitalist economy as being based on selfishness, a position that seems to be accepted by capitalist thinkers like Ayn Rand in her two famous works, *Capitalism: The Unknown Idea* and *The Virtue of Selfishness*. From this point of view, the Santi Asoka asserts that Buddhist economics differs greatly from capitalist economics in that the former is based on altruism. Any aim to convince human beings to love others like oneself, as pointed out by Ayn Rand, however, must be confronted with the big question: how can human beings who are naturally selfish love others? The Santi Asoka's response to this question is: (1) Even though human beings apparently are selfish, the very essence of human beings, in the Buddhist perspective, is pureness. That is, all human beings possess the potential to cultivate their mind away from selfishness. (2) As individual human beings are morally weak, however, social culture is needed to enable human beings as individuals to be strong enough to act against selfishness. This belief led to the setting up of the Buddhist Asoka community, well-known in Thailand.

The Asoka community contains a number of subcommunities, all established to be so-called self-supporting organs. In each subcommunity, the *sangha* (a Buddhist term denoting the Buddhist church) plays the basic role of both spiritual and working leader. The church is the centre bf the community, with two main duties: meting out moral and economic advice. A common slogan well-known among the Asoka community states, "No work, no right to eat." This implies that the capitalist economy is an evil as it permits those who do not produce (such as those engaged in the stock market who make profits through money

games) to possess wealth. Instead, the Asoka economy stresses on 'work,' a term that denotes various kinds of activity such as working in the fields, teaching, and so on. Work is the most important factor in Buddhist economics in that if everyone produces according to his or her ability and consumes according to real demand, to use Phra Prayudh's term, the total number of things produced will be enough to be shared by all the members of the community. As only real needs are served, the exploitation of natural resources will be much reduced. Buddhist economics in the Asoka community does not aim at wealth, but at the rational well-being of all members of the community.

Actually, the Asoka community produces nearly everything that is consumed in the community. It has its own schools for children, where the common knowledge required by the state is taught and additional working experience is stressed so that children are socialized into being good Buddhists at the early stage of their life. According to the Asoka community, the Buddhist way of life has very close connections with nature. Science and technology that is widely practised in modern Thai agriculture is seriously examined by the community. Natural products are produced in the community and excess commodities are sold in the market.

It seems obvious that the economic philosophy adopted by the Santi Asoka is collectivism. Buddhadasa, who more or less has influenced the Santi Asoka, is well-known as the contributor of a political and social theory called Dhammic socialism, claimed by him to be based on Buddhist thought. Buddhadasa states that nature has some will, and through wisdom, human beings can understand it. He believes that the will of nature is collectivist, thus, implying that the social theory best applicable to human community is collectivism. The Santi Asoka follows this reasoning. Actually, collectivism has been presented by Western thinkers like Plato, Thomas More, Peter Kropotkin and Karl Marx. Buddhist collectivism could be considered one of the collectivist theories in the world. However, as stated by Buddhadasa, Buddhist social theory must be based on loving kindness, and loving kindness without religious grounds is impossible. There are two ways to manifest collectivism. One is through political force, and the other is through religious faith. The Asoka community uses the latter method. It should be noted that the leader of Santi Asoka, Samana Bodhirak, admits that religious faith is something hard to apply to society on a large scale. So, Buddhist economics seems best when applied to a small community whose members are closely linked by religious faith and culture, rather than to the whole country.

Royal projects

The attempt to apply Buddhist economics on a larger scale can be found in the projects run by the present king of Thailand. Recently, the king has criticized attempts to make Thailand an economic giant; that to be a tiger (tiger here symbolizes an economic leader) is not important, but to have an economy that can provide a self-supporting system is of greater importance. The king presents an economic theory, which he calls self-sufficiency economics. Even though he does not mention that his theory is based on Buddhist doctrine, economists in Thailand who are familiar with Buddhism admit that his theory can be called a Buddhist economic theory.

The projects run by the king are in two parts. First, they are to give his people the right understanding of the economy. Second, they are about applying that understanding to real practices. According to him, the objective of the economy is to provide basic needs, not to be used as a means to accumulate wealth. The king's position seems to be in accordance with Buddhist morality, which does not consider wealth accumulation the sole aim of life. The king believes that, ultimately, natural resources such as food must be considered the 'real' thing, while things that play major roles in modern capitalist economy such as currency are merely illusions. A member of Thai royalty, who devoted his life to agricultural development, once said that money is illusion but food is real. Modern economy wrongly convinces people that money is God. As an illusion, a system based on money can be critically affected, with the economic crisis that occurred in Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia in the past five years being cited as evidence of this. In Thailand, during hard times, a number of people who were critically affected committed suicide. It should be noted that compared to businesspeople, farmers suffered the least. The great difference between them is that a farmer's life is associated with the real thing while a businessperson's life is involved with illusion. Illusions can appear and disappear at any time.

The king's theory of Thai economy is applied in village economy. Over the past decades, Thai villagers had suffered greatly from the old style economy, where they were advised to produce commodities to be sold in the market. In market economy, which Marx criticizes extensively, the one who takes profits is usually not the worker. The village economy does not aim to produce for the market, but primarily for family consumption. The excess is sold in the market only as a supplement. It is believed that this system enables those who produce to be as best rewarded from their work as possible.

The Possible Role of Buddhist Economics in the Future

Based on what I have observed of Buddhist economics in the Thai context during the past years, I have made some formulations. As I am not an economist but a Buddhist scholar whose work centres on reading Buddhist texts rather than carrying out empirical research on the economy, I apologize if my economic insight is inaccurate. The first thing that comes to mind is, when we discuss the matter of applying alternative modes of economy to society, we must first ask what is wrong in the current system. As I understand it, human beings have our own unique and different lives. We have different jobs, family, friends, and so on, and these differences make us unable to follow the same path. The capitalist economy functions well in the world because it does not demand that everybody does the same thing. Division of labour, as mentioned in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations,* is inevitably accepted as a necessary fact. My first assumption is that division of labour is not an evil in itself.

The second thing that comes to mind is that no economic theory can ever be considered separately from the matter of justice. I use the term 'justice' simply to denote fair distribution. Although I admit that capitalist economics serves most people well, one of its weak points is its conception of justice. For me, it is wrong if the people who work hard remain poor, while those who do not produce become rich. The capitalist world allows this contradiction without questioning it, and this is wrong, too. If we want Buddhist economics to be applied to Thai society and the world, it seems that its role would be to provide for the adoption of a rational concept of fair distribution in society.

The third thing to be mentioned is the so-called *minor scale* of Buddhist economics. Economic theories taught in universities are grouped under the social sciences, implying that these theories consider social dimensions of human life, not life itself. Life, in the Buddhist perspective, is the smallest entity but of the greatest importance. Economics courses can provide knowledge on how to glean the most profit in business, but this absolutely does not concern life. In Buddhism, life is concerned with how to be happy; profit-making and happiness are two different things. One major evil found in the capitalist economy, as Marx points out, is that it forces you to work and you are finally forced to hate your work. Among businesspeople, there are few who admit that work brings happiness. On the contrary, Buddhist economics states that as long as you do not feel that work is happiness, something must be wrong. Buddhist economics brings life and work together, and this cannot be found in general economics courses in universities. Alienation between people and their work is a serious matter to be resolved, and Buddhist economics tells a lot about how to solve this problem. We have many material economic theories, but one thing we lack is an economic thought that

can heal spiritual poverty. At this point, Buddhist economics may possibly serve very well!

Notes

1. According to Thai tradition, a Buddhist monk with specific religious qualities will be honoured by the King as a royal *sangha* member. This monk will be given a royal *sangha* member name, known in Thai as *samanasak*. The older name will be replaced by the newer one when the monk rises in status, making it very difficult for those unacquainted with Thai tradition to figure out if different names refer to the same monk. Phra Prayudh is now given the *samanasak* Phra Dhammapitaka, and had a number of names previously. To avoid confusion, the monks mentioned in this paper will be referred to by ordinary names and not by titles.

2. The term egoist is used here to refer to a natural fact without any moral implications. That is, a man with an egoistic attitude can be good or bad depending on his outer actions, nor on his inner attitude to his life and the world.

References

Abhichai Panthasen (2001). *Buddhist Economics.* Bangkok: Arnarin Press.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1972). *Morality and the World.* Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation.

_____ (1975). *Idappaccayata: The Conditioned State of Things.* Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation.

_____ (1977). *Dhamma and Politics.* Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation.

_____ (1986). *Dhammic Socialism.* Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation.

_____ (1989a). *Handbook for Mankind.* Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation.

_____ (1989b). *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhadasa.* Edited and translated by D.K. Swearer. New York: State University of New York Press.

_____ (1990). *The Buddha? Doctrine of Anatta.* Chaiya: Dhammadana Foundation.

Chamnong Tongprasert (1979). *Buddhism, Society, and Politics.* Bangkok: Praepittaya Press.

Pataporn Sirikarn (1995). *The Duty of the Sangha in Buddhist Doctrine: A Case Study of Phra Khamkhian Suvanno.* Bangkok: Institute of Thai Studies, Thammasat University.

_____ (1997). *Santi Asoke Movement in Thai Society.* Bangkok: Center for Buddhist Studies, Chulalongkorn University.

Phra Dhammapitaka (1984). *Looking to America to Solve Thailand's Problems.* Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1989a). *Culture and Development.* Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1989b). *The Freedom Road of Thai Education*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1992a). *Buddhism as a Foundation of Science*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1992b). *How to Set up True Democracy*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1993). *Toward Sustainable Science*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1994a). *A Buddhist Solution for the Twenty-first Century*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1994b). *Buddhist Economics: A Middle Way for a Market Place*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

_____ (1994c). *State and Buddhism*. Bangkok: Buddhadhamma Foundation.

Preecha Changkwanyun (1995). *The Political Thought of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Preecha Piampongsarn (1985). *Green Economics*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn Political Economy Group.

Sidh Butr-indr (1979). *The Social Philosophy of Buddhism*. Bangkok: Mahamakut University Press.

Somboon Suksamran (1972). *Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia: The Role of Sangha in the Modernization of Thailand*. London: St. Martin's Press.

_____ (1982). *Buddhism and Politics in Thailand*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

_____ (1993). *Buddhism and Political Legitimacy*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Somparn Promta (1996). *Emptiness: A Buddhist View on Human Life and the World*. Bangkok: Puttachat Press.

_____ (1998a). *Buddhist Philosophy: Man, Society and Ethical Dilemma*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

_____ (1998b). *Law and Morality: A Buddhist Perspective*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.

Sulak Sivaraksa (1980). *Religion and Development*. Bangkok: Suksit Siam Press.

_____ (1981). A *Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*. New York: Parallax Press.

_____ (1988). A *Socially Engaged Buddhism*. Bangkok: Suksit Siam Press.

_____ (1992). *Seeds of Peace*. Bangkok: Suksit Siam Press.

_____ (1993). *The Buddhist Perception of Desirable Societies in the Future*. Bangkok: Suksit Siam Press.

3

Secular Education, Development and Values:
A Buddhist Perspective*

Pracha Hutanuwatr

Introduction

From the perspective of a Thai Buddhist, secular education and the current form of 'development' are core components of the modernization project, which began in Europe several centuries ago and is currently in its globalization phase. This project operates from a basic set of beliefs and values that are alien to Buddhism, and it produces and reproduces values that are antithetical to basic Buddhist values. The beliefs and values of Western modernity are fundamental to a power structure that is socially unjust and environmentally destructive, and degrading to the quality of human life.

My critique of these beliefs and values is based on the Buddhist belief that society, as an external influence (*paratokosa*) on human beings, should enhance the development of healthy human qualities. Wisdom, generosity, self-restraint, self-respect and compassion should be encouraged and supported; unhealthy human characteristics such as excessive individualism, competition, greed and violence should be discouraged. The present education and development systems, however, privilege the latter.

In contrast, Buddhist education (*sikkha*) aims at cultivating the healthy (*kusala*) and reducing the unhealthy (*akusala*) human qualities. It does this via a form of education that is grounded in the Eightfold Path for living skilfully and ending suffering, as was taught by the Buddha. This learning is lifelong, holistic and mostly self-directed. The process of Buddhist education empowers both the individual and the community to become self-reliant and self-respecting.

If development policy is going to change so that it influences society to move in a more Buddhist and humane direction, then formal education can play a vital role, but only on the condition that there is a political will for serious reform. In the absence of the will to reform, Buddhism can still be a frame of reference for

alternative education and other non-mainstream movements that challenge the present mindset and system, and this can lead us toward positive long-term change.

Development, Desire and Resistance

What's Wrong with Development?

In my country, many people, including the rich and the poor, urban and rural dwellers, are not satisfied with the lives they are currently leading. Even some of the forest dwellers are dissatisfied. They are all under enormous pressure to compete with one another for more money, more power, higher social status and more social recognition. Worse, this ethos of competition is considered progressive according to the value system currently dominant in Thai society. If you are contented with your life, if you do not try to move up the social ladder, if you are not eager to "get on in the world," you are considered lazy, regressive and not up-to-date. If you are a government officer of a certain rank, you must try to move up. If you are a businessperson, you must try to get richer. If you are a farmer and you have a motor cycle, you must try to get a pick-up truck. If you are a local politician, you have to try to be a national politician. This drive to get richer and more prosperous holds true for both individuals and institutions. Businesses always have to expand, offices have to get bigger, government departments need to get a bigger share of the state budget, the GDP of a country needs to increase and so on.

From a Buddhist point of view, this kind of competitive and size-obsessed social ethos makes everybody unhappy, whether they be rich or poor, winner or loser. People seem unable to dwell in the present moment and appreciate the beauty of life as it is. Everyone always has to move on to the next post, and once there, has to move further up.

Why and how does this happen? The Buddhist analysis is that this happens when people are driven by their unexamined and unrestrained desires (*tanha*). According to the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism, *tanha* is the root cause of suffering. After half a century of development, even though some sectors of Thai society are better off materially, this is counteracted by the fact that the development of *tanha* is an integral and essential part of the modernist development paradigm. Thus, in general, people from all walks of life are less rather than more happy.

If we were to express the pursuit of happiness in equation form, it could look like this:

$$\text{Happiness (x)} = \frac{\text{Satisfying one's desires (y)}}{\text{Desires (z)}}$$

This simple equation shows that we can be happier (increasing x) by either increasing (y) or decreasing (z). The modern development paradigm definitely encourages us to increase (y), that is, to satisfy our desires as much as possible. In my view, this is the basic ethos of the modernization project. This project originated in Europe several centuries ago and has been imposed on Asia, firstly, by the colonial powers and later, by the agents of economic globalization, transnational companies and globalist economic institutions such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

From a Buddhist point of view, the imposition of such an ethos is a tragic mistake as it rests on a fundamentally flawed and inadequate understanding of human nature. As the Buddha said, "No river is bigger than *tanha.*" Gandhi expressed it as, "The world has enough for everyone's need but not enough for anyone's greed." Desires are never fulfilled by satisfying them; the more you satisfy them the larger they get. So, trying to become happy by increasing the capacity to satisfy desires is a futile pursuit. This is why consumerism can never respond to the existential sense of lack that we all have. Satisfying greed and puffing up the sense of self-importance may temporarily fill us with some sort of excitement and help us escape from the basic void of life, but life always brings us back to our basic existential insecurity. Only an authentic spiritual education can help us learn to cope with this basic insecurity.

Tanha and its Consequences Examined

Thus, we see a lack of meaning and joy in modern society, where a secular education system that promotes a competitive ethos is widespread. Let us take a closer look at how *tanha* operates in our lives to create unhappiness. Whatever culture or race we belong to, whatever ideology we subscribe to, whatever religion we adhere to, we are all aware that one common aspect of our humanity is our tendency to crave wealth, power, recognition and sensual pleasure. Buddhists call this tendency *lobha* (greed). If we cannot have the object of our desire, or if it is taken away from us, we get depressed or angry or are filled with hatred (dosa). We further compound the potential sources of unhappiness by regarding the satisfaction rendered by wealth, power, recognition and sensual pleasure as worthwhile not only in themselves, but also for the sake of comparing ourselves with others: "I have what you have, I have more than what you have, I have better than what you have." This tendency to assert oneself in competition against and in comparison with others, to regard oneself as essentially separate and different from other beings, is called moha or "illusion of Self" in Buddhism. The combination of greed, hatred and illusion (*lobha,* dosa, moha), acting together, is known as *akusalamula,* which means unhealthy or unwholesome roots.

Such unhealthy roots are not confined to individuals, but also operate in different collective forms, and often with more destructive consequences. Instead of me, me and just me, it can be my family, my company, my country, my community, my language, my religion, my race, my group and/or my club. *Akusalamula* is the force behind colonization, tribal wars, religions and countries, conflicts between ethnic groups and exploitation by corporations. Even international sporting events may exhibit *akusalamula.*

Akusalamula at Work in Thai Development

Let us move from general principles to the realities of development and education in my country.

We were forced to formally open our country to Western powers in 1855. After seeing what was happening to neighbouring countries, the Thai elite in those days had been for decades anxious about the dangers of Western colonization. It responded to this pressure with a drive to modernize and develop the country along Western lines politically, economically, technologically and culturally. This was both an attempt to prevent a colonialist imposition of modernization, and a sincere effort on the part of the first generation of elite Thai modernizers to gain the best that the West had to offer while still retaining the Buddhist traditions of Thailand. One significant method employed to achieve this end was the sending of royal children to the West to be educated. When this second generation returned home to rule, however, it lost confidence in authentic Buddhist values, lost touch with its roots, and succumbed to Western values. Thus, although Thailand survived the colonization storm at the political level, by remaining unconquered, it slowly lost its cultural and intellectual independence.

One reason why efforts to maintain a strong Thai culture grounded in Buddhism were undermined is that the new elite used secular education as an important tool in the development process. The new forms of education had the effect of making those educated in this way feel that our culture is full of superstition, and our traditional way of life is not good enough. Not having modern technology and a modern way of life was represented as a form of inferiority to be despised and transcended. Secular education in the service of the modernist paradigm of 'development' implanted the values of individualism, competition, the need to 'succeed' and consumerism in the minds of the population. Why? Because without these Western-style values, there would be no drive toward Western-style development.

The situation got worse after World War II, when the Americans entered Thailand in a big way, and our development and education policies were completely under American influence. This brought about a cruder kind of modernization.

On the advice of American experts, the military government ordered Thai monks not to teach the principle of *santosa* (contentment or satisfaction with what one has) to the people, because that would prejudice people against joining in the 'development' process. So, the Americans knew that Buddhism operates from the (z) and not the (y) part of the happiness equation.

Until today, we have been unable to liberate ourselves from Americanization, even though American troops are no longer stationed in our country. We have had more than enough of American- and European-educated Thai elite and technocrats trained to operate development and education projects the American way. The situation worsened after the economic crash of 1997, when many critical sectors of the economy were bought over by foreign corporations. Pressure from the culture of consumerism has increased accordingly. This form of development and its associated form of education are not desirable, not only because they make people unhappy at the individual level but also because together, they constitute a form of structural violence in society. After decades of this form of development, the gap between the rich and the poor, and the powerful and the powerless is getting wider and not smaller. An increasing number of farmers have lost their land and gotten into debt, while unemployment is a common phenomenon. The trafficking of women, drug abuse and trafficking and HIV/ AIDS have become very serious social problems. Big businesses may have become bigger and richer, but the majority of ordinary people like rural fisherfolk, small farmers and forest dwellers are losing their livelihoods and turning into cheap labour in the cities, where trade unions are kept weak to attract international investment.

On top of all this injustice in society, the whole ecosystem of the country is becoming degraded in every aspect. The forests are quickly shrinking, air pollution in big cities is getting worse, and rivers and canals are suffering from an overuse of chemicals in agriculture. Natural resources, which form the basis of livelihood for ordinary people, are being rapidly depleted. Culturally, the whole society has become increasingly materialistic and consumerist. Corporate businesses use marketing to stimulate greed and increase wants, by manipulating people into thinking that life is only valuable when you can buy and consume goods promoted by the media. The aim of life is reduced to gaining increased sensual pleasure, wealth, power, status or fame. Everything in modern society, from human life to trees, animals and ecosystems, and even minerals and oil from below the earth's surface, are thought of in terms of market value or material value.

The Religion of Consumerism

In fact, consumerism becomes a new kind of demonic religion, propagated through the strongest means ever used in the history of religion, namely, mass media and

the secular education system. This new religion has its own temples in shopping malls, its own preachers in media moguls and advertising kings, and its own theologians in economists and technocrats who legitimize economic growth, the free market and industrialism. People who are unable to escape the evangelical tools of this new religion, the mass media and secular schools, and who are thereby forced to live under this 'religious' ethos, will always feel that they are invalid. Life for them becomes a constant struggle to be someone other than who they are. They are always not good enough, do not have enough, have not done enough. So the aim of life is always more money, more recognition, more power. The whole climate of society is an echo of the new motto "I buy, therefore I am." If we want to *be someone* we have to *buy something,* and in order to satisfy this constant desire to be someone, we have to buy newer models or brands, many of which are intentionally designed to be inefficient or to become easily obsolete. The world we live in today is under assault from rampant consumerism, which threatens the very destruction of our planet. We consume too much, produce too much, and create too much waste. The society we live in emphasizes the selling of goods that are not vital for life's needs, but which merely contribute to the profits gleaned by corporations.

This requirement of endless consumption, within the unlimited growth economy of industrialism, is the fundamental structural cause of violence against human beings and nature that we face today. Regrettably, the education system has to be viewed as part and parcel of this unhealthy structure. What are the prospects for change? Although the adoption of the new Thai constitution in 1997 and its associated reforms mean that some prospects look brighter than they have in a while, I remain cautious and only hopeful that there is now a little room for organic intellectuals to influence mainstream developmental thought. We will have to begin by questioning all the basic assumptions of the model of development that we have adopted.

Questioning Some Basic Assumptions

The reason current systems of development and education have created so many problems in Thai society is, I believe, due to a number of wrong basic assumptions and beliefs associated with the whole process. In addition to the wrong belief about human happiness, and a wrong system of education that encourages competition, individualism, greed and consumerism (both discussed earlier), there are a few other underlying wrong beliefs that need to be identified.

First of all, the belief that Western civilization is superior is a wrong belief. Even though school textbooks pay lip service to the value of Buddhism, Thai culture and Asian culture, the whole ethos of the education system leads people

to believe that we have to catch up with the West. This creates a hypocritical society where one thing is preached but another is practised. With cultural domination by the increasingly powerful Western media, people and their local cultures have been inflicted with an inferiority complex. As the administration and educational systems are still modelled on the colonial style, much of the diversity of local cultures has been gradually weakened. Every village and region wants a Bangkok lifestyle while increasing numbers of Bangkokians want to be Westerners in all aspects of life even down to their hairstyles – a visible symbol of the loss of self-esteem (*hiri-ottappa*) in society. From the Buddhist point of view, the loss of self-esteem is the beginning of all moral degradation. Combined with the worship of greed as a social value, it thoroughly corrupts society.

The second wrong belief in the current mode of development and education is the belief in science as the only source of valid knowledge, despite the fact that science is only one kind of knowledge (dealing only with the material aspect of the universe) among many others. Important indigenous wisdom, which has been the basis of sustainable societies for generations, is looked down upon and disregarded, especially, wisdom related to understanding oneself, deeper human relations and the human relationship with nature.

This brings us to the third mis-belief – that humans should dominate and conquer nature. The consequences of this delusion are not only the destruction of nature beyond the scale at which the earth can sustain itself, but also the alienation of human beings from nature – another reason for unhappiness in our time. It is clearly stated in Buddhism that human beings should live close to nature and build a culture such that humans can be friends with, rather than masters of, nature. For us, the forest, not the city, is the centre of real culture.

Last in the list of mis-beliefs comes the belief in linear progress, which moves us away from the 'present moment.' The causes and conditions of staying in the 'present moment' or the 'moment of reality' are of prime importance in Buddhism, particularly with regard to the art of coping with suffering. Under the 'progress' ethos, we are stimulated to expect that things will be better in the future, but at the cost of sacrificing the present reality. This belief in progress is a myth as it promises something that will never be completely fulfilled. Indeed, the strive to fulfil this myth is stimulated by *tanha*. In the name of development and modernization, ordinary people have been 're-structured' to abandon cultures and ways of life that have evolved over thousands of years, and which are for the most part extremely appropriate for local conditions and environments. Workers have been manoeuvred to sacrifice labour for low wages for the sake of industrialization; farmers have been relocated by big infrastructure projects in the name of progress, development and economic growth. In these processes, the

disruption to living in the present moment' and the resulting upheaval is given little or no consideration at all. The forces of development – the state and corporations – seldom stop to investigate whether their practices are doing more harm than good, but continue to preach blind faith in their religion of progress at any cost.

Buddhist Practice to Reduce Akusala (unhealthiness)

The huge increase in suffering in society caused by the thoughtless and self-seeking application of modernist development has brought forth a Buddhist response. If Buddhist education is going to have any real, positive impact in dealing with the problems of present-day society, it has to be able to help decrease both individual and structural defilements (*akusala*). In other words, Buddhist education should not only help us keep our precepts of not doing any harm and of being honest and generous in a personal sense, but should also encourage us to act in these ways to change damaging economic, political and cultural structures. The practices of meditation and mindfulness must not be confined to the meditation room. How can it be good Buddhist practice to meditate and then spend the rest of our time submitting to the status quo, when the whole system is full of *akusala*? We must practise mindfulness to reduce our individual defilement and increase our positive potential, in order to be actively involved in a pursuit toward changing the structures of defilement. Thus, meditation becomes an aid in becoming more sensitive to the destructive tendencies in mainstream society. The practice of *vipassana* (insight) meditation can help us see the impermanence, suffering and non-self of the World Bank, the IMF, multinational corporations and dictatorial regimes. It will also help us cultivate the wisdom to envision alternative structures, and the ways to achieve them.

Traditionally, when one becomes a devout Buddhist, one practises meditation seriously and keeps the precepts – not to kill, not to steal, not to misbehave sexually, not to tell lies and not to intoxicate oneself with drugs and alcohol. In addition to this, one should live a simple life with few possessions. When this is translated into modern society, modern Buddhists in both East and West usually follow this interpretation of the precepts and meditation practice in a personal manner. How many, however, are questioning consumer lifestyles and the ideal of an endless accumulation of wealth, including vast amounts of money in pension funds and the purchase of numerous insurance policies against the perceived difficulties of losing these possessions and financial insecurity? If such trends continue, modern Buddhists will hardly be able to contribute to a reduction of structural violence in the world today. In our daily life in the modern world, we seldom kill anybody directly. We rarely even kill animals directly. Most of the

harm in the world today, including the majority of modern crime and drug problems and even AIDS deaths, is not the result of direct violence. Rather, they are the result of developing social structures that encourage greed and competitive aggression. One may keep the five precepts in the traditional sense, but what about keeping silent when your government sends troops to kill people in other countries? What about investing or putting money into a company or bank that invests in arms production? What about the IMF or World Bank using their financial influence to support big development projects that destroy communities and villages and large tracts of nature? What about transnational corporations (TNCs) invading communities and taking away local natural resources and destroying local cultures and community life? What about governments supporting TNCs against local people, an increasing occurrence all over the world in the name of globalization? What about the state-controlled education system aimed at training young people to be technicians so that they will fit in as part of the machinery of the corporate world, without any concept of themselves as whole persons with higher potential?

Each of the aforementioned structural concerns violates many of the Buddhist precepts while at the same time harming people and nature on a large-scale. Part of spiritual education in today's world should be about understanding this structural violence, and training oneself not to commit it, while also engaging in striving toward alternatives. Buddhist education needs to focus on empowering people to become enlightened individuals full of compassion and wisdom, and enlightened agents of change who will reduce and eradicate violence against people and nature at both personal and structural levels. Buddhist education should also aspire toward helping individuals become self-reliant within their own communities, rather than being dependent on a hostile state and under the thumb of national and global corporations. We need a new kind of *Bodhisattva* who dares to dream of a different kind of world and engage in different kinds of social action, according to the potential of each person to combine meditation and social action into their way of life. Wherever we are in society, we are always able to do something for positive structural change. At the same time, this can be a means through which we cultivate positive qualities (*parami*) for reducing our personal residues of greed, hatred and illusion. This 'engaged' form of education gives real meaning to life, because it aims at cultivating the wholesome potential that naturally exists in the individual, and these qualities will connect one with other beings and the universe. This lies at contrast with an education that aims at training people to be technicians or technocrats, fuelled by selfish motivations to glorify the ego via wealth, status or power. Buddhists believe that although you may be 'successful' through this kind of education in conventional terms, you will still experience a lack of meaning in

life and be deeply dissatisfied. It is this existential sense of lack and the void that haunt us in the modern world and drive us to want more, do more and achieve more, and more and more ... without end. Thus, we perpetuate cycles of suffering and become more and more in need of forms of education that show us how to avoid and end suffering and create positive alternatives.

A Vision for a Buddhist Education

Sikkha for Individuals and Society

To achieve our vision of a holistic education that encompasses spiritual values as well as intellectual development, we must examine our assumptions about who we are trying to educate, and what it is possible to do with them. For Buddhists, a key assumption is that every human being is born with the potential to become a Buddha. Buddhahood encompasses healthy qualities such as wisdom, generosity, self-restraint, self-esteem and compassion. Another core assumption is that the primary aim of human life must and should be to cultivate these faculties to the fullest, in order to realize Buddhahood. For an individual to achieve this aim, two indispensable conditions must be fulfilled. The first is critical self-awareness (*yonisomanasikara*), and the second is a supportive social environment of good, spiritual friends (*kalyanamitta*).

The aim of Buddhist education, therefore, is to ensure that these conditions are met, and to promote and encourage social values that enhance a healthy quality of life consistent with attaining Buddhahood; rather than the opposite, which the present system is doing. It is clear that this process of education cannot be confined to the classroom. Education needs to be incorporated into all aspects of society to empower the individual and strengthen the community, rather than increasing feelings of inadequacy and community disintegration, as is the present trend.

What would such an education look like? For over two thousand years, Buddhist thinkers and practitioners have advocated that a true education *(sikkba)* begins with and should always be based on the Eightfold Path, taught by the Buddha as the way to live skilfully and end suffering. *Sikkba,* thus, includes how we look at the world, how we cultivate our intentions and motivations, how we talk, how we act, how we choose and conduct our livelihood, how we cultivate good thoughts, how we develop mindfulness in our daily life and how we develop peace and calm. This form of education is holistic in the sense that it develops every aspect of life simultaneously. It does not give prime importance to intellectual training but aspires to harmonize the head with the heart, as well as the hand with the mouth. In this sense, life itself is a form of education and people from all walks of life and all levels of intellectual capacity can realize the highest educational

attainment. Sikkha is an education that aims to reduce greed, hatred and self-importance. In the process of doing so, individuals and communities can gain self-confidence and be empowered. Once desires are reduced, and we have more compassion and wisdom from not comparing ourselves with others, we can become relaxed and content with what we have and who we are, so as not to be easily tempted by the siren call of endless wealth, recognition and power. Once the mind and the community cease to be crowded with unquenchable desires, our natural positive potential for virtues such as compassion and wisdom will be released and can blossom. Hence, it is possible to counteract all forms of violence.

Sikkha does not constitute education for social climbing; it does not require us to deny what we and what our communities are, and neither does it encourage us to be someone or something else. Rather, it strengthens us in being aware, proud and critical of who and what we and our community are. Whilst this can be understood intellectually, it can be very challenging to truly assimilate such intellectual insights into our daily lives to reach the described levels of contentment and self-confidence. This kind of self-confidence and self-esteem is very different from the shallow self-confidence and self-esteem based on egoism and individualism. True confidence and self-esteem come from the freedom of not comparing and not desiring to be ahead or equal to others, and from the healthy energy of love and compassion. The more this positive drive can be developed, the more empowered the individual is in making decisions that are based less and less on self-interest. This may sound paradoxical but in practice, the weakening of the sense of self-centredness leads to the strengthening of a self-love that is wholesome and positive. In Buddhism, self-interest and other kinds of interest do not contradict one another if we operate from a wholesome and healthy (*kusala*) perspective.

Sikkha needs to apply equally to society as well as to the individual. For an individual to cultivate healthy qualities, greed, violence and consumerism must not dominate society. We need a social environment that encourages the virtues of dana (generosity), *karuna* (compassion), *sila* (social justice), *samathi* (peacefulness) and pannya (wisdom). What does this mean in terms of how we develop our societies? It means that we need an education system that encourages cooperation rather than competition, and provides opportunities for students to develop all aspects of healthy human potential. To be a computer expert or a politician or a lawyer or a medical doctor is secondary to being a well-balanced human being.

In addition to providing a better basis for the development of all-rounded, healthy individuals, the education system should also aim at creating an all-rounded, healthy society. To achieve this end, the education system should be less

elitist. For example, training in technical expertise – from medicine to agriculture – should allow for fair representation from all communities, including tribal communities. Those trained must make a commitment to go back and serve their communities. Education must also be decentralized, so that local areas have more authority in deciding on an appropriate content and format of education to suit local needs and aspirations.

More attention should also be paid to the total social environment in which people learn and live. For example, we learn greed and hatred from an economic system that puts profits before people. We need an economic system that produces for the real basic needs of people, sharing natural and financial resources fairly and emphasizing local production for local consumption. Economic activities should not be the cause of social injustice and environmental destruction. The weak must be taken care of and have their basic needs met.

Commercial advertising is another form of social miseducation, and must be abolished. It only serves to stimulate and manipulate greed and illusion, and is a form of dishonesty that breeds suffering. Television and radio programmes should be fun and educational, with a balance of international, national and local productions. Freedom of expression should be guaranteed.

Centralized, colonialist forms of public administration are yet another way in which people are miseducated and disempowered. Step by step, the central authorities need to be localized to provide better public administration, education, healthcare and other public services. In this way, a Buddhist society becomes an educational environment filled with *kalyanamitta* (good friends). In such a society, happy people who live a simple life and serve others will be highly valued no matter the structural position they hold in the society, whether professor or potter. People who show off their wealth and overconsume will not be respected. Instead, those who spend their surplus time cultivating their wholesome human potential will be encouraged and supported.

The Core of Buddhist Education

How will this happen? The core of Buddhist education is the Eightfold Path. The path starts with the right view. This means looking into the true nature of things and realizing that there is no separate Self; everything is interconnected. This is in contrast to the usual way of seeing ourselves from a self-centred and anthropocentric point of view, as individuals and as a species. From the non-Self point of view, however, we are one with other beings in the universe, both human and non-human. Hence, to harm others is to harm ourselves – our social and environmental crises bear witness to this law of nature. The interrelatedness between human moral conduct and ecological balance is clearly stated in the ancient scriptures,

and developed in Buddhadasa Bhikku's translation of and comments on a Pali *Sutta*. He comments on the result of not acting in accordance with the *Dhamma* (law of nature).

The *Sutta* says:

Now, when the Brahmins and people with money already do not act according to *Dhamma,* the city people and country people do not act in accordance with *Dhamma* ... When we have reached the point where all people do not act according to *Dhamma* there arise uncertainties, fluctuations, and abnormal conditions in all of nature: The orbit of the moon and the sun is fluctuating and uncertain ... the stellar system has been disturbed by the ambitions of very greedy people, people who do not act according to *Dhamma*. [The *Sutta* goes on to describe how *panjassa* (pattern or order) of the universe becomes confused and this affects the patterns of weather, which affect the crops and, in turn, the people and the animals cannot survive.]

Buddhadasa comments that:

Human beings have long since brought about injustices that have left their mark on nature; this has resulted in nature behaving incorrectly. When nature is disrupted, it surrounds humans and brings about their continued downfall until it affects their physical bodies and their heart and mind; then our heart and mind also become mixed up.

We are supposed to live in harmony with nature and take from nature only enough for our basic needs. If we take this view seriously, it means we have to make drastic, radical changes in our economic and political institutions. This is in contrast to the view of modernity that regards human beings as masters and conquerors of nature – a view which, in my opinion, is the root cause of the worsening series of environmental calamities and crises that we face today.

To cultivate the right view is not just about philosophizing on the non-Self. We must examine our consciousness – including that which is usually hidden at the subconscious level – in order to transform our habits, attitudes and values into a sound basis for living wisely. This can be achieved by the prolonged practice of *vipassana* (insight) meditation until it is thoroughly integrated into our daily lives.

The second step on the Eightfold Path, right thought, is also concerned with our motivation and patterns of thinking. We have to train our thoughts to be free of selfish desire, hatred and cruelty. Again, this is not possible without going deep into our consciousness via meditation and mindfulness. The last three steps on the path – cultivation of good thoughts, developing mindfulness at all times, and developing peace and calm – also focus on mental development. Becoming more mentally skilful is not enough, however. The remaining steps of the path insist that at the same time, our speech, action and livelihood should be free from harming other beings – human and non-human alike.

If we look at life in modern society, we can see that we are living in an environment that encourages harmful speech, as heard in advertisements; harmful action, such as competition, overconsumption of meat, sexual abuse and deforestation; and finally, harmful livelihood, such as trading in arms or drugs, or running brothels or sweatshops. Harmful speech, action and livelihood destroy our quality of life, and create guilt and confusion in our hearts and heads, which makes it difficult to meditate and calm our minds. They also block the blossoms of compassion, wisdom and other positive qualities in our hearts, besides harming other people and nature. Our society is too busy, too noisy and too fast. Our minds are trained by the modern environment to be addicted to excitement, especially through television and other kinds of media. This has damaged the modern mind, and people are always doing things, needing things, desiring things. They are no longer able *to* be, simply to be. So it is necessary to cultivate our mental health by practising meditation and mindfulness, so that our minds will be calm, stable, active and sensitive. The healthy mind can, in turn, be used to cultivate wisdom and morality.

Traditionally, the two conditional factors absolutely essential for this kind of education are *kalyanamitta* (good spiritual friends) and *yonisomanasikara* (cultivating critical self-awareness). The former is an external factor and the latter, an internal factor. *Kalyanamitta* are not confined to teachers and fellow students, but include all aspects of the external environment of life, such as schools, media, family, nature, books, television, art, and so on. A spiritual teacher and a good friend may not be restricted to an individual human form either. Our educational friends may include a stable community, a forest, the sky at night, or perhaps an animal. In a deeper sense, education means learning to have right relationships with everything Spiritual education is a process that should occur within the individual and community, with a minimum classroom role; at its best, classroom education can be but a preliminary factor in cultivating good friends. This is why when we talk about Buddhist education, we cannot avoid talking about a new direction for society. As long as the present social ethos – which encourages greed, hatred and illusion – dominates our lives, there is no hope of Buddhist education having an effect on society at large. Whilst it may help a small group become personally enlightened, the impact will be very limited.

For example, we have several forest monasteries and some good meditation masters in Thailand, but their impact on the whole of the country is very small. This is because the structures of Thai society are becoming less and less Buddhist. Indeed, the basic ethos of Thai society is now geared toward economic growth fuelled by greed, competition and a materialistic way of life. Thus, when we consider the content and processes of whole educational establishments in modern

society, they hardly seem like fertile ground for finding good friends who will encourage us to cultivate compassion and wisdom, and reduce our defilements. Actually, the kind of friends we are more likely to find in modern educational establishments are what we call *papamitra,* meaning false friends or foes in the guise of friends. So it is very important for those who want to seek spiritual education to look for good friends and remember that the definition of *kalyanamitta* is wider than that of the personal teacher, albeit personal teachers are very, very important. In the age of the information highway, a lot of information can be sent across the globe instantly, but all this information put together cannot replace a good spiritual teacher who interacts with us in person. Many important things in life are not learnt through written or even verbal communication. When you have a personal teacher, the very relationship is ongoing education.

The other essential factor in a Buddhist education is the development of critical self-awareness. This is the freedom to question and doubt all kinds of proclaimed truths, including what our teachers teach. The Buddha warned his followers not to blindly follow what he said. Before belief, there should be real experimentation and observation of how the teachings, and indeed how everything, affect our lives. We must examine whether the teachings help us reduce our greed, narrow-mindedness, endless ambition, hatred and self-centredness and instead make us more content, open-minded, compassionate and forgiving. In this sense, spiritual education is a lifelong process of training under the guidance of external and internal teachers, good friends and critical self-awareness.

A Model of Buddhist Education

The Content of Buddhist Education

Can Buddhist education occur in the present schooling system? My answer is yes, but with a big *if.* In general, I agree with Ivan Illich that the present schooling system is doing more harm than good to individuals and society. I prefer the idea of diverse and multilayered learning centres organized by various social institutions such as temples, communities, families, factories, companies, cooperatives, hospitals, police departments, etc. This can happen at the local, regional, national and international levels to supplement the educational needs of society, bearing in mind that the whole society itself needs to be educationally reorganized according to the mentioned guidelines. Many people, however, will see this as being far off in the future. If we have to get by with the present schooling system for a while, what can we do? Bearing in mind that the aim of our education is to enhance the healthy or wholesome (*kusala*) components of life and of a healthy society; the learning environment, the process of learning and educational content

must work together toward this same goal. One of the weaknesses of the present education system is that the moral teaching in the textbooks says one thing while the learning environment and teaching methods communicate another.

A Buddhist social change and educational organization that I work with, the Spirit in Education Movement, has developed the following set of six basic content areas to be covered in ensuring a holistic education. To develop wholesome qualities in individuals and society, the schooling system has to provide an educational environment where the student can come to critically

- Understand herself/himself
- Understand society
- Understand nature
- Understand beauty
- Develop skills in healthy interpersonal relations
- Develop skills in searching for needed knowledge

These six aims cover the basics for becoming a mature, fully-cultivated person. Along with these basics, the student can gradually learn other skills that will be useful for earning her or his livelihood. With our sister organizations, the Thai Interreligious Commission for Development and Wongsanit Ashram, we are working to develop and pilot modules in these six areas. I will briefly discuss each of the areas to explain what we do.

Understand the self. Each of us is born different, with different temperaments, characters, hidden potentials, moral strengths and weaknesses, hidden skills, etc. Some are more lustful, others more angry, some compassionate, others intellectual, some are pragmatic, some are good at music, while others like painting. To be aware of who we are and accept, love and respect ourselves while concurrently directing ourselves toward a more healthy path is the aim of this aspect of education, which includes the ability to look after our mental and physical health. Meditation, contemplation, yoga, *tai chi,* silence, prayer and other forms of traditional spiritual practice can be applied skilfully. New approaches can be developed. Drama and novels can be helpful. Group work, vision quests, astrology, anagram and modern psychology can all be used if applied properly. In fact, all educational activities should help in understanding oneself if the student learns how to draw lessons from them. The teacher who is highly self-actualized will be able to facilitate this very important aspect of learning.

Understand society. Society today is very complex and it is difficult to see the big picture and the interrelation of different factors that affect our lives. Decisions made by a small group of people in one corner of the world can easily affect a vast majority of people elsewhere. Within one national boundary, there are different

sorts of communities existing together, sometimes with little understanding of or even communication with one another, not to mention the different schools of thought and ideologies that operate in the world today. Learning to understand society, therefore, should not be confined to intellectual learning. It should include visiting and spending time with different communities, improving our understanding by developing our hearts to be compassionate and sympathetic, as well as increasing our ability to analyze injustice and the causes and mechanisms of exploitation. This module of our curriculum includes exposure to alternative initiatives and tools to dream of and envision a different, better world.

Understand nature. To understand nature is to understand that one's own life, and human life, in general, are part of an ecosystem that is holistically interrelated. To harm nature is to harm oneself and vice versa. Besides learning how the ecosystem works, we need to emphasize the ecological crises that we are facing, both at the local and global levels, and be able to relate those environmental problems to our ways of producing, consuming and wasting. Introducing students to successful ongoing sustainable initiatives can provide great inspiration and a sign of hope for a more nature-friendly world. Taking the students to forests and a sea bonds them to nature and creates the love that is needed for living in harmony with nature. Moreover, exposure to the wilderness can be a great way of learning to know ourselves better. Many spiritual cultures have developed rituals and practices that help them know themselves by being one with nature, such as the rites of passage of the Native Americans and the *tudong* (forest wandering) tradition of the Buddhist forest monks. These are tools that can be developed or applied for educational purposes.

Understand beauty. Industrial and commercial development in the past half-century has destroyed our taste for traditional beauty without replacing it with something equal or better. This is very sad as the ensuing ugliness plays an important role in polluting the minds of our people. Our traditional ideas of beauty may be 'simple,' but they are very much in tune with nature and enhance the cultivation of a healthy quality of life or at least, do not endorse an unhealthy one. Yet presently, in the name of modernization and with commercial advertising, our homes are full of throwaway junk, such as posters of film or television stars. Handcrafted bamboo and rattan baskets and simple cane furniture are replaced by mass produced plastic. Even the Buddha shrines are decorated with plastic flowers and electric 'auras.' Houses are inappropriately designed and coloured with modern materials (some of which are very harmful, like asbestos). These are used in our villages with a sense of superiority. Our towns and cities are built to be modern (Western) without consideration for the local climate and the natural

environment. Bangkok, once known as the "Venice of the East," has become a city of sex, sin and gloomy concrete, full of billboard advertisements by transnational corporations. If you do not know what hell looks like, you can visit parts of downtown Bangkok like Silom or Sukhumvit.

Then, there is the pollution of the mental environment through the junk television programmes full of advertising, plus talk shows and sensational movies, most of which stimulate *akusala*. It is, therefore, crucial to help our youngsters rediscover a sense of beauty beyond the commercial and junk arts dominating our society. While it is of prime importance to go back to our traditional arts and develop from there to ground ourselves in our own roots, we can definitely enrich ourselves and our culture by being receptive to beauty from other cultures – East and West, North and South, new and old, classical, modern and postmodern. People preoccupied with good art will definitely enhance our healthy quality of life, and this is a sign of a good society.

Develop skills in healthy interpersonal relationships. Buddhism is all about relationships. Relationships with our fellow human beings are an important factor in determining whether we are happy and healthy people. More than a hundred years of the modernization project in the country has weakened our ability to relate well to one another, even to close kin and friends. It is vital to reclaim this ability; we can draw on our indigenous wisdom, Buddhist teaching and other relevant teachings for this. Again, this is not done by listening to lectures but by actually having relationships with a healthy teacher and with friends in the learning group, by working together, learning together, playing together, living together, travelling together. Then there should be proper debrief after the activities. Proper consideration should be given to the time that the student and teacher spend together. It must be long enough to deepen the relationship but, at the same time, not rob them of opportunities to form other good friendships. Again, we should emphasize that healthy relationships with fellow human beings interdepend on our relationship with ourself and with nature. They cannot be separated.

Develop skills in searching for needed knowledge. As education is ongoing and lifelong, it is crucial to develop the skills needed to seek knowledge when and where it is needed. This includes the ability to catch the main points of a talk, conversation, paper or book and summarize and articulate them in various ways; skills in basic social research; skills in using libraries and the Internet; skills in asking good questions and probing deep into issues; the ability to analyze and synthesize; and the ability to look at and think of an issue from different perspectives. Also emphasized is the skill to meditate and contemplate in finding an understanding that is deeper than what the intellect can fathom. Other

indigenous ways of seeking knowledge should also be used, such as the walkabout, shamanism, the *tudong,* and the vision quest.

The Environment and Process of Buddhist Education

The learning environment. Teachers form the most important factor in creating a successful learning environment. Even if we have all the most effective and modern teaching aids, the compassionate, fair, respectful and long-lasting relationship between teachers and students is vital for success in this kind of education. All the key values we aspire to will be cultivated through this relationship. Both students and teachers grow together, as no one can be perfect in right relationships. Thus, the selection and training of teachers is of prime importance. Here, I agree with Helena Norberg-Hodge's view that putting students of the same age together in a classroom can create a competitive atmosphere. We should minimize this possibility and balance the class with students of different ages in the same learning group, where older students can help the younger ones. The whole learning group must have group learning projects, which are balanced by each individual having his or her own learning project, under the guidance of one or more teachers. The learning project should be something that is fun, exciting and relevant to real-life situations; for example, crafting a table together, cleaning a canal nearby, interviewing a community elder, growing a bed of vegetables, rehearsing and performing plays, walking or cycling together, and learning about the ecosystem or social systems of the community along the way. To finish one project, students may need to learn many related subjects as well as learn how to work and play together in a group. The reflection or debriefing at various stages of the project should be done in such a way that each student participates fully, creating an atmosphere of team learning in balance with individual learning as well as critical and analytical thinking with respect to other people's opinions. The teacher needs to be skilful and non-judgemental, acting like a good friend (*kalyanamitta*) who facilitates the learning process.

The learning process. The learning process is crucial to the success or failure of this kind of education. Giving a teacher the role of a centre of learning that lectures a lot does not create the kind of results we want. The most important part of the learning process is that the students need many opportunities to make meaningful decisions and draw on the lessons to be learnt from them. This is the crux of holistic education. Decision-making on important issues will make students learn actively and take responsibility for their actions. This is very different from listening, copying and memorizing subjects, many of which are not at all relevant to real-life situations. It is for this reason that we also emphasize learning by

undertaking projects relevant to life, which is multidisciplinary by nature. This way of learning is very similar to real-life situations where decisions, including wrong decisions, are made. It is in learning from them that we mature in life. From this perspective, sitting in a classroom for twelve or fourteen years or more without making enough relevant decisions is such a waste of our time. To carry out a project, either as an individual or in a group, the student must participate in the decision-making process from beginning to end. Students have the right to make decisions which are different from the teacher's; in other words, they are allowed to make possible wrong decisions and learn from them.

Basic literacy skills necessary for carrying out projects, such as reading, writing, arithmetic, summarizing, speaking, etc., are provided by the teacher. Through the project approach, students gain a lot of self-motivation for learning these basic skills. For a person to grow up with an awareness of the necessity of balancing individual and community needs, there has to be a good balance between individual and group decision-making, so that each person learns both personal and community responsibility. Likewise, the process of drawing lessons involves both the individual and the group, so that one can learn to balance personal opinion and group and wisdom.

The differences between Buddhist and secular education are summarized in the following table:

Secular Education	Buddhist Education
a. Head-oriented; compartmentalized; over-emphasis on intellectual development at the expense of other human potential.	a. Holistic; interrelated; interdisciplinary; head, heart and hands are taken seriously into consideration, so hidden potential is revealed and can blossom.
b. Authoritarian; teacher-centred; teachers know all and talk a lot; subjects are decided by a central authority; students are passive.	b. Dialogic; student-centred; subjects are relevant to students' needs; students actively participate in learning and making important decisions.
c. Individualism; competition; selfishness.	c. Team learning; cooperation; generosity.

Secular Education	Buddhist Education
d. Uprooted from traditional culture and spirituality.	d. Traditional culture and spirituality are important parts of education.
e. Inflicts an inferiority complex, false pride and fake confidence; ambitious; provokes discontentment with life; always climbing social ladders; engenders hopelessness and despair.	e. Brings empowerment, healthy confidence and humility; teaches contentment; ready to serve others; is hopeful and happy.
f. Primary aim to produce employees, technicians.	f. Primary aim to promote the growth of healthy human qualities.
g. Education confined mostly to classroom and youth.	g. Self-education in real experiences of life; lifelong learning.

Conclusion

I began my paper by looking at the problems of social injustice, environmental destruction and cultural alienation created by secular education and development in my society, which makes both the rich and the poor unhappy. I then analyzed the cause of these problems by pointing out the wrong assumptions or beliefs on which this type of development and education is based, according to a Buddhist perspective. The most prominent wrong assumption is that people can become happier by satisfying their endless desires. There is also the problematic belief in the superiority of Westernization, in science as the superior way of knowledge, in linear progress, and in human supremacy over nature. Next, I explained that Buddhist education is a lifelong process and covers all aspects of life in a holistic way. This form of education, known as *sikkha,* is based on the Eightfold Path, which in turn relies on the two basic and essential preconditions of effective education, namely, critical self-awareness and good spiritual friends.

The last point highlights that in order for this kind of education to work, the whole society needs to be structured as a place for lifelong and positive education, and the direction of development has to change drastically, away from the present trend. I do not have faith in the current schooling system. If we must use the schooling system, however, at least for the time being, then we need to change the content of education, and the learning environment and process so that schools

can encourage the growth of positive human potential, rather than repress it as they do presently.

Finally, if development policy is going to make a much overdue change toward a more Buddhist and humane direction, education can play a vital role – but only on the condition that there is a political will to serious reform. Where such will is lacking, Buddhist educational principles and practices can still be used creatively, to provide an innovative and exciting frame of reference for alternative education and other non-mainstream movements. In this way, *sikkha* both challenges the present mindset and system, and offers a practical means of achieving long-term change.

References

Bello, Walden and Rosenfeld, Stephanie (1990). *Dragons in Distress: Asia's Miracle Economies in Crisis.* San Francisco: Food First, Institute for Food & Development Policy.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1985). *Heart Wood from Bo Tree.* Bangkok: Suan Usom Foundation.

_____ (1989). *Anapanasati: Mindfulness in Breathing.* Translated by Santikaro Bhikkhu, 2nd Ed., Bangkok: Dhamma Study and Practice Group.

_____ (1993). *Dhammic Socialism.* Edited by Donald K. Swearer, 2nd Ed., Bangkok: Thai Interreligious Commission for Development.

Capra, Fritjof (1982). *The Turning Point.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Daly, Herman E. and Cobb, John B. (1989 & 1994). *For the Common Good.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Galtung, Johan (1988). *Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace.* Hawaii: Da Won Sa Buddhist Temple of Hawaii.

Macy, Joanna (1991). *World as Lover, World a Self:* Berkeley, California: Parallax Press.

_____ (1998). *Coming Back to Life.* British Columbia: New Society Publishers.

Schumacher, E.F. (1973). *Small is Beautiful.* London: Abacus.

Sulak Sivaraksa (1985). *Siamese Resurgence.* Bangkok: Asian Cultural Forum on Development.

_____ (1987). *Religion and Development.* Bangkok: Thai Interreligious Commission for Development.

_____ (1992). *Seeds of Peace.* Berkeley: Parallax Press.

_____ (1999). *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium.* Bangkok: Foundation for Children and Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation.

_____ (2001). *Santi Pracha Dhamma: Essays in Hounour of the late Puey Ungphakon*. Bangkok: Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, Foundation for Children and the Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation.

Sulak Sivaraksa et al, eds. (1990). *Radical Conservatism: Buddhism in the Contemporary World*. Thailand: *Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa* Foundation.

4

Secular Education, Values and Development in the Context of Islam in Thailand: An Outlook on Muslim Attitudes toward Thai Educational Policy

Hasan Madmarn

Abstract

The question of the purpose of education seems to be a normal clicht, and finding responses to it provokes debatable discussion, especially amongst the educated. In this category, I mean the educated Muslims of Thailand, in general, and the Southerners, in particular. Whatever form the education policy of the Thai government takes, due to inner consciousness, Muslims in Thailand are always on the alert, especially when the word 'secular' is associated with 'education.'

The process of institutional change taken by the Thai government toward traditional Muslim institutions in the South, from *pondok* to *madrasah* and from *madrasah* to the so-called Islamic private school, has made Muslims aware of the modern trends that are encroaching into their traditional institutions (*pondok*). 'Modern trends' have caused Muslim religious leaders to wonder about what will happen if such terms carry the meaning they seem to. Besides not being well-prepared with modern fields of education, traditional Muslims also know that Islamic education is totally different from the secularists' notion of education.

The Muslims in Thailand are not in opposition to Thai policy makers on the subject of education. They are, in fact, co-policy makers and share-partners in the education process that is in compliance with the new constitution. The Muslim community participates in all educational agendas proposed by the government so as to create harmony between itself and the process of nation building.

Introduction

This paper touches on the general phenomenon of Muslim education in Thailand, with emphasis on the four southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, Narathiwat and Satun – the Malay-speaking areas in particular. This paper also explores the process of involvement of government policy in the nature of the curriculum of Islamic education, in the hope that the Islamic education should be adjusted in line with the new modern system of Thai education.

The value of Thai education and its development will be discussed to find out how much of the attitudes of Muslims and Thai policy makers are finally compromised. The Muslims and their religious leaders believe that a proper educational process is the source for a harmonious life, if it carries the right message. That is to say, a proper educational process will serve as a real problem solver if it can properly nourish seekers of knowledge in both mental-physical and spiritual needs.

Secular Education and Muslim Attitude

Before discussing the topic in detail, it is worthwhile to mention secular education, as it embodies a negative notion for the Muslim community in Thailand. The Muslim community believes that any educational policy embellished with secular processes and unIslamic practices should be rejected, whether or not it is an official form of education offered in Arab or Muslim countries. Muslims consider secular education a dangerous tool aimed at eradicating the grassroots of faith, and invisibly destroying the structure of nation building. Dr Mohammad Abdulkadir expresses this:

> The existence of these problems is due to the fact that, until very recently, no effective, sincere and proper attempt had been made to facilitate communications. Moral instruction, based on Buddhist doctrine, which forms an important part of the curriculum in all categories of academic schools, imposes unacceptable value on people of the Islamic faith (Mohammad Abdulkadir, 1980).

Webster's New World Dictionary (1968: 1318) gives a clear explanation of the word 'secular' by stating that it is used in reference to the world and worldly things, as distinguished from the church and religious affairs. And 'secularism' is the belief that religion and ecclesiastical affairs should not interfere in the functions of the state, especially public schooling. In reading the above passage, the Muslim community is alert to the aim of the secular education policy and aware of the danger it poses in demolishing the Islamic faith. In this matter, Muhammad Hamid al-Afendi and Nabi Ahmed Baloch say:

> Islamic education does not regard life as an end in itself. Life on earth is but a bridge which man must cross before he enters into spiritual life after death. Herein lies a fundamental difference between modern and Islamic education. Modern education merely considers happiness in this world as its final goal, whereas Islamic education regards life as only a means of achieving happiness in the hereafter. This basic difference in the aims and objectives of modern and Islamic education leads to differences in the methods by which these aims and objectives are achieved … On the other hand, Islamic education sees the happiness of man as fundamentally based on intellectual, emotional, and spiritual convictions … In Islam there is no segregation

between religious and secular education. They are inseparable and indivisible. Neither aspect should be over-emphasized at the expense of the other (al-Afendi and Baloch, 1980: 4).

Due to the process of institutional change in Thai government policy, Muslims in Thailand are aware of the modern trends encroaching into their traditional institutions. 'Modern trends' have caused Muslim leaders to wonder about what will happen if such terms carry the meaning they seem to. In order to face the new challenges of government educational policy, the Muslims of Pattani and its environs started to think up ways to maintain their traditional Islamic heritage while, at the same time, adjust to the national policy. The goal of the national policy is to ensure adequate education for modern life, and to integrate ethnic groups in the country. Muslims in Thailand reacted peacefully against government policy by proposing certain criteria on the policy of education. They feared that if the policy endorsed by the government did not fit in with the Muslim faith, the latter would be rejected; this offends Muslims as it disturbs the learning of Islam. Muslims are always the negotiating party to have the policy reasonably adjusted. Astri Suhrke describes the schooling situation for Muslim children in four southern provinces in Thailand:

> The Thai government has continuously emphasized that the Muslim must learn the Thai language and receive secular education. Indeed, there is a tendency in Bangkok and among the local government officials to regard education as a panacea [*dawa' yashfi min jami' al-'ilal wa al-asqam*: Concise Oxford] for [the] peaceful integration of the Muslims. But the response of the Muslim community to secular education has been mixed (Suhrke, 1977: 238).

This is due to Muslim attitudes toward Thai education. Some Muslims oppose it because it contradicts their traditional values; they firmly hold that religious education is more important than Thai education. Muslims fear that "the Thai government is using secular education to assimilate the Muslims, to make them eventually deny their religion, history, race and custom" (Suhrke, 1977: 238). Nantawan Haemindra adds:

> Like other cultural groups, the Muslims are interested in retaining the essence of their traditional culture and fear that the Thai government is trying to assimilate them by changing their local custom [Islamic], institutions, language and perhaps also religion (Haemindra, 1977: 91).

One important notion that should be identified here is that Muslims fear that their local customs, that is, local Islamic practices, might be eradicated from their Islamic heritage, which always becomes an issue where opposition to Thai government policy in education is concerned. Yet, if we examine the minds of the Muslims carefully, we realize that the Muslim community in Thailand does not

reject any system of education so long as its aims do not interfere with or interrupt the basic beliefs of the Muslims. Attempts to bring this unacceptable notion into the Muslim community, however, meet with failure. Wolf Donner in his book *The Five Faces of Thailand* confirms that "the Thai policy of assimilating minorities has not succeeded with the Muslims, because they have nothing in common: language script, religion, way of living, education, and attitude towards the central government are completely different from those of the Thai population" (Donner, 1987: 467).

From what has been mentioned, we are aware that Thai Muslims know that the education policy of the Thai government makes them feel that their cultural backgrounds are always being disturbed. This also makes them suspicious of the government's sincerity in the educational reform carried out in their community. It is for this reason that government policy has continually and increasingly faced negative reaction and resistance from the Muslims. This is confirmed by Stephen I. Alpern:

> Any assimilationist policy would focus on educating the Malays in Thai language and culture. But the existing geographical factors, psychological characteristics, ... cultural and racial affinities of the Malays are consolidated behind barriers of resistance too strong to overcome in the space of a few generations (Alpern, 1974: 254).

Muslim Education and Social Change

Muslims in Thailand are aware of the importance of education; only through a proper education can a person survive. In other words, modern education is a certified document to be carried wherever one goes. Through this notion, the Muslims of Thailand and of the four southern border provinces, in particular, learn how to cope with their notion of education in the face of the 'modern system,' which usually has nothing to do with Islam. Moreover, in secular states or a non-religious government, the word 'Islam' might have been observed to be a useless panacea to society. Due to this fact, Muslims in Thailand have taken on various roles in nation building; be it the political activities, social functions, religious affairs, or educational processes of the Thai government.

In fact, the philosophy of lslamic education lies beyond the term 'education' itself. A properly set up education system is needed to bring mankind to the right path. Proper education offers correct notions to mankind by making them realize the real objective and the right purpose of the Creator, the Almighty God. "Education should be related to the ultimate aims of human life, such as happiness, altruism, service to God and so on" (Hasan Langgulung, 1988). The divine Islamic message that appears among the Arab community in the Arabian peninsula asks

man to read or recite with a careful observation to the Wisdom of the Lord, the Creator of the world. This could be traced back to the first *Surah* (chapter) of the *al-Qur'an*, the *al-'Alaq*, which reads:

Bismillah al-Rahmman al-Rahim
1 - Proclaim! (or Read!)
In the name
Of thy Lord and Cherisher
Who created -
2 - Created man, out of
A leech-like clot
3 - Proclaim! And thy Lord
Is Most Bountiful
4 - He Who taught [the use of] the Pen,
5 - Taught man that
Which he knew not.

The commentary of the holy Qur'an (King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex, al-Nadinah) explains that the word Iqra may mean 'read' or 'recite' or 'rehearse' or 'proclaim aloud.' This declaration or proclamation was to be in the name of Allah the Creator. It was not for any personal benefit to the Prophet; to him there was to come bitter persecution, sorrow, suffering and the need to change the attitudes of the people of Makkah towards worldly life and use it as a means to the Hereafter. Islam emphasizes this matter by asking Muslims to think and realize that what has been performed in this world must be related to the Creator, the Lord of the world. Thus, the *Surah* Iqra asks man to adhere himself to the Lord, especially when seeking knowledge, whatever knowledge it will be.

All these indicate that man should not only run his life in pursuit of worldly desires, but should also gear his work for the Hereafter. Those educated in the true Islamic way can stand firmly on the right path and proceed with life complying with what Islam calls for. Muhammad 'Abduh, an Egyptian modern thinker of the 19th century, sees that the adequate system of balance in education brings change to society. His real interest lies in educational reform. 'Abduh emphasizes that proper education must cover two academic aspects – general education and religious education. Man must speculate about life through reason to find the truth, and should shun away from blind imitation (*al-taqlid* al-'dm). However, reason should not take over the revelation (*al-wahy*).

Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh (Hasan Madmarn, 1997) wants to see the Muslim community free from bondage. He encourages his people to investigate all

phenomena in the world, for he believes that these phenomena will bring benefit to mankind, and the contemplation of God's creation does not contradict the teachings of Islam.

Shaykh 'Abduh says that God has sent down two books: one that is created (nature) and one that is revealed (the *Qur'an*). The latter leads us to investigate the former by means of intelligence which was given to us so that we can understand wonderful creation in a true sense. In fact, there is no contradiction between Islamic teaching and the sciences.

Shaykh 'Abduh believes that those who are entrusted with the education of people and the training of their morals are "physicians of souls and spirits" and should be familiar with the Islamic principles of moral health, as physicians are with physical health (Hasan Madmarn, 1997).

Education, Its Islamic Values and Development

Examining the first word Iqra in Surah *al-'Alaq* makes us feel that it acquires its object, for it is the word of 'command' or *al-amr* in Arabic. It is a normal rule in Arabic syntax that when a transitive verb appears in a sentence, the object of the verb must be included, and if the object does not show itself in the sentence, the omitted object (*mafuul bihi*) is implied and understood. Here, when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was asked to read by the Gibrel, the Prophet repeated after listening to the Gibrel for the fourth time, not the first three, and we find that the object of the verb is not mentioned. This implies that there must be a hidden notion understood from the word Iqra, and this word reminds us that man should read or learn everything that is necessary. In other words, man should read and learn all the sciences that are important in order to make himself a qualified and righteous person. Reading all the sciences, in fact, is considered to be the development of oneself.

Ziauddin Sardar, in his article "The Future of Islamic Studies," mentions that the twentieth century Muslim philosopher Muhammad Iqbal had noted and clarified that the purpose of Islamic studies is to (1) educate and train well-qualified theologians; (2) produce scholars who may, by their researches in the various branches of Muslim literature and thought, be able to trace genetically the continuity of intellectual life between Muslim culture and 'modern' knowledge; **(3)** turn out Muslim scholars well-versed in the various aspects of Muslim history, art, general culture and civilization; and (4) produce scholars who may be able to carry out researches in the legal literature of Islam.' Muhammad Iqbal goes on to say that the training of well-qualified theologians is necessary to satisfy the spiritual needs of the community, "but the spiritual needs of a community change with

the expansion of that community's outlook on life." Iqbal wants to see a new and more innovative way of teaching Islam.

Ibn Sina, as a practitioner in the field of education, has given a guideline on how Muslim children should be brought up to achieve the aims of their lives according to his philosophy. His views on education were recorded in his book *Kitab al-Siyasah (The Book of Politics)*:

> It is necessary that children start learning al-Qur'an as soon as they are physically and intellectually ready. At the same time they have to begin learning alphabets, they are also learning to memorize the Tambus as well as the poems. It is because to memorize the Tambus is easier, shorter, and the tones are lighter. It is necessary to choose poems which are related to the virtue of morality, knowledge and to avoid ignorance, to encourage righteousness towards parents and doing favours, and respect the guest. When they already memorized al-Qur'an and mastered the principles of the (Arabic) language, they are then directed towards which is relevant to their natures and aptitudes (Ibn Sina, 1911).

Concerning education for life, which is known today as vocational education, Ibn Sina stresses:

> When the child is through from learning al-Qur'an and the principles of the language, he is then to choose on what his vocation will be, and he is instructed accordingly. And it is important that the teacher or the manager of the child knows that not all the vocations aimed at by the child are relevant or available for him, instead he has to choose the one which is relevant to his nature. If he wants to be a writer, he has to learn, in addition, language, correspondence, speeches, communication, dialogue and so forth. He is also to learn arithmetic, to practise in offices and learn calligraphy. If he wants others he will then be directed to those areas.

This, according to Ibn Sina, indicated that one of the aims of education is to prepare children for certain jobs, for a job literally means life and happiness.

Muslims in Thailand also want to see new and fresh approaches on how new Islamic education should be taught in the Thai curriculum, so that the demands of the Muslim community in education are properly adjusted.

A Bargaining Policy

The government, with its education policy, tries to regulate the traditional Islamic institutions in the four southern border provinces of Thailand, and transform them into Islamic private schools. In previous decades, these institutions were more or less ignored by the government. Stepping into the arena of bargaining over the policy, the Muslims in Thailand have learnt how to play the game. That is to say, the Malay Muslims of the four southern border provinces of Thailand,

religious teachers in particular, accepted the government's policies with a careful eye on their own concerns.

The Muslims go along with whatever is done to serve their needs in general without deviating from the fundamentals of Islam. If any policy appears to lead in the opposite direction, they do their best to set the proposed aims on the right course. To this end, they keep up negotiations with the authorities until they can agree on how to handle the issues in a way that will serve the common interest. Their watchful attitude makes the government realize that to make a national policy acceptable, it must cope with the Muslim perspective. Any policy must be acceptable to both sides in its merits, and acceptance should not have to be bought through financial inducements. That the government has attempted to do so can be seen in the remarks of Ladd M. Thomas:

> In the late 1950s the government began to rethink its policy toward these schools, and a decision was eventually reached to encourage them through monetary incentives to first register with the authorities and later convert to private school status (Thomas, 1969: 7).

In fact, in trying to bring Muslim education in line with the national policy, the government uses every method it can, including support from local agencies and village leaders, to fulfil its plans. District and provincial officers are important agents in the implementation of education programmes. The officers who involve themselves in Muslim education in southern Thailand believe that they are confronting non-violent reactions that manifest in the form of practices. These non-violent actions express the Islamic outlook more than any consideration of national needs. The government believes that the Muslims' dissatisfaction with national policy must be solved through various aids. Stephen I. Alpern writes:

> In confronting national problem, the Thai government has attempted to persuade Malay religious leaders to align their schools with Thai national educational standards through the use of various forms of inducement, including financial aid, books and other educational materials (Alpern, 1974: 249).

At present, after the pondok have been transformed through various educational equipment and financial support, the educational problems do not end the complicated demands from Muslim religious leaders. Financial aid is not the real need of the people. Rather, the real need of southern Muslims is as fundamentally simple as that found in any Muslim community, which is, education must be carried out in accordance with the need of the Islamic population. It must not disturb the culture, language and religious identity of the people. That is why, "in spite of these attempts to accommodate the needs of Thai Muslims, there remains a strong popular resistance to government education" (Alpern, 1974: *249).*

Thai Practice under the New Regulation

Presently, the Thais, in general, and the Muslims, in particular, are living under the new constitution. The new regulation on education provides more chances and more facilities for common practices and religious beliefs. Concerning education, Thai citizens have complete freedom to run any educational programme, be it a formal or informal system. The new constitution, Act 38, states:

> A person preserves a complete freedom in religion, sect, and has freedom to practise in religious faith, as far as it does not go against the civil conduct, nor it goes in opposition to the peacefulness, or the moral judgement of the people.

The Malay version, *Fasal 38*, runs like this:

> *Seseorang mempunyai kebibasan yang semperna dalam memuluk agama, mazhab agama atau pegangan keagamaan dan mempunyai kebibasan dalam beramal menurut ajaran agama atau mengambil upacara mengikut kepercayaan masing-masing sekiranya tidak bercanggah dengan kewajipan rakyat dan tidak menjadi halangan terhadap keamanan atau moral yang baik bagi rakyat.*

Act 42 runs as:

> A person has total freedom in academic process, training, teaching and learning. The distribution of the outcome of the research based on academic process must be protected as far as the function does not go against the civil conduct and moral ethics of the people.

The Malay version, *Fasal 42,* runs:

> *Seseorang mempunyai kebibasan dalam bidang ilmiah, kursus, pembelajaran dan penyebaran kerya kajian secara ilmiah mesti mendapat perlindungan, namun selama mana tidak bercanggah dengan kewajipan rakyat atau akhlak yang baik bagi rakyat.*

Through the new regulation under the *Perlembagaan Kerajaan Thai Tahun B.E. 2540 (1997)*, the Muslims of Thailand have the chance to develop their religious practices and educational functioning, which eventually lead them to adapt their cultural background with the modern system of Islamic *weltanschauung,* and also gives them room to adjust their identities according to their ethnic background.

Government Policy toward Muslim Education in Thailand

In order to make national policy more effective, the government established in the early 1950s a General Education Development Centre in Yala (Alpern, 1974: 249) known as Education Region Two. The main objective of establishing this centre is "the need for good (Thai) language instruction programmes," and to

give it the function of a cooperative agency that links the government to Muslim institutions of Thailand's southern provinces. The efforts of the centre have met with a somewhat positive but cautious reaction from Muslim communities in the Malay-speaking areas. The General Education Development Centre located in the town of Yala "began to pay special attention to the Thai-Islam [sic] by the end of that decade and by the mid-1960s was heavily preoccupied with devising means for getting more of them into primary school" (Thomas, 1969: 8). The aim of this centre, through the use of several devices, is to bring Malay/Muslim children into the Thai education system. In the first stage of its work, it hopes to "turn one of the Islamic religious schools (now a private school) into a model for others by improving Thai language and other secular instruction" (Thomas, 1969: 8).

As I mentioned earlier, neither secular education nor Thai education policy has anything to do with Islamic practices. This is why Muslim parents prefer to school their children at the more Islamic-oriented institutions, in the hope that they will become leaders in their own community or, at least, learn how to take responsibility as good Muslims toward their families (see Hasan Madmarn, 1990b: 122).

Muslim Parents and Educational Institutions

The positive attitude of Muslim parents toward private Islamic schools, even presently, is clearly shown in the charts below. The number of students completing primary level and moving on to the lower secondary levels of public schools, private schools and the Islamic private schools, in the academic year 2543 B.E. (2000), are shown here:[2]

No.	Province	Private Schools	Islamic Private Schools	Public Schools
1	Yala	146 students	6,450 students	2,094 students
2	Pattani	—— students	6,183 students	2,409 students
3	Narathiwat	20 students	4,483 students	2,421 students
4	Satun	—— students	1,465 students	2,119 students
5	Songkhla	2,156 students	2,157 students	10,533 students

The figures above show that Muslim parents living in the Yala, Pattani, Narathiwat, Satun and Songkhla provinces prefer to send their children to Islamic private schools rather than private and public schools. At the Higher Secondary

level, Muslim students completing their Lower Secondary level prefer to study at Islamic private schools. The number of students enrolled are clearly shown here:

No.	Province	Private Schools	Islamic Private Schools	Public Schools
I	Yala	—— students	3,952 students	1,317 students
2	Pattani	—— students	3,722 students	1,656 students
3	Narathiwat	—— students	2,421 students	1,680 students
4	Satun	—— students	692 students	1,735 students
5	Songkhla	585 students	637 students	6,754 students

Conclusion

Muslims in Thailand reject an educational policy embellished with secular factors. They hope to see their fellow citizens firmly embrace their customs and cultures, which lead their communities to build a so-called 'moral ethics.' Education without moral judgement will sooner or later consume nation building. With this assumption, the Muslim community in Thailand plays a concrete function in building the new generation at an early age.

Fearing that their customs and cultural backgrounds will be disturbed by a secular system of education, Muslim communities in Thailand cooperatively establish kindergartens – Islamic-based institutions – in every village. They carry different names such as Rawdah School, Amanah Sak School, Sekolah Tadika and Gurusamphan in Thai. These institutions are mostly built attached to the *masjid*, and they are under the supervision of the *imam* of each *masjid*.

From academic models based on moral judgement, Muslims in Thailand believe that the new generation will grow up to be qualified persons capable of handling their own societies and participating in nation building as well.

Notes
1. Allama Muhammad Iqbal (1964), "Some Thoughts on Islamic Studies," in Syed Abdul Vahid Ashraf, ed. *Thoughts and Reflections of Iqbal*. Lahore: Sheikh Muhammad Ashraf, quoted in Ziauddin Sardar *(1983):194*.
2. These figures are taken from "A Brief Report on Development of the Islamic Private Schools in Regions 2, 3 and 4 in the Fiscal Year 2543 B.E. (2000)," Office of Private Education Committee, Ministry of Education (Office of Development for Education, Religion and Culture, Region 2).

References

al-Afendi, Muhammad Hamid and Baloch, Nabi Ahmed, eds. (1980). *Curriculum and Teacher Education*. Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University.

Alpern, Stephen I. (1974). "The Thai Muslim," *Asian Affairs,* 1.

Donner, Wolf (1987). *The Five Faces of Thailand*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Haemindra, Nantawan (1977). "The Problem of the Thai-Muslims in the Four Southern Provinces of Thailand, Part 2," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,* 8, 1, March.

Hasan Langgulung (1988). "Ibn Sina as an Educationist," *The Islamic Quarterly,* XXXII, *2,* London: The Islamic Culture Centre.

Hasan Madmarn (1989). *"Pondok* and Change in South Thailand," *Aspect of Development: Islamic Education in Thailand and Malaysia*. Bangi: Institut Bahasa, Kesusasteraan dan Kebudayaan Melayu, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

_____ (1990a). *Pondok and Madrasah in Patani*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

_____ (1990b). "Traditional Muslim Institutions in Southern Thailand: A Critical Study of Islamic Education and Arabic Influence in the *Pondok* and *Madrasah* Systems of Patani," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Utah.

_____ (1997a). "Islam and Educational Development," *Songklanakarin Journal of Social Science & Humanities,* 3, 1, January.

_____ (1997b). "Islam and Educational Development: The Concept of Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905)," *Songklanakrin Journal of Social Science & Humanities,* 3, 1, January-April.

_____ (2001). *Pondok dan Madrasah di Patani*. Bangi: Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Mohammad Abdulkadir (1980). "A Southerner Speaks Out," *The Nation,* Bangkok: 15 December.

Suhrke, Astri (1977). "Loyalists and Separatists: The Muslims in Southern Thailand," *Asian Survey,* 17, *3,* March.

Thomas, M. Ladd (1967). *Socio-Economic Approach to Political Integration of the Thai-Islam: An Appraisal*. DeKalb, Illinois: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University.

Ziauddin Sardar (1983). "The Future of Islamic Studies," *Islamic Culture,* 57, LVII, 1, January, Hyderabad, India: The Islamic Culture Board.

5
Tagore, Education, Cosmopolitanism
Saranindranath Tagore

Introduction

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the first thinkers in the modern world to argue for the value of a cosmopolitan education. He wrote:

> Now the problem before us is of one single country, which is this earth, where the races as individuals must find both their freedom of self-expression and their bond of federation. Mankind must realize a unity, wider in range, deeper in sentiment, stronger in power than ever before (Tagore, 1980: 171).

For Tagore, the unity of mankind pivots on "differences in man that are real," and at the same time on "consciousness of our unity." He continues to state that the "perfection of unity is not in uniformity, but in harmony." In this paper, I will focus on elucidating some of the philosophical ramifications of this notion of 'unity as harmony' as distinguished from 'unity as uniformity,' with special attention to a theoretical framework that has recently been called 'cosmopolitanism.' I will also comment on a philosophy of education that can be drawn on cosmopolitan lines.

Two Senses of Unity

Tagore's distinction between the two forms of unity may be elaborated in the context of certain contemporary philosophical concerns. The postmodern contestation of modernity is a well-known episode in recent theoretical developments. To avoid confusion, it is best not to take the notions of modern and postmodern as historical periods; rather, it is helpful to understand these notions as consolidating and indexing a nest of philosophical positions. Though these nests harbour a wide variety of conceptual species, the fundamental note of disagreement between the two is focused on the issue of foundations. According to postmodern theorists, modernist discourses rely on a singular system of legitimation that disrupts the play of plurality. To invoke a philosophical example, Hegel's account of history is deeply modernist in its orientation because for him, the time of history is the medium in which the world-spirit realizes itself. Indeed,

Hegel claims as a corollary of this thesis that at each point in time, a given culture has a status of superiority because in it, spirit is more self-realized than in others. Thus, Hegel, in his historical lectures, was able to claim that Greek civilization is more developed than Indian or Chinese civilizations.

For postmodern thinkers, the subversion of plurality is taken to be a defining characteristic of modernity, and is the focus of relentless attack. In the domain of such debates, 'unity as uniformity' emerges as a modernist notion. Evocations of the unity of man or the unity of cultures are targets of postmodern critiques, which see these conceptual shapes in Hegelian terms, namely, in terms of the construction of unities through strategies of exclusion couched in the language of developmental progression. Such narratives of progress constitute what Lyotard, a leading postmodern theorist, has called terror. In the postmodern landscape, the language of unity is replaced by, again in the words of Lyotard, "many different language games – a heterogeneity of elements." These "give rise to institution in patches – local determinism" (Lyotard, 1993: xxiv). The sense of unity that is attacked by postmodern theory may be termed, after Tagore, 'unity as uniformity' because unity is achieved through strategies of exclusion. In this account, unity is achieved through a reductive move whereby an attempt is made to exclude difference from the cultural sphere. Lyotard profiles the move in the dictum: "Adapt your aspirations to our ends – or else," and characterizes it as a terrorist utterance.

The postmodern quest for plurality is mounted on a sustained effort at fragmenting the exclusionary account of unity as uniformity. Fragmentation, while it can halt the terroristic implications of unity, however, cannot provide a positive account of how cultures can open dialogues across divides. In overprivileging the view that cultures are fragments, where unity is artificial and can only be constructed and imposed, postmodernism has precious little to say about intercultural conversations, which seek unities without disrespecting differences.

The postmodern construction of unity as uniformity fortunately, does not exhaust the various philosophical senses of unity. There is another sense of unity – the sense endorsed by Tagore – that pivots on a respect for difference. This is the notion of unity as harmony. Explicitly appealing to the writings of Tagore, Martha Nussbaum has recently developed a view of cosmopolitanism, which is neither modern nor postmodern in its implications. A few words about Nussbaum's reflections on the concept of cosmopolitanism may be helpful in coming to grips with the counter-modern notion of unity as harmony.

In developing her notion of cosmopolitanism, Nussbaum provides a detailed discussion of Tagore's novel, *The Home and The World.* The plot of the novel, featuring the three main characters of Nikhil, Nikhil's wife Bimala, and Nikhil's

friend Sandip, takes place during the playing out of the *Swadeshi* movement of 1905 when Bengalis staged a movement against the colonial power, protesting the political division of Bengal. Tagore himself was an active participant in the movement, though, in disagreement with the adoption of strategies of violence, he retired from the movement. The novel, then, reflects, in part, his own experiences and contributions to the movement. The difference between Sandip and Nikhil, in Nusssbaum's treatment of the novel, provides a rich literary account of her own distinction between the patriot and the cosmopolitan. Sandip is a nationalist whose patriotic fervour translates into the burning of foreign goods and the call for violence. Nikhil is the critic of unchecked nationalism, and stands for cosmopolitan virtues that transcend what Nussbaum calls ethnocentric particulars. In the novel, Bimala is attracted by Sandip's nationalist passions, but tragically realizes too late, after Nikhil is killed, that her husband's cosmopolitan moral position is more sensible than the narrow nationalism advanced by Sandip.

Martha Nussbaum argues that, in the character of Nikhil, Tagore is charting out a position where the absolute privileging of national identity *at the expense of* broader forms of identity is morally blameworthy. Indeed, she argues that narrow nationalism subverts the very virtues that hold a nation together:

> I believe Tagore sees deeply when he observes that, at bottom, nationalism and ethnocentric particularism are not alien to one another, but akin – that to give support to nationalist sentiments subverts, ultimately, even the values that hold a nation together, because it substitutes a colourful idol for the substantive universal values of justice and rights (Nussbaum, 1996: 5).

Much of Tagore's social philosophy was developed in the 1920s, in the cusp between the two World Wars. Further, he was a major actor in India's decolonizing process. Thus, his critique of nationalism should be understood in terms of the concrete manifestations of violence and domination. He argued in a series of lectures in Japan and the United States that the martial effects of nationalism can be checked through the reprivileging of other forms of human identity that can be found in civil life (see Tagore, 1950). It is in these other forms of identity – broadly, cultural identity – that overlapping patterns can be found. Though a detailed analysis of Tagore's views on nationalism and internationalism is outside the scope of this paper, it is important, nonetheless, to recall the great historian E.P. Thompson's remark: "More than any other thinker of his time, Tagore had a clear conception of civil society, as something distinct from and of more personal texture than political or economic structures" (see Thomson's *Preface* in Tagore, 1950). Nussbaum's account of cosmopolitanism is anchored in the cultural dimensions of civil life.

Nussbaum understands cosmopolitanism in terms of world citizenship, where the world citizen is a person situated in one nation but, nonetheless, has to share the world with citizens of other countries. Michael Walzer and others have criticized Nussbaum's conception of world citizenship by claiming that in so far as the notion is a legal notion, a person can only be a citizen of a nation; in other words, the concept of world citizenship is incoherent (Walzer, 1996: 125). In my judgement, this criticism fails to take into account a distinction between citizenship as a legal notion, and citizenship, in Martha Nussbaum's usage, as a cultural or a civil notion. Of course, one might claim, following Walzer, that as a matter of definition, citizenship is a legal notion. Yet, we do not have a substantive objection, merely a semantic disagreement. Nussbaum could use a different term such as 'world-belonging' or some such descriptor. Thus, in the political vocabulary of nation states, we all are citizens of a nation, but in the cultural sense we are (or perhaps ought to be) citizens of the world. Hilary Putnam understands this distinction but objects to Nussbaum, in a different trajectory, by claiming that, morally speaking, the best kind of patriotism entails a loyalty to what is best in the traditions one has inherited. Indeed, for Putnam, loyalty to inheritance is indispensable (Putnam, 1996: 96). This objection can be easily diffused by claiming – as does Amartya Sen in his defence of Nussbaum's thesis – that world citizenship does not logically eschew loyalty to what is best in one's culture. Sisela Bok makes the point that inheritance is important for cosmopolitanism by appealing to Tagore's philosophy of education. For Tagore, Bok writes, "children learn from the diffuse atmosphere of culture – one which keeps their minds sensitive to their inheritance and to the current that comes from tradition, and which makes it easy for them, to imbibe the wisdom of ages" (Bok, 1996: 43). At the same time, inheritance is balanced by an outward-looking attitude where the student, in Tagore's view of cosmopolitan education,

> must be so equipped as no longer to be anxious about his own self-preservation; only through his capacity to understand and to sympathize with his neighbour can he function as a decent member of human society and as a responsible citizen (Tagore, 1961: 63-64).

Note Tagore's conceptual distinction here between "member of human society" (a civil conception) and "citizen" (a political conception), and his insistence that the two complement each other.

The achievement of a balance between inheritance and world – the flesh of the cosmopolitan citizen – is the construction of unity as harmony. I provide the following rather long and clumsy definition of unity as harmony: it is, somewhat following Kant, a regulative idea that allows for cultural empathy, generating the capacity of incorporating elements of cultural alterity (otherness) whereby one's

world view is inaugurated by inheritance but is continually shaped by other absorptions. Unity here is an ideal that is never achieved as a final closure but is always in the process of being formed. I venture to suggest that unity as harmony forms the philosophical basis of dialogue across cultures and faiths. As I understand the notion, dialogue is not mere conversation, but has a transformative power, which can generate an empathic link between the dialogue partners. This dialogic link of empathy is a cosmopolitan virtue. Such a virtue is illustrated in Tagore's words: "whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours, wherever they might have their origin. I am proud of my humanity when I can acknowledge the poets and artists of other cultures as my own" (Tagore, 1928). This attitude of empathic identification, the seeking of unity through harmony, transcends Walzer's legal definition of citizenship and embraces the world in a cultural understanding of belonging. Interfaith dialogue or intercultural dialogue, in general, is to be understood in the context of facilitating cosmopolitanism. Moreover, it ought to be clear as well that the notion of unity as harmony rejects the postmodern claim that the concept of unity has to be displaced if plurality is to be saved. Cosmopolitanism allows for a nuanced understanding of unity, which allows for the play of difference.

Cosmopolitanism and Education

The educational mission of the cosmopolitan is to help develop dialogic capacities, which enable persons to seek unity in diversity even in the recognition that a final and absolute unity is not a possibility. The great Moghul emperor Akbar provides us with an example of a dialogic character. He thought deeply about the issue of religious harmony in the context of the religiously diverse landscape of northern India. He was probably the first political leader to actively facilitate a dialogue across religious discourses when he invited Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Jain, Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian scholars to debate theological issues and hammer out common tenets across faiths. Such an effort, on the part of Akbar, was directed toward the consolidation of what I have earlier termed 'cultural empathy.' Such efforts were part of the deep cultural exchanges between Hindu and Islamic civilizations. A very good example of a product of cultural empathy is the development of North Indian classical music, which continues to be a vibrant musical tradition in India and internationally. North Indian classical music followed a developmental pattern that seamlessly wed Hindu and Islamic (specifically, Persian) traditions in creating one of the great musical cultures of the world. Civilizational accomplishments of this nature nourish Akbar's cosmopolitan argument that our future turns on dialogic harmony and on the

shunning of unity that pivots on exclusion. Amartya Sen explicitly appeals to Akbar in arguing for cosmopolitanism in education:

> In dealing with controversies in US universities about confining core readings to the 'great books' of the Western world, Akbar's line of reasoning would suggest that the crucial weakness of this proposal is not so much that students from other backgrounds should not have to read Western classics, as that confining one's readings only to the books of one's civilization reduces one's freedom to learn about and choose ideas from different cultures in the world (Sen, 2000).

Tagore anticipated the cosmopolitan broadening of the curriculum, thankfully a contemporary trend in many educational systems both in the East and the West, in his educational institution in Shantiniketan where Sen spent his formative years. Suggestive of the cosmopolitan spirit, Tagore adopted the motto "the world in one nest" for his Visva-Bharati University. He inaugurated institutes for the study of foreign cultures, placed emphasis on foreign language education, and used his worldwide influence to attract an international faculty and students. Needless to say, these efforts were visionary for their time, when international cooperation in education was not a matter of course as it is now. Deeply committed to the practical implementation of his educational ideals, the money from the Nobel Prize and substantial book royalties were used in the early development of the institution.

Amartya Sen, who was for many years a student in Tagore's school, vividly recalls the cosmopolitan experience of his formative experience:

> I am partial to seeing Tagore as an educator, having myself been educated at Santiniketan. The school was unusual in many different ways, such as the oddity that classes, excepting those requiring a laboratory, were held outdoors (whenever the weather permitted) ... There was something remarkable about the ease with which class discussions could move from Indian traditional literature to contemporary as well as classical Western thought, and then to the culture of China and Japan or elsewhere (Sen, 1997).

Another famous alumnus of Tagore's educational institution, Satyajit Ray, universally acknowledged as one of the great masters of world cinema, also comments on the cosmopolitanism of Tagore's educational vision:

> I consider the three years I spent in Shantiniketan as the most fruitful of my life ... Shantiniketan opened my eyes for the first time to the splendours of Indian and Far Eastern art. Until then I was completely under the sway of Western art, music and literature. Shantiniketan made me the combined product of East and West that I am *(The Guardian*, 1 August 1991).

These remarks hint at an educational process that is itself a dialogue across cultures. Moreover, these comments lend concrete shape to a philosophy of education that

prioritizes the virtue of cosmopolitanism. The philosophy claims that worthwhile education makes possible a life, navigating under the sign of an ideal unity, that is capable of cultural empathy.

Cosmopolitan education educates neither the modern nor the postmodern person. As noted earlier, the postmodern notion of cultures as incommensurate fragments is flagged in order to critique the modernist notion of unity as exclusion. To be educated as world citizens, regulated by the ideal of the alternative conception of unity as harmony, eschews modernist terror ("Adapt your aspirations to our end – or else"). At the same time, it does not subscribe to the view that persons are wholly determined by local inheritance. To make the same point in another way, neither modernity nor postmodernity can adopt the dialogic posture.

So far I have considered, following Tagore, some of the philosophical issues at stake in developing a cosmopolitan philosophy of education. Given the theme of this volume, I have attempted to profile the theoretical connections between the philosophy of education, and the dialogic encounter among cultures, religious and otherwise. The comments are inspired by a recognition that now more than ever, we need to extend ourselves through dialogue with our fellow human beings. Cosmopolitan education is a good place to start. Now, some practical issues need to be considered.

Deep Cosmopolitanism and Some Curricular Considerations

The philosophical sense of cosmopolitanism developed in the previous section needs to be distinguished from "shallow cosmopolitanism" in order to sharpen the curricular implications of a cosmopolitan philosophy of education. In a famous essay on Tagore, Isaiah Berlin hinted at a distinction between shallow and deep cosmopolitanisms when he attempted to situate the poet's internationalist ethos between "shallow internationalism" that advocated the abolishment of national traditions and "gloomy traditionalism" that overemphasized inherited cultural constraints (see Berlin, 1996: 260, 264). The grammar of Berlin's distinction may be translated into the discussion of cosmopolitanism and education: a shallow cosmopolitan curriculum or course design would opt for a broadly rendered multicultural syllabus without paying special attention to one's own tradition. Hilary Putnam, in his rejoinder to Nussbaum, unjustifiably accuses her of being a shallow cosmopolitan when he writes that the defence of cosmopolitanism amounts to the claim that "each national tradition that tries to keep the national traditions alive … should be discouraged, indeed scrapped (Putnam, 1996: 92). Within the philosophy of education, Putnam's political worries would complement the general claim that an educational edifice which ignores cultural inheritance is

deeply impoverished. Berlin's careful account of the political ramifications of Tagore's internationalism, which is in broad agreement with Nussbaum, blunts Putnam's objection by showing that cosmopolitanism and patriotism are not necessarily philosophical antinomies. The deep cosmopolitan can be a patriot.

Putnam's worry in the context of education is indeed well-founded; it would indeed be peculiar at best and a travesty at worst for an education system to introduce a student to multiple cultures without a proper grounding in one's own inheritance. Such an observation, however, is not sufficient in establishing the normative undesirability of cosmopolitan education sedimented in multicultural syllabi. There is ample space between the two extremes of shallow cosmopolitanism and gloomy traditionalism, and deep cosmopolitanism is anchored in that mediating space. Curriculum ought to be designed from the material provided by the tension between the other and the own.

Before proceeding to curricular concerns, an objection needs to be considered at this juncture. One could argue that in multicultural societies, the deep cosmopolitan agenda is questionable because no clear-cut dividing line can be drawn between the other and the own in a population for which an educational system is designed. In order to meet this objection, the philosophical resonance of inheritance and world in a deep cosmopolitan philosophy of education needs to be further explored. To make a very complicated matter easier to handle, let us take the case of religion, since most profess a particular religion and even those who do not usually would have a view concerning religion. In teaching a course on world religions, the deep cosmopolitan will argue that a certain relation has to be established between inherited religious frameworks and world religions that one does not profess to. Here, the contours of the objection against deep cosmopolitanism become clearer when one sees that in a multicultural, multireligious society, the population of students will not have a uniform religious inheritance. We shall return to this point later. For now we proceed by noting that the deep cosmopolitan has to specify the nature of the relationship which is obtained between inherited and world religions within a pedagogical enterprise.

A fruitful approach to course formulations and curricular innovations would do well to summon the hermeneutic insight that understanding hinges upon interpretation, and that the interpreting event requires a background horizon. In other words, the process of learning can occur and new knowledge can form only when an internal cipher is allowed to organize the material according to its structure. Heidegger called these ciphers the fore-structure of the understanding; and Gadamer, following Heidegger, termed them prejudices. For both Heidegger and Gadamer, these structures of the knowing mind are ontologically constitutive of the human condition (for Heidegger and Gadamer on hermeneutic, see,

respectively, Heidegger, 1962 and Gadamer, 1990). If a hypothetical Christian, unaware of world religions, is told that for a Hindu, Krishna is an incarnation of the absolute, the person's initial access into the Hindu belief will be determined to a certain extent by the doctrine of the Trinity. A hermeneutically charged philosophy of education would be sensitive to this inevitability. The initial interpretive event, though mistaken if the two doctrines are taken to be identical, would nonetheless limn an overlapping space between the two religious frameworks. The educator can now proceed to bring clarity to the nature of the overlapping space by rendering the similarities and pointing out the differences. The hermeneutic insight that registers is precisely the point that no access to the other is possible without bringing into relief at least one point of intersection between the own and the other, inheritance and world. If this view of the learning process is correct, it would follow that a cosmopolitan education, which justifiably nurtures the knowledge of the wider world, cannot ignore inherited traditions.

The point runs deeper than the claim that knowledge of inherited tradition is necessary; the hermeneutic insight specifies exactly *why* such knowledge is required. If inherited tradition comprises the initial layer of interpretive fore-structures, then this original moment needs to be enriched. The acknowledgement of the connection between tradition and fore-structures of the understanding by deep cosmopolitanism makes it significantly different from shallow cosmopolitanism. The shallow cosmopolitan, in devaluing the importance of tradition, does not sufficiently thematize the problem of access. It is important to note that the deep cosmopolitan is not committed to a static fore-structure; the learning process would expand, modify and enrich the hermeneutic possibilities for the students. Thus, in the deep cosmopolitan educational design, premium is placed on movement toward world from tradition in the constitution of the fore-structures. The deep cosmopolitan only insists that the original moment of the movement of learning needs to be anchored in an enriched sense of inheritance. Tagore's claim quoted earlier that whatever we understand and enjoy in human products instantly becomes ours; wherever they might have their origin, it is rooted in a deep cosmopolitan sensibility and is not founded on a shallow tradition-eschewing cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitan pedagogy is impossible without the fore-structure of tradition; such is the lesson of hermeneutics extended to the philosophy of education.

Now we may return to the objection raised earlier. In an educational setting where inheritance and tradition cannot be specified with some degree of accuracy, how can the deep cosmopolitan educationist proceed? The first point to note is that even in multicultural settings, a dominant tradition can be specified. However, having said that, immediate note must be made to the effect that a philosophy of

education must be universal enough to include minority concerns. We have noted, inspired by hermeneutic insights, that deep cosmopolitan education ought to be sensitive to the interpretive dimensions embedded in the learning process. According to this view, relying on the ontology of fore-structures of the understanding provides access to the other pivots on points of intersection between discursive structures. Thus, a deep cosmopolitan syllabus must pay special heed to mapping and exploring plottings of intersection across the elements of the syllabus, where the algebra of intersection profiles conceptual similarities without glossing over textures of difference. Consideration of the intersection would provide the context for the fore-structures, which are constructs of inheritance. In such a course, regulated by a syllabus of intersection, the problem of specification of tradition and inheritance would be overcome. The cultural breadth of the syllabus, surely a basic requirement of a cosmopolitan education deep or shallow, would ensure that each student has the material necessary for hermeneutic access to the material presented in the course. More crucial, the mapping of the points of intersection (examples to follow) would usher in the hermeneutic sensibility needed to solve the problem of access. Moreover, in deploying such a strategy and freeing up the interpretive capacities of the students, a plurality of ways is effected in which learning will occur in the classroom. Finally, the syllabus need not adopt any particular standpoint as the tradition in the syllabus. The standpoint of tradition would be centred on the student, allowing for a wide range of difference. In other words, the breadth constraint provides the necessary but not the sufficient condition for the cosmopolitan syllabus. My thesis implies that the intersection criterion would supply the sufficiency condition.

Let us consider the intersection criterion within the context of a hypothetical course. Given my own special area of expertise, I will discuss a course in philosophy. The course is designed for a first year baccalaureate student, and is entitled "Introduction to Philosophy." The main purpose of this exercise will be to illuminate the intersection criterion, and its importance for a hermeneutically charged cosmopolitan education. Further, we are assuming that though the example given involves a discussion of a course in philosophy, the underlying ideas are relevant for other cultural areas of study as well.

The first lecture is crucial. The entire lecture ought to be devoted to an elucidation of the philosophical underpinnings of deep cosmopolitan education. The point needs to be made that the students in the course bring to the study material interpretive capacities that may overlap in some areas but will also mark difference in other areas. Here, the main issues that need to be raised have been discussed earlier in this paper. Most importantly, it should be made explicit at the outset that, depending on the structures of one's own inherited traditions, some

parts of the course will initially resonate more than others. The course assumes to profit from these varying resonances because the pedagogy has the goal of initiating a deep cosmopolitan philosophical experience. As the course proceeds through the mappings of intersections, the less resonant should become more familiar, and in the process, ought to enrich the system of inheritance. Indeed, the whole purpose of deep cosmopolitan education is to enfold the world in the home through the process of multiculturally expanding the fore-structures of the understanding.

The design of the course should take seriously, and not dismiss as some do, the similarities between philosophies across cultures, which have been ferreted out by comparative philosophers. Indeed, comparative philosophy continues to be a vibrant subtradition within the academic discipline of philosophy. Comparative philosophy, when worked out in a sophisticated fashion, is sensitive to difference even when in pursuit of similarity; thus, intersections that are profiled in such texts are born out of nuanced readings of the primary texts and do not appear forced and artificial.' Parenthetically, it ought to be mentioned at this juncture that comparative research cutting across cultural boundaries is well-developed in most of the arts and social science disciplines. As a practical suggestion, the designer of a deep cosmopolitan syllabus will do well to consider these works.

The following areas may be fruitfully discussed in the course:

(a) In a famous argument, the Scottish philosopher, David Hume, called into question the justification of an abiding self over time. The great Indian Buddhist philosopher, Nagarjuna, also raised philosophical objections against the belief in the self. What are the similarities and differences in the two approaches? The philosophical theme concerning the self can be related to more contemporary debates in European philosophy concerning the decentring of the Cartesian conception of the self.

(b) Thomas Hobbes, the 17th century English philosopher, and Xunzi (310 BCE), a Chinese political and social philosopher, developed influential theories built on the fundamental shared assumption that human nature is not altruistic. A section in the course devoted to political philosophy may leverage on this intriguing point of intersection.

(c) A significant movement in European philosophy, inaugurated in the 18th century by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, saw the necessity of postulating (partly as a response to Hume) a layer of consciousness to account for the unity of consciousness. A tantalizingly similar move is made by the classical Indian system of *Advaita Vedanta* and its main philosopher Sankara in the analysis of *Sakshin* or witness consciousness. A rich deep cosmopolitan narrative, sensitive to identity and difference, can be woven around the

intersecting concepts of Sakshin and Kant's and Husserl's notions of transcendental subjectivity. (A good resource for this is Gupta, 1998).

(d) It is well-known that neo-Confucianism attempts to harmonize Buddhism and Confucianism. Here, a fruitful node of intersection may be located between Indian and Chinese philosophical cultures through the study of the metaphysics of Chou Tun-I (1017-1073), Ch'eng Hao (1032-1085) and Ch'eng I (1033-1107) (these thinkers are collectively called the Ch'eng Brothers) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200). There is a relative paucity of works that compare the philosophies of India and China. In this regard, though, I suspect that Neo-Confucianism would provide a wealth of material.

(e) Japanese philosophy also provides illustrations of intersection. Nishida Kitaro, the great 20th century Japanese philosopher, formulated an original philosophical vision by combing the insights of Zen Buddhism and Western phenomenology. The study of Nishida's philosophy in bringing in a fourth philosophical tradition can provide nuance and complexity to the deep cosmopolitan agenda of the course.

The above is by no means an exhaustive list of all possible intersections that can be plotted across philosophical cultures. The list is designed just to hint, through concrete illustrations, at the sorts of issues that need to be included in a syllabus sensitive to deep cosmopolitanism. It is worth repeating that the curricular implications of deep cosmopolitanism, as opposed to shallow cosmopolitanism, suggest that it is not sufficient to make students take separate courses in different cultural traditions. This cafeteria approach to multicultural education has been justifiably criticized on the grounds that it is not sensitive to inherited traditions. The model being defended here calls for curriculum to be designed such that each course (or at least a good number of them) is internally regulated through what I have been calling mappings of intersection. It is also important to note as a point of clarification that intersection, while trafficking in identity, cannot afford to ignore difference. A deep cosmopolitan search for similarity, shaped by evolving fore-structures, seeks shapes of identity textured by the nuances of difference.

The discussion so far supports the important claim that deep cosmopolitan education privileges the development of capacity over content. While discussing Tagore's vision of cosmopolitanism, the point was made earlier that the achievement of a balance between inheritance and world alone can facilitate the achievement of unity as harmony. Further, it was noted that the idea of unity as harmony, when used regulatively, generates the *capacity* of incorporating cultural alterity (otherness), whereby one's world view is inaugurated by inheritance but is continually shaped by other forms of inheritances. This rather abstract formulation can now be given a more concrete shape. An educational experience of

cosmopolitan design, developed through mappings of intersection, will of course specify material that will disclose systems of similarities and differences across cultures. Such disclosures are infinitely important because, as noted earlier, they help in negotiating the problem of access. Utterly incommensurate differences from inheritance cannot be learned and retained in a meaningful fashion. More importantly, though, exposure to deep cosmopolitan education nurtures a *capacity* for the achievement of unity as harmony which, as noted earlier, is never found as a final closure but is always in the process of being formed. Unity as harmony opposes the modernist alternative of unity as uniformity with its attendant exclusionary terror. Within the context of the educational enterprise, the following problem with the notion of unity as harmony remains: surely, one can object that a conception of unity cannot harbour contradictory beliefs. In other words, how is it possible to unify in harmony beliefs or proposals that cannot be held jointly? In order to diffuse this objection, we need to note that unity in the sense of harmony, unlike unity as uniformity, is not being treated as a closure; rather, unity as harmony is an ideal that ought to nurture the capacity for cultural empathy. Neither all beliefs nor all proposals can ever be included within a final unifying synthesis; nonetheless, a deep cosmopolitan education, by disclosing possible ways in which intersections can be mapped without losing sight of difference, hones the capacities required for making the other one's own, of allowing the world to enter the home. The hermeneutic reading of cosmopolitan education would suggest that the fore-structures of the understanding are interpretive capacities that need to be attended to in a philosophical understanding of education. In the context of deep cosmopolitan education, the fore-structures – which in the hermeneutic tradition have ontological resonance – are to be taken as inherited structures. Consequently, in a deep cosmopolitan setting, the design of a course needs to be sensitive to the cultural context of its students. In relatively homogeneous societies, the problem of specifying inheritance is easily enough solved. In more multicultural classrooms, the net has to be more widely cast to enable the inclusion of a greater variety of cultural inheritances. The philosophical reflections presented here do not admit to an easy formula that can help in the design of a deep cosmopolitan syllabus. These remarks, however, can suggest directions in which one can proceed in designing such courses.

Conclusion

Though I have been thinking primarily about university education in this paper, there is no reason to believe that the deep cosmopolitan educational agenda cannot be extended to pre-university/college education, at least at the level of high school.

It is worthwhile to note that Tagore's educational philosophy and practice of cosmopolitanism included the pre-university classroom. His educational thinking and the institution in Shantiniketan covered the entire pedagogic range from preschool to postgraduate education. Indeed, Amartya Sen's rich recollection (quoted earlier) of his cosmopolitan educational experience in Shantiniketan concerned his pre-university education.

The guiding belief behind this essay is that the institution of dialogues across cultures is of utmost importance. The possibility of such dialogues, however, rides on the cultivation of a kind of intellect that is open to transformative encounters with other cultures, on the wisdom of not shutting off the world while gathering sustenance from one's own cultural inheritance. The writings of Rabindranath Tagore steadfastly endorse and explore the ramifications of this fundamental belief. Following Tagore, I have submitted the idea that the question of dialogue, in a most fundamental sense, hinges on a philosophy of education. It is in the education process that openness can be nurtured, not through rote learning, but through the development of capacities. I have attempted to give shape to a philosophy of education, which can best serve the purposes of dialogic encounters through the notion of deep cosmopolitanism. Dialogue as a process ought not to be limited to formal institutional gatherings, but ought to be a formative structure of a person's world view. Deep cosmopolitanism argues for a form of education that is itself dialogic in structure. Differences between cultures cannot be removed – indeed, removal is not desirable as pluralism is good – but they can be negotiated in a movement toward an ideal unity, which Tagore sought in harmony and not in uniformity. Today, in the midst of uncertainties engendered by divisions, deep cosmopolitan ideals need to be considered anew. The future demands it.

Notes

1. For an engaging defense of the comparative agenda in philosophy against charges from modernist and postmodernist camps, see J.N. Mohanty (1993). Especially germane is Mohanty's rebuttal of Husserl's and Rorty's criticisms of the philosophical assumptions of comparative philosophy.

References

Berlin, Isaiah (1996). "Rabindranath Tagore and the Consciousness of Rationality," in Henry Hardy, ed. *The Sense of Reality.* New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

Bok, Sisela (1996). "From Part to Whole," in Martha Nussbaum. *For Love of Country.* Edited by Joshua Cohen, Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 38-44.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1990). *Truth and Method.* New York: Crossroad.

Gupta, Bina (1998). *The Disinterested Witness: A Fragment of Advaita Vedanta Phenomenology.* Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Heidegger, Martin (1962). *Being and Time.* San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Lyotard, Jean-François (1993). *The Postmodern Condition.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mohanty, J.N. (1993). "Are Indian and Western Philosophy Radically Different?" in Purushottama Bilimoria, ed. *Essays on Indian Philosophy.* Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 313-330.

Nussbaum, Martha (1996). "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," in Martha Nussbaum. *For Love of Country.* Edited by Joshua Cohen, Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 2-20.

Putnam, Hilary (1996). "Must We Choose Between Patriotism and Universal Reason?" in Martha Nussbaum. *For Love of Country.* Edited by Joshua Cohen, Boston: Beacon Press, pp. 91-97.

Sen, Amartya (1997). "Tagore and His India," *The New York Review of Books,* 44, 11, 26 July.

_____ (2000). "East and West: The Reach of Reason," *The New York Review of Books,* 47, 12, 20 July.

Tagore, Rabindranath (1928). *Letters to a Friend.* London: G. Allen & Unwin.

_____ (1950). *Nationalism.* Delhi: Macmillan.

_____ (1961). "A Poet's School," in his *Rabindranath Tagore, Pioneer in Education: Essays and Exchanges between Rabindranath Tagore and L.K. Elmhirst.* London: John Murray.

_____ (1980). *Creative Unity.* Delhi: Macmillan.

The Guardian, 1 August 1991.

Walzer, Michael (1996). "Spheres of Affection," in Martha Nussbaum. *For Love of Country.* Edited by Joshua Cohen, Boston: Beacon Press.

Part II

Religion, Education and Women

6

Religious Education and Gender Issues: Difficulties of Female Ordination in Thailand

Parichart Suwanbubbha

Abstract

An official acceptance of ordained women challenges Thai society at present. This chapter addresses the historical and social reasons for this reality and proposes a possible solution. It is necessary to have an attitudinal change in Thai sociocultural sensitivity to female ordination. The difficulties do not, of course, stem from Buddhist eternal principles, instead they are grounded in the cultural values of 'hierarchy' and 'gender difference.'

Empowerment of this group of women is well overdue. This chapter proposes "Buddhist Feminism of the Middle Path as a pragmatic tool to increase self-esteem and opportunity for this group in Thailand. Through intrareligious dialogue, it is hoped the burden that women encounter in Thai society may be eased. The possible solution should be based on a reconsideration of monastic rules and Thai cultural values. The 'equal value' of women in Thailand is a central theme in this chapter, and may in time ensure that this group of women receive acceptance. Acceptance would be legitimate when the majority of Thai society approvingly support these changes. Acceptance would, ultimately, result in a more equitable society that brings spirituality into the realm of lived experience.

Introduction

This chapter aspires to discuss the situation of Buddhist education in Thailand by focusing on the limited opportunity for Thai women to be ordained at present. Female monks (*Bhikkhuni*) have never been accepted in Thailand. The push for a revival of full ordination is vital, and is a sensitive topic in the country at present. It is true that we have a group of *Mae Chee* (women in white) who look like ordained women, but in reality are not; generally, they do not have an accepted status among the *Sangha* (monk community) and in society. The unofficial acceptance of these two groups of Thai ordained women does not derive from their spiritual disability as women. The limitation is hidden deep in the

understanding and expectation of people related to 'hierarchy' and 'gender difference' in Thai society. This may well be related to socioeconomic factors and the distribution of social funds. To my knowledge, there is no hard evidence to support this limitation. It is, however, more related to the role of this group in the lack of recognition accorded to them by society and the Buddhist community at large. Ultimately, however, it involves *Theravada* monastic rules. This chapter, then, attempts to analyze some conditions and factors, both positive and negative, for Thai women in their fulfilment of these roles. In exploring this theme, however, some observations from western feminism are useful and will be utilized to understand the situation in accordance with Buddhist teachings. In other words, "Buddhist Feminism of the Middle Path' will be interwoven to propose a new perspective from which to understand and ease some difficulties encountered in women's religious education in Thai society.

Buddhist Education

In Buddhism, ultimate reality (nibbana) is beyond the cycle of birth, decay and death. Buddhist liberation is sought through an effort to practise insight meditation (*vipassana*). When we talk of Buddhist education, we are then concerned with a process of learning to reach this highest goal. Buddhist education emphasizes mental development. The "ultimate objective of Buddhist education and its process of mental development is the liberation of the individual from all types of bondages" (Guruge, 1990: 32). The underlying truth of Buddhist teaching is (1) not to do evil; (2) do good; and (3) purify one's mind. These core teachings include moral discipline (sila), concentration of mind (*samadhi*) and the wisdom gained through the realization of the true nature of life (*panna*). Therefore, being good by paying attention to ethical sensitivity and moral principles is not enough in itself. Good Buddhists need to cultivate spiritual training by concentration and insights gained through meditation. Accordingly, "to know just enough to set one's self on the path of mental training has been the primary objective of Buddhist education" (Guruge, 1990: 32). It is expected, therefore, that Buddhists – both ordained and laypersons, both men and women – undertake mind development.[2]

A Buddhist society (A., II: 132) requires four groups of people. Presently in Thailand, we have only three groups: *Bhikkhu* (male monks), *Upasaka* (laymen) and Upasika (laywomen). Bhikkhuni or female monks are not included; traditionally, they are not part of Thai Buddhist society. Thai women who would like to live their lives as ordained monks become Mae Chee. It is true that both the laity and the ordained can achieve the highest goal if they make an effort and

practise insight meditation. By way of spiritual practice, they can become involved in religious education. Owing to the fact that there are no official *Theravada Bhikkhuni* accepted by the *Sangha*,[3] however, Thai women have more or less limited opportunity in the Buddhist educational sphere. The *Sangha* is considered the community of learning. Having a formal *Bhikkhuni* community in the *Sangha* is another important factor and environment to encourage women to fulfil the goal more easily, rather than practising *Dhamma* at home as part of the laity. Leaving home physically and in heart seems to be the direct and only way to pursue the religious goal of this group. Categories of ordained women are, of course, not always clear-cut or uncontested. In terms of the laity, we have (1) pious laywomen who have been supporting Buddhist monks; (2) laywomen as devotees who have been studying and practising *Dhamma;* and (3) a group of female meditation teachers who have been unexpectedly teaching *Abidhamma* and meditation. Here, we will concentrate only on ordained women as (1) *Mae Chee* who have been struggling for proper status in this Buddhist community and (2) female monks striving for acceptance as *Samaneri* and *Bhikkhuni,* and who are making a great effort to effect a full ordination.

Thai *Mae Chee*

Thailand is a *Theravada* Buddhist nation in Southeast Asia, with 92.95 per cent of its population composed of Buddhists (Office of the Committee of National Education, 2000: 41). In this figure, *Mae Chee* are women in white robes with shaven heads; they leave their homes and take up the eight precepts. Although they adopt the appearance and lifestyle of ordained women, their uncertain status is placed somewhere between laywomen and ordained nuns. In fact, they are laywomen as *Upasika*, taking up the eight precepts.[4] In reality, there is no such word as *Mae Chee* in the *Tripitaka* (Buddhist scriptures). This group does not have the privileges of monks (ordained men) and do not derive benefits such as reduction of bus, train and airplane fares, and medical expenses at government hospitals. The extent to which they are considered ordained is, in political terms, in name alone. In real terms, they cannot vote and take part in any political activities. They are expected to be quiet and work in the temples, and be responsible for the care of activities in monasteries such as cleaning, serving monks and feeding stray animals. Most of them become *Mae Chee* for a variety of reasons such as escaping from worldly problems, repaying successful prayers, etc. A few have strong conviction to become *Mae Chee* in order to study *Dhamma* as *anakarika* (a wandering person), but *Mae Chee* as a rule never leave their laity lives to be ordained because of Thai customs. Thai *Mae Chee* are under the umbrella of the Thai Mae

Chee Institute. They are not officially accepted by the government and, therefore, lack the opportunities monks have, and do not receive financial support from the Department of Religious Affairs. They are different from *Dasa Sil* Mata in Sri Lanka because the latter is taken care of by the All Sri Lanka Union of Dasa Sil Mata founded by the government (Barnes, 1996: 266).

Due to the Thai Mae Chee's uncertain status, the *Sangha* and the Thai government did not officially provide university opportunities for the Mae Chee, as they did for monks. Their formal education began when a group of Mae Chee and some monks cooperated with a Buddhist university to found the Mae Chee College with the aim of teaching both Buddhist studies and other secular academic subjects.[5] This college, however, is just a pilot project under the Faculty of Religion and Philosophy at *Mahamakutrajavidhyalai* Buddhist University. Fortunately, Mae Chee have recently been allowed to study *Palisuksa* (Buddhist language study), *Dhammasuksa* (dhamma study) and *Abidhammasuksa* (Buddhist higher doctrine). Nevertheless, this represents a small number of Thai women when compared to the overall population. Most Mae Chee prefer to live their lives peacefully and practise meditation (*vipassana-dhura*) rather than concentrate on the processes of studying, remembering and teaching (*gantha-dhura*).

With regard to the weak points of the learning process in Buddhist education, we have seen evidence of unsuccessful methods of learning. These focus too much on memorizing the Dhamma, and in not applying Dhamma knowledge to the present day context and daily life experience. Ordained people should be encouraged to apply the grounded theory of Buddhism in analyzing the real causes of problems[6] and then formulate appropriate solutions. In this chapter, however, our scope only covers Buddhist education related to gender issues.

In spite of Mae Chee's lack of support from society,' they still play a lot of important roles in society. It is unfortunate that Thais hardly recognize their contributions.

Most Thais have failed to realize that Mae Chee's work has been related to teaching both Dhamma and worldly knowledge. Their educational responsibilities cover all three aspects of the educational system – informal, non-formal and formal. Their informal education also extends to social welfare for children and the poor.[8] Although there are claims that Mae Chee play many roles in Thai society, these roles are only limited to some groups of *Mae* Chee who have financial support and are able to perform these activities. The success of activities depends on an individual and not the institutional base. Mae Chee, it is felt, need official support in terms of raising their status in society so that they may play more active roles and receive autonomy in Thai society. Mae Chee, therefore, need official monastic establishments in order to be the institutional base for

Buddhist education. This will be explored in more detail when we deal with Bhikkhuni.

Recently, the religious roles played by Thai women have been as Samaneri and Bhikkhuni. In fact, we can say that the Buddhist community of Thailand has recently been challenged by a revival in the call for full ordination of women as Samaneri (female novices) and Bhikkhuni (female monks). We return to this revival movement in our discussion on Buddhist teachings on women's rights and issues of feminism in the Thai context.

Thai *Women as Samaneri and Bhikkhuni*

It is true that Thailand is a *Theravada* Buddhist nation in the same way that Sri Lanka is but in Sri Lanka, people believe that there were Bhikkhuni for some time, and they then disappeared. In Thailand, however, there have never been any official Bhikkhuni. When some women aspire to become female monks in Thailand, therefore, there are strong reactions against them, both positive and negative. The Buddha, however, never suspected women's spiritual ability. According to the Buddha, "man is not always the only wise one, woman is also wise" (Dhs. A., Vol. ii: 119). The Buddha continues by affirming the spiritual strength of women:

> O Gotami, perform a miracle to dispel the wrong views of those foolish men who are in doubt with regard to the spiritual potentialities of women (Apadana, 11: 535).

The main opposition to Bhikkhuni does not relate to Buddhist eternal principles but is derived from human cultural expression as the Theravada Bhikkhuni lineage had died out. The revival of ordination is considered to be in opposition to monastic rules (vinaya), that is, authentic ordination must be composed of a committee of both male and female monks. This chapter does not argue whether these reasons are right or wrong, but is interested instead in why some Thais are likely to oppose it.

Generally speaking, Thai women are often expected to be neat at household chores, as echokd in the sentiment that women should be "the hind legs of the elephant." This implies that Thai values prefer to see women obeying men. This is also reflected in the hierarchy of Thai society, as elaborated in the following observation:

> Hierarchy in Thailand is based on a variety of overlapping vertical axes, wherein, for example, royalty are considered superordinate to commoners, religious specialists have superiority over laity, urban dwellers are thought more advanced than rural folk, seniors take precedence over juniors, and men are normatively superior to females (Cook and Jackson, 1999: 9).

By broad implication, therefore, it should not be surprising to experience the movement against women when they try to become female monks. Opportunities for Thai women to be involved in Buddhist education are limited in terms of achieving full ordination. It is possible to argue that women as laypersons are able to develop themselves in terms of Buddhist spiritual education. Yet, official acceptance by monks and people of a community of ordained women is also important. Hierarchy, however, seems to be the base for this gender difference. Gender may be defined as:

> ... patterns of power, norms and roles, the cultural representation of women and men, customs, legislation and the sexual division of labour; how material opportunities and rewards are distributed between women and men; differentials of power and influence according to genders (Graham, 1996: 78).

From this definition, gender implies the division of labour, status and roles between men and women. With regard to *Mae Chee,* it is clear that "status matters more than gender" (Tannenbaum, 1999: 254).[9] Thais are accustomed to envisioning male monks as having respectful power, but they hesitate to earn merit with *Mae Chee* on account of the fewer precepts the *Mae Chee* adopt[10] and, accordingly, the less respectful power they have. An official status from the *Sangha* community may, therefore, be the start to gradually changing the image of Thai *Mae Chee* as legally ordained women, and changing the views of Thai society. There has been opposition to the notion of women's rights and feminism in the move to raise *Mae Chee*'s status and revive fully ordination for *Bhikkhuni* in Thailand.

Women's Rights and Feminism in the Thai Buddhist Context

It is worth considering the idea of women's rights and feminism from the Buddhist perspective. Buddhism emphasizes analysis and investigation of its applicability in contemporary contexts and social themes. In this regard, the concept of women's rights and feminism appears to be imported from western civilization; in fact, these ideas are clearly expounded in Buddhism: "The freedom of analysis and investigation, while subjecting the Buddha's teachings to dissent, innovation, reinterpretation and even misinterpretation, promoted a spirit of tolerance which permeated the Buddhist educational system" (Guruge, 1990: 28).

With regard to women's rights and feminism, Buddhist teaching leans toward supporting women's rights and the well-being of women. According to Buddhist teaching, men and women have to depend on one another. Their roles are complementary[11] and both are important in their own right. By this we mean that both men and women are human beings born into the cycle of birth, decay

and death. They are equal under the processes of change (anicca), suffering or dissatisfaction (*dukkha*) and are not the real self (*anatta*). Moreover, men and women are subject to the same law of cause and effect (law of kamma), and neither can escape from retribution for their deeds. This natural law is seen as being fair for both men and women, because it permits everyone to have the right to act according to their intentions. At the same time, he or she needs to be prepared in accepting the responsibility of having different results according to causes. By considering these teachings, it is possible to conclude that both men and women have equal rights, and no one should dominate over the other; each has his or her own dignity as a person. This is not dissimilar to the claim by mainstream feminism "that women really do inhabit the human realm and are not 'other,' not a separate species" (Gross, 1996: 17). Both men and women are, therefore, entities under the same natural law and possess the same human rights, according to the Buddhist perspective and mainstream feminism alike.

According to Buddhism, another explanation for human rights includes the right to have a life beyond suffering (Intharakamhaeng, 1984: 10). This argument attempts to link the ultimate reality in Buddhism which is *nibbana* or the end of suffering. No matter the quality of life people possess and their claims to rights, they are still suffering. They do not, in fact, have authentic rights in a real sense. Through this explanation, those men and women in Thailand who are poor and oppressed are still far from the category of having rights. This understanding of rights in a Buddhist sense is, according to language, still related to the individual self. In the Dhamma meaning or in absolute language, everything is no-self (*anatta*). One is always expected to detach from 'self,' from 'myself' and even from 'my rights.'

Pushing for women's rights and calling for the official acceptance of Bhikkhuni in Thailand has been ill-received because people have referred to the concept of getting rid of the 'egoistic presence' of Bhikkhuni. In fact, the proper way of thinking for both men and women should be the awareness of the expression of self in dealing with Mae Chee and *Bhikkhuni*'s existence because, in reality, nothing exists that can be claimed to be 'my rights' and not 'your rights.' Moreover, it may well be that the expectation of the public that those ordained should aim at practising Dhamma and contemplative life, rather than involving themselves in activities in society, even if it is to ask for their 'own rights.' This may well be another reason why some Mae Chee have felt that they should keep quiet and perform only monastic work, in spite of their uncertain status and the few privileges accorded them by society.

With respect to the concept of hierarchy, it is to be understood that men have power over women in traditional Thai society. Feminist groups, however, pursue

egalitarianism[12] and ask for the same rights as men to become monks, so that women should also have the right to be ordained. It is true that equality does not work well in every single case; equality is important, but may not work well when it is used to push for female ordination. As Rita Gross, a well-known Western Buddhist feminist has rightly stated, "the difference between 'freedom from gender roles' and 'gender equality' is profound (Gross, 1996: 24). Likewise, a frequently cited alternative meaning of equality is appropriate here: "that what women do should be regarded as of equal value with what men do – a version of separate-but-equal thinking that is often advocated as a conservative alternative to patriarchy" (Gross, 1996: 24).

The concept of equal value between men and women is taught in Buddhism. According to the law of kamma, men and women are equal under this *kammic* energy, and neither men nor women can escape this natural law. The Buddha's teaching on *Brahma Vihara* (Four Sublime States) clarifies *mudita* as sympathetic joy by sharing in the happiness of others and their progress without jealousy (A., ii). That is, if Mae Cbee are able to study and finish the *Pali* knowledge at level nine, they should be treated in the same way as monks by the government and by the *Sangha*. The public needs to appreciate the equal value of their effort and hard work in the same way they do monks. In practice, this should also be reflected in terms of titles and other privileges such as the graduation ceremony and financial support each month. It may be considered too much for Mae Cbee to ask for these things, but it is in accordance with Buddhist teaching that if one has behaved well, one should be appreciated and receive sympathetic joys from society in the way of a sincere heart and concrete actions. In fact, the reasons behind this unequal treatment of Mae Cbee are related to their uncertain status of not being ordained. Their rights are not appropriate within the context of the expectations Thai society has of them. In their situation, it is more appropriate to use the concept of equal value of action (kamma) to their gender roles as men or women. Here, kamma in terms of work, action and morality should be a criterion for classifying the degree of good humanity rather than the concept of masculine or feminine. In terms of Buddhist education, it is more useful to use the life of the Buddha as a model, with the presupposition that both men and women have Buddha-nature, that is, "education that takes refuge in the Buddha is an education that introduces us to and confronts us with Buddha-nature, the nature of the mind and of all life" (Santikaro, 1999: 417). Therefore, men and women's spiritual abilities need to be recognized, sketched out, appreciated, encouraged, nurtured, challenged, and so on, in order to appreciate the different but complementary roles of men and women.

This Buddhist perspective toward men and women's actions (kamma) is not dissimilar to the teachings of the radical transformists, another branch of western

feminism. This group would like to "emphasize the need for forming new visions of being human and new visions of the social orders" (Chopp, 1992: 191). According to them, there should be no more habitual stereotypes, so that we "praise men with values of autonomy and objectivity while of emotion as female" (Chopp, 1992: 191). Buddhist laywomen and ordained women are calling for the opportunity to be evaluated according to their moral behaviour and actions, rather than from a gender perspective of being born and having the characteristics of being male or female.

The difficulties confronting *Mae Chee* and *Bhikkhuni* in terms of their existence and their acceptance in Buddhist society are not related to suspicion of their spiritual potentiality. According to the *Dhamma Vinaya*, the Buddha ensures the possibility of spiritual development among women; this is one of the eternal facts. The real problem can be said to originate from cultural expression. Hierarchy and gender differences have been a central feature that has influenced Thai society for some time. The word hierarchy is not only used in its negative sense. In fact, hierarchy has a positive side in maintaining good Thai manners of paying respect to elders and so on. According to Gross, "proper hierarchy" is important as it "connotes the proper use of power that has been properly earned" (Gross, 1996: 25-6). Proper hierarchy may well provide a solution for the predicament of *Mae Chee* and *Bhikkhuni*. Both groups possess the ascribed status of women in Thai hierarchical society. This status has been related to different sets of rights, duties, honour, prestige and responsibilities differing between men and women.

Although *Mae Chee* play a central role in organizing centres for pre-school education, they have never been given the right to do so in their own names. They continually need to gain permission from the authorities to found such pre-schools, despite being the ones to fully initiate, administer and participate in this endeavour (only an Abbot has rights to found these centres). The *Mae Chee* have been handicapped by their ascribed status as laywomen who are not traditionally regarded as ordained women in a *Theravada* society like Thailand. The same may be said of *Bhikkhuni*. Due to Thai cultural expression and the ascribed status of women, Thai women are not officially supported in gaining full ordination and may even be faulted with shortening the life of Buddhism.

Nevertheless, Thai *Mae Chee* themselves do not mind whatever status the public assigns to them and how the public views them; they continue practising *Dhamma* and are a good example of spiritual practitioners who contribute and help the needy and the poor, and take care of oppressed women and children. In doing so, they may be said to have changed their ascribed status into an achieved status. It is felt that they should continue their good performance and contribution both in religious and secular activities, and continue to demonstrate that they

have thrown away their egoistic ambitions and devoted their lives to studying and practising *Dhamma* peacefully. It is hoped that people will come to respect the *Mae Chee* and unofficial *Bhikkhuni* for their good work, and they will then get the moral support they justly deserve from Thai society. Their achieved status will, in time, become a source of power, which will lead them back to proper hierarchy. The achieved status proposed depends on the proper use of power (positive power) and, according to their own personal qualities and activities, properly earned by Thai women in their roles as *Mae Chee* and *Bhikkhuni.* This may sound idealistic and hard to fulfil, but it is felt to be one among several possible solutions that must be exercised to improve the religious status and role of Thai women at present.

Some Suggested Solutions

Buddhists who realize the difficulties confronting Buddhist women should try to exercise loving kindness (*metta* and *karuna*) toward them. Otherwise, it is possible that both men and women alike may miss the central teachings of Buddhist *kamma.* The *kamma* concept gives hope to people, because in every minute, one is creating a new *kamma.* At the very least, we should try to affirm the concept of *kamma* in practice, to an equality of opportunity for everyone in everyday life. Through this approach, it is possible for both women themselves and the holistic organs of Thai society to have sincere cooperation in solving problems in any given situation. One of the most efficient tools for overcoming and easing such problems is dialogue. The intrareligious dialogue proposed here among Thai Buddhists is necessary for groups that hold different convictions but realize that they share the sensitive details of a given issue as a whole. Generally speaking, Thais usually avoid conflict and confrontation. They may have their own strong opinions but not as partners in a dialogue. If one realizes the benefit of dialogue in terms of mutual understanding and solving problems, however, one may be willing to cooperate for mutual gain. It is possible to learn from similar situations that confront followers of other religions. Here, it is the dialogue of life that aids in the consideration of the problems of women and gender issues. For example, in Roman Catholicism, there are no female priests. We can learn from the way Christian women deal with issues that similarly confront Thai Buddhist women.

With respect to *Mae Chee,* their situation might be easier to solve than that of *Bhikkhuni,* since *Mae Chee* have been part of Thai society for a long time. According to the statistical records of the Religious Affairs Department, there are 13,258 *Mae Chee* in Thailand (Office of the Committee of National Education 2000: 35). It is felt that *Sangha* and government officials should raise the issue of *Mae*

Chee's status to be included in the present *Sangha* Act. The question that should be asked is: "what is their official position in the *Sangha* community?"We can also ask "how should people treat and support them properly?"Is it possible to permit Mae *Chee* to take the ten precepts?They may then be officially considered female novices by the *Sangha*. It is time to consider their existence seriously and officially. Dialogues and public hearings should be an urgent priority in raising people's awareness and making them think carefully and properly for the benefit of Buddhism in general.

With respect to the ordination of Bhikkhuni, there are two groups of people that need to engage in dialogue. Those that argue for the continuity of *Theravada* Bhikkhuni lineage need to present authentic religious documents to reassure people that the revival of ordination is in accordance with the Dhamma *Vinaya*. The other group that needs to engage in ongoing dialogue should be composed of those in society who are afraid of the negative consequences of ordination. It is possible that these people may not be aware of the possibility of reformulating Buddhist feminism. It is necessary to keep in mind that having Bhikkhuni in Thailand does not mean that women would like to dominate over or separate themselves from men in order to have their own domain. This is not a case of western sectarian separateness. Buddhist feminism is different and that should be stressed. The doctrine ofpaticca samuppada, where everything is interconnected (M. ii: 32), is very appropriate. Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni should, in playing out their roles, be complementary to society. In some situations related to women and children, Bhikkhuni may be more suited to the task than Bhikkhu. There are benefits of civic education, where learning to live together is a priority: "*Sangha* is in the community of right understanding and right action; they live out the path of peace without clinging to conventional distinctions between individual, or between the personal and the collective"(Santikaro, 1999: 420-1).A true monastic community needs to treat Bhikkhuni as co-partner monks, and be accepting and kind to the newcomers. In applying the Middle Path (the Buddhist concept of not having extreme opinions), the controversy of Bhikkhuni's ordination may be eased. Above all, it is-not unusual to have difficulties in dialogue between these two groups; difficulties exist among many groups in society. When one aspires to do everything for the sake of Buddhism, however, one has to use *panna* (wisdom) and skilful means together with good intention for the common good. This is especially so when one needs to think about the nature of Thai society and Thai culture, which are unique and sensitive toward women's issues and the question of hierarchy.

Conclusion

As a core idea, Buddhist teachings offer us many tools with which to understand cultural realities. Why then do women and others still suffer in spite of a combination of good teachings? One response might be that we are only Buddhists in name who do not practise seriously in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha. The Thai Theravada monk, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (n.d.: 4), however, stressed three valuable heritages for us to keep in mind:

(1) we should learn, practise and experience the authentic teachings of our religion;
(2) we should escape from materialism's influences;
(3) we should make an effort to have mutual understanding among followers of each religion.

The words above serve as motivation for new *Theravada* spirits in response to the threatening materialistic development and technology. They encourage us to become Buddhists in practice and to cooperate and live peacefully by way of interreligious dialogue in the pluralistic present age.

As to gender and religious education for ordained women, we find that Buddhism includes feminist resources and women's rights to ease potential problems. Technology and development also both liberate and threaten us simultaneously. Buddhist education may help to reduce the dehumanizing concept of technology and the modern world education and regard them as spiritual development. When we talk about human value then, we include human dignity and women's rights. Each religion ought to cooperate through interfaith dialogue in order to learn, grow and change with regard to misunderstandings and difficulties, especially those confronting women.

Thai women have a lot to contribute to in the future prosperity of Buddhism in terms of earning merit and practising meditation as laywomen (*Upasika*). As ordained women, they still challenge society and sensitive issues for both Mae Chee and Bhikkhuni. In confronting these issues, one needs to enter with a Buddhist attitude in heart, head and hand. Thai society has difficulties in accepting extreme feminist ideas from the outside, but "Buddhist Feminism of the Middle Path" (composed of the concept of *kamma*, loving kindness, wisdom and interconnectedness of both men and women, Bhikkhu and Bhikkhuni, and the laity and the ordained) might be easier to accept. The Buddhist community needs to realize that this intellectual liberation is an intensive educational development.

Dialogue is the answer to finding proper actions which should go hand in hand with Buddhist eternal principles and *vinaya*. What we need to keep in mind, however, is that any change should also be suitable to Thailand's unique culture,

so that the change might be good for the sake of Buddhism and the world community as a whole.

Notes

1. This concept is developed using Buddhist teachings that relate to the idea of human beings and women.
2. Undertaking mind development also means 'mindfulness in action.' Work or social action practises *Dhamma* and exercises inner development as well.
3. There are three Thai women from Sri Lanka who were ordained. Two of them are *Samaneri* (female novices). One of them is a *Bhikkhuni*. We also have a number of *Bhikkhuni* ordained from *Mahayana* Buddhist countries. All of them are not officially accepted by *Theravada* Buddhist monks in Thailand.
4. There is one group of Thai *Mae Chee* who take the ten precepts. They are at *Satheindhammasathan* in Bangkok.
5. According to official understanding, *Mae Chee* as laywomen are supposed to attend educational institutions according to their abilities. In actual fact, they can attend only some governmental and private universities because, generally, ordained people are not supposed to study together with the laity.
6. Some urgent problems are drug addiction, child abuse, prostitution and violence, etc.
7. People usually earn merit with monks by offering them food, money and other necessary things because these are considered "fields of merit." *Mae Chee,* on the other hand, are seldom included in these activities; their financial support comes from their own families.
8. More detailed research in *"Mae Chees* and Educational Responsibilities in Thailand* by Parichart Suwanbubbha is to be published by the Office of the Committee of National Education.
9. Tannenbaum refers to the study by Hanks and Hanks; please see Lucien Hanks and Jane R. Hanks (1963). "Thailand: Equality between the Sexes," in Barbara Ward, ed. *Women in the New Asia.* Paris: Unesco, pp. 424-451.
10. Monks take the 227 precepts, while *Mae Chee* take only the eight precepts.
11. See *Disa 6* (D. III: 190), a teaching on ideal relationships with others, including duties of husband to his wife, and of wife to her husband. This relationship is always reciprocal.
12. According to feminist theology, there are four types of feminism: liberal egalitarianism, romantic expressivism, sectarian separateness and radical transformism. For details, please see Rebecca A. Chopp (1992). "Feminist Theology," in Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. A *New Handbook of Christian Theology.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

References

Barnes, Nancy J. (1996). "Buddhist Women and the Nuns' Order in Asia," in Christopher Queen and Sallie B. King, eds. *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (undated). *Moradok thee hkoophak wai (Left Heritage).* No publisher information.

Chopp, Rebecca A. (1992). "Feminist Theology," in Donald W. Musser and Joseph L. Price, eds. *A New Handbook of Christian Theology.* Nashville: Abingdon Press.

Cook, Nerida M. and Jackson, Peter A. (1999). "Desiring Constructs: Transforming Sex/Gender Orders in the Twentieth Century," in Peter A. Jackson and Nerida M. Cook, eds. *Genders and Sexualities in Modern Thailand.* Bangkok: Silkworm Books.

Dhammananda, K. Sri (1994). *Treasure of the Dhamma.* Kuala Lumpur: Buddhist Missionary Society.

Esterik, John Van (1996). "Women Meditation Teachers in Thailand," in Penny Van Esterik, ed. *Women of Southeast Asia.* USA: Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University.

Graham, Elaine (1996). "Gender," in Lisa Isherwood and Dorothea McEwan, eds. *An A to Z of Feminist Theology.* Sheffield: Academic Press.

Gross, Rita M. (1996). *Feminism and Religion.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Guruge, Ananda W.P. (1990). "Buddhist Education," in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism.* Vol. V, Sri Lanka: The State Printing Cooperation.

Intharakamhaeng, Runjuan (1984). "Meeting Points of Creative Cooperation for the Proper Human Rights," in Sompong Bhramapaim, ed. *Women's Rights: A Buddhist Way* (in Thai). Bangkok: Gender Press.

Office of the Committee of National Education (2000). *Religious Statistics of Thailand in 1999.* Bangkok: Center of National Statistic Bureau for Educational Reform.

Santikaro, Bhikkhu (1999). "Education as Refuge," in *Socially Engaged Buddhism for the New Millennium.* Bangkok: Sathirakoses-Nagapradipa Foundation and Foundation for Children.

Voramunee, Phraraj (1975). *Dictionary of Buddhism.* Bangkok: Mahachulalongkornrajavidhayalaya.

7
Woman, Religion and Spirituality:
Religious Education and Gender Issues
Mary John Mananzan, OSB

Introduction

Religion is an important aspect in many people's lives. It tries to answer the existential questions that arise in every human heart such as: Why do I exist? Why is there suffering? Why do I have to die? What is the meaning of life? It promises salvation, liberation and enlightenment in one form or another. It is, therefore, appalling that this important aspect of human life can become oppressive. The essence and starting point of all religions is an experience of something tremendous, of some transcendence that is then interpreted as an experience of God. Such an experience cries out to be shared and, soon, the person who has the experience gathers disciples. A community is formed. Structures, rules of conduct and even a list of beliefs begin to develop. Some groups that claim closeness with the founder of a religion assume the power to interpret the founder's words, actions and mission. Soon, there develop power relations. As soon as such power relations appear, oppression becomes a possibility, and then a reality.

This chapter aims to describe the role of religious education in women's lives, by identifying the oppressive as well as the liberative elements that may coexist in institutional religion. It will focus on Christianity, although its conclusions may also be true of other institutionalized religions.

Herstory

Let me begin with a woman's story.

Linda is a helper in the kitchen of a seminar house. At the age of 13, a married man seduced her. To escape a court case filed by Linda's employer, the man persuaded her to come and live with him. As she was no longer a virgin and felt that she had no future, Linda went and lived with him. The man was so jealous that when he went out to work, he would lock Linda up in the house. She was pregnant with her second child when, in a fit of jealousy, he knocked her head on the floor so hard that she lost four of her front teeth. On another occasion, he threatened her with an air pistol that exploded, burying nine pellets in her thigh.

Seven were taken out through surgery, but two remained embedded in her thighbone. That was when Linda went to the Women's Crisis Center with her three children.

As she had no permanent job, when the man persuaded her to go back to him, she did. She never could refuse him when he wanted her, so at the age of 25, she had five children. She had to give away one of her children. Also, she almost died during the birth of her fifth child, and later, she had a miscarriage. The question now is, at the age of 30, how many children would she have? And how in the world can she feed them all?

Why did Linda feel she had to live with her seducer? How could she stay with him for such a long time? Much of Linda's actions or inactions will be clarified in the later part of this chapter.

Religion as a Socializing Factor in the Woman Question

In order to understand the role of religion in the Woman Question, we have to understand what the Woman Question is. Linda's story is an example of so-called women's issues, which can be classified into:

1. Inequality, discrimination and subordination of women;
2. Violence against women in the form of rape, incest and battering;
3. Trafficking of women in the form of prostitution, mail-order brides and overseas women contract workers.

These women issues happen, in whole or in part, in all races, cultures, religions and nationalities; whether women live in the First World or Third World; in the East or in the West; in the North or in the South. I think that these are just external manifestations or symptoms of the real problem, which I call the 'Woman Question.' This brings us to the definition of the Woman Question.

The Woman Question is a fact or phenomenon, *not* a thesis or hypothesis; that there is discrimination, subordination, exploitation and oppression of women *as* women, differing in degrees or extent, but which cuts across class, race, creed and nationality, is a global, systemic and ideological question.

The ideology behind the Woman Question is *patriarchy.* The root word is *patriarch,* meaning father. Patriarchy denotes the absolute rule or power of the father. This may be traced to societies, for example, the Hebrews and the Romans, where the father was not only the head of the household; he was the *owner* not only of the material property of the family such as the house, land, animals, etc., but also of the members of his household: slaves, children, concubines, wives. Although there is no longer any legal justification for the rule of the father, centuries of the practice of patriarchy has left a collective memory that gives men a

proprietary attitude toward women. This is what makes rape, incest and wife battering possible.

The Woman Question is not only a personal question (although it is very much so), it is also a social question. It has been going on from one generation to the next because of three important socializing forces or institutions, namely, education, religion and mass media. In this chapter, I will focus on the role of religious education in the perpetuation of the Woman Question. In this connection, I will discuss the interpretation of the Bible, the facts of Church history, and the present structure, teachings and practices of the Church.

Women and the Bible

Throughout the history of the Church, the Bible has been used to justify the subordination and discrimination of women; yet women, not men, are the most constant believers of the Bible or God's word.

First, it has to be noted that the Bible was written in a patriarchal society. Although its authors are unknown, the books of the Bible have been attributed to men writers, have been interpreted by men, and have been taught for the last two thousand years by men.

In the monotheistic patriarchal Hebrew society, God was considered a patriarch. There was a pronounced male domination over women that had a double standard of morality favourable to men. Women were considered the property of their fathers or husbands. The woman's main contribution was in bearing children. That was why to be barren was a curse. Needless to say, they were excluded from cultic participation except as spectators. They had to observe ritual purification for menstruation and childbirth.

The movement that Jesus of Nazareth initiated was a movement critical of the then prevailing Jewish society. Elizabeth Fiorenza writes:

> As a renewal movement the Jesus movement stands in conflict with its Jewish society and is 'heretical' with respect to the Jewish religious community. The earliest Jesus traditions expect a reversal of all social conditions through the eschatological intervention of God: this is initially realized in the ministry of Jesus. Therefore the Jesus movement can accept all those who according to contemporary social standards are marginal people and who are, according to the Torah, 'unclean': the poor, the exploited, the public sinners, the publicans, the maimed and the sick, and last but not the least, the women (Fiorenza, 1979: 315).

Therefore, it is not surprising that Jesus' treatment of women went against the accustomed attitude of the people of his time. Jesus took women seriously and chose them as disciples and primary witnesses, for example, Mary Magdalene and three women who witnessed the empty tomb. Jesus not only spoke in public

with the Samaritan woman, he even engaged her in a theological discussion and revealed his mission to her. He was forgiving of the woman taken into adultery and put up the Syro-Phoenician woman as a model of faith. He gave his Mother, Mary, a significant role in his mission.

In early Christian communities, the character of the Jesus movement found expression in the abolition of social distinctions of class, religion, race and gender (Gal. 3:28). Gentiles, slaves and women assumed leadership functions in missionary activities. For example, Prisca together with her husband Aquilles played an important role equal to St. Paul's. So did Thecla and Lydia, and other women who played prominent roles in the development of the early Christian communities.

Unfortunately, the egalitarian elements in the Jesus movement gradually got eliminated in what Fiorenza calls "ecclesiastical patriarchalization." This was a part of the "apologetic development of cultural adaptation that was necessary because the early Christian missionary movement, like the Jesus movement in Palestine, was a countercultural conflict movement that undermined the patriarchal structure of the Graeco-Roman politeia" (Fiorenza, 1979: 316).

This ecclesiastical patriarchalization led to the exclusion of women from church offices; women had to conform to their stereotyped roles in patriarchal culture. It was no longer a woman's call to discipleship that wrought out her salvation but to her prescribed role as wife and mother.

In this patriarchal context, some interpretations of Bible passages can really rationalize the subordination of women, for example, in the interpretation of the creation story where woman is taken from the rib of man. This has actually caused women to feel inferior because they are made to feel that they are only derived beings. The male is the important one and the woman is merely formed from him. Second, a woman seems to have been created only for the sake of the man. She is made to feel that she has no significance in herself except in a relationship of service to a man. And worse still, she is made to feel guilty of the sin of man. She is supposed to be the seductive temptress that brings about man's downfall.

Women in Church History

Ecclesiastical patriarchalization went on relentlessly throughout Church history. In reacting against Gnosticism, which allowed the female principle in its concept of the godhead, the Fathers of the Church became increasing misogynistic in their writings.

The writings and teachings of the Fathers of the Church are of utmost importance in the creation of normative principles and attitudes in the new

Church. Unfortunately, these supposedly holy and intelligent men had such low opinions of women that their misogynistic attitude became the foundation for the way women would be thought of and treated in the course of centuries.

Some examples of their misogynism:

- St. Paul: "Wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (Ep. 5:24).
- Tertullian: "You are the Devil's gateway. You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine Law. You are she who persuaded him whom the Devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image of man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die" (Tertullian, De *Cultu Fem.*, 1, 1).
- Augustine: "We are men, you are women, we are the head, you are the members, we are masters, you are slaves" (quoted in Julia Kelly, 1975: 500). "I know nothing which brings the manly mind down from the height more than a woman's caresses and that joining of bodies without which one cannot have a wife" (quoted in Kelly, 1975: 500).
- Jerome: "As long as woman is for birth and children, she is different from man as body is from soul. But when she wishes to serve Christ more than the world, then she will cease to be a woman and will be called man" (Commentary to the Epistle to the Ephesians, III, *5).*
- Gracian wrote:

  Different kinds of temptations make war on man in his various ages, some when he is young and others when he is old: but woman threatens him perpetually. Neither the youth, nor the adult, nor the old man, nor the wise, nor the brave, nor even the saint is ever safe from woman (quoted in C.R. Boxer, 1975: 100).

The later Doctors of the Church were no better. The active force in the male, Jerome writes, "tends to the production of perfect likeness in the masculine sex, while the production of woman comes from defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or from some external influence" (Summa *T.*, **Q.** 92, art. 1). Woman is, therefore, a misbegotten male.

One can give countless examples. The point is that there is a long and continuous history of misogynism in Church history that accounts for the tenacity of the interiorization, among both of men and women, of the inferiority subordination, and all other stereotyped ideas about women that contribute to their susceptibility to victimization. As a result of this, there was a significant stress on vowed celibacy for both men and women. With the establishment of monasteries, a communal life of celibates under the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience took form. In time, convent life became circumscribed by the rules imposed by clerical authorities who are, of course, male. In the sixth century, they prescribed the cloister of all nuns which was to be kept strictly.

It is not only the misogynistic writings in Church history that are so reprehensible.There are documented acts of violence toward women by the Church through the instrumentality of the Inquisition. Women mystics, healers, or women who did not quite fit the categories allotted to them were persecuted, hunted down, and even burned at the stake.

In 1484, the book *Malleus Malificarum* classified all the supposedly foul activities of these 'witches.' The most modest estimate states that about two million women, including Joan of Arc, were killed after being tortured between the 12th and 17th centuries. Women who gave birth without screaming might have been regarded as 'not saved' by the pangs of childbirth, which was supposed to be retribution for Eve's sin in "tempting" Adam. It could be interpreted that a woman's childbirth was aided by the Devil, thus, making her a likely candidate for a witch hunt.

Canon Law itself justified wife-beating:

> In the Middle Ages, the Church as well as the state gave husbands the legal right to inflict corporal punishment. There were laws, which specified in which cases of bad conduct women could be severely beaten with a whip or a stick, and in which cases moderate chastisement was in order. Some within the Church went so far as to demand that this be done with dignity (The Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Quebec Bishops, 1989: 31).

The Protestant Revolution, which did much to promote the role of the laity, failed to do the same for women. In fact, by restraining devotion to Mary and by suppressing the convents, the Reformation removed a number of women's safety valves. Even Martin Luther was ambivalent about women. He failed to see the sexism in biblical patriarchy; he still preached that the role of women was in procreation and nurturing.

Women in Philippine Church History

Pre-Spanish Filipino society cannot be called matriarchal, but Filipino women did enjoy equal status with men. The *mujer indigena* received equal inheritance; her training was the same as her male counterpart. The wife enjoyed the same right as the husband in marriage, including the right to divorce. She participated in managing the domestic economy as well as in agricultural production. She could be a 'pact holder,' which shows equality in political leadership opportunities. She had a pre-eminent role in the religious cult, being the priestess or *babaylan* who offered sacrifices in all the important events celebrated by the community.

In the 16th century, Spain brought Christianity and Western civilization, with its patriarchal structure, to the Philippines. The same misogynistic trend that was

present in the Western Church was, of course, brought to the islands, as shown in the following instruction to parish priests in the colony:

> Woman is the most monstrous animal in the whole of nature, bad tempered, and worse spoken. To have this animal in the house is asking for trouble in the way of tattling, tale bearing, malicious gossip, and controversies, for wherever a man is, it would seem to be impossible to have peace and quiet. However, even this might be tolerated if it were not for the danger of unchastity. Not only should the parish priest of Indians abstain from employing any woman in his house, but he should not allow them to enter it, even if they are only paying a call (Casimiro Diaz, quoted in Mary John Mananzan, 1988: 27).

The friars spared no effort in moulding Filipino women to the image and likeness of Spanish women of the Iberian society at the time; their lifestyles did not differ much from those of contemplative nuns of today. Schools for girls were established, and manuals for young girls were translated into the values, concept and prescriptions that the friars ingrained in young girls. The cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary was introduced to complete their domestication (there is, of course, a liberating way of honouring Mary).

The product of this friar education was later personified in the sweet, shy, docile and pious Maria Clara, the heroine of José Rizal's novel, *Noli Me Tangere*. Later, during the Propaganda movement, the *ilustrados* who were trying to awaken the national consciousness of the people denounced the friars' exploitation of Filipino women, and their domestication that had been effected by Spanish religious education.

Women in the Church Today

This section will treat separately the Protestant and Catholic Churches. It will also discuss the matter by taking into consideration the teachings, practices, structure and rituals of the Churches.

The Catholic Church still holds a conservative view of women. Church teachings on family life still emphasize the "obey your husband dictum. It allows only natural methods of family planning and has not lifted its ban on divorce. Many so-called 'happy' marriages are built on the subordination of women who simply keep quiet "so there will be no trouble." In marital conflicts, confessors advise a too-early reconciliation without a serious analysis of the conflict. The wife has an almost exclusive burden of keeping the marriage intact and very often, battered women continue staying on in marriages so as not to have a 'broken family.'

The Catholic Church's moral theology still focuses on the 'sins of the flesh,' with a certain bias against women as 'Eve the temptress.' It offers the model of

Mary as Virgin-Mother, which is almost impossible for Catholic women to emulate. The cult of virginity that prevails makes women who lose their virginity, even if not through their own doing, feel like garbage. Many prostituted women make a plunge into prostitution because they lost their virginity either through rape or incest. Putting up an ideal of woman as one who is self-sacrificing, long-suffering, patient, meek, etc. is actually a conditioning of a victim consciousness in women. It is no wonder there are so many women victims of violence.

In the liturgy, there is still a sexist tone when addressing the assembly as 'brethren,' praying for the salvation of 'mankind,' and exhorting to love one's 'fellowmen.' Women are given minor roles in the liturgy, but they shoulder the more burdensome preparations behind the scenes and the "making order" after each celebration.

Although women are the most active in Church functions and activities, they are deprived of participation in the major decision-making processes and are denied full ministry in the Church. Celibate priests continue, in fact, to make the rules and prescriptions governing marriage and family life. The structure is hierarchical and clerical, and women have no part in both. There is also the sad reality of sexual abuse and sexual harassment of women and children within the church. These issues are not seriously confronted, and the only solution used is the transfer of the erring clergyman.

The structure of Protestant Churches is less hierarchical than that of the Roman Catholic Church. Bishops are elected and pastors are petitioned by parishioners. There is usually a national conference where the laity is represented in the decision-making process. In some Protestant denominations, there is already an ordination of women pastors and there are also women bishops. In actual church practice, however, there is still much to be desired. I will let Protestant women speak for themselves. Ruth Kao writes:

> There is a Women's Department Secretary working in the main assembly of the Church ... In the local Church we have women deaconesses and for about fifty years we have had women ministers. But there are very few women in the decision-making bodies of the Presbytery or the Assembly. But we are now educating ourselves to be more self-reliant and to encourage our women to take part in these activities (quoted in Ranjini Rebera, 198511986: 15-16).

Saramma Jacob of the Syrian Orthodox Church of India pinpoints the problems of women in her Church:

> Women in our Church have two urgent problems. They are: 1) to have voting rights in the Church, 2) to be admitted to theological seminaries. Though women are faithful in worship, they do not have equal rights with men in the Church. Men

believe that they represent women as well. Regarding entering seminaries, there is a belief that women do not need theology (quoted in Rebera, 198511986: *22*).

Cynthia Lam, women's secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, laments:

> In the Church, women play a traditional role, preparing Holy Communion. Women's opinions are not respected. They are not taken into consideration. Women are expected to be obedient to the leaders and not to speak up. But it is the women who teach Sunday school, prepare the worship, and do home visitations. Although there are more women than men in most congregations, there are more men than women in decision-making bodies. So in practice the minority lead the majority (quoted in Rebera, 198511986: *24*).

We come back to the story cited at the beginning of this chapter. It is clear why Linda acted and decided as she did. First of all, she went along with the man who seduced her because she felt "she was no longer a virgin" and will have no future with anyone else. She had no choice but to give in to her husband every time he wanted her, and since contraception is not allowed her, at the age of 25, she found herself with five children she could not afford to raise. She put up with the battering of her husband because she was made to believe that whatever happens, she must not break up with him. She was also conditioned to be subservient and long-suffering. She felt it would be better to have a husband even if he battered her than to have no husband at all. Even if Linda was not a religious woman, the factors that influenced her decisions and actions stemmed from the religious values that have become a part of the Filipino culture.

The Power of Religious Language

When feminists insist on the use of inclusive language, some think it a trivial concern, yet, one cannot underestimate the importance of language in the formation of our consciousness and perspective.

Ordinary grammar rules that the words 'man' and 'he' are generic and that they include women. So when the priest says at Mass, "My dear brothers, let us pray for the salvation of all men," women should feel that they are included. Psychologically, however, there is a feeling of exclusion and subordination that is subconsciously felt by women in being thus included in a generic term. It is the "taken from Adam's rib" feeling all over again.

More fundamental than this is the use of 'He' for God. Everyone will agree that God is a spirit and, therefore, has no sex or gender. Yet, when one calls on God, the ordinary image that comes to the mind of an ordinary person is that of a male being, most often old and with a beard. This has justified patriarchy and

hierarchy in the Church and in society. Conversely, one's relationship with a human father does colour one's perception of God – as being stern, strict, judgemental, and waiting for us to commit sin so that we can plunge into hell, etc. That one needs to anthropomorphize when speaking about God is understandable because we have to talk to human beings, but then the anthropomorphism of God must be the complete human experience, and maleness or fatherhood is just one aspect of being human. To completely exclude femaleness or motherhood when talking about God is to be inadequate and give a very false image of God.

As a result of woman's immersion in male names and images of God, she has been excluded from the divine. God and Mankind are male. Therefore, men are considered representative of a full and complete humanity; their experience is normative, while a woman's is peripheral. From this immersion in male names and images of God, the girl-child becomes convinced that masculine qualities are more valuable than feminine ones. She develops a deep sense of inferiority and feels second-rate. The images of saviour are male and, therefore, the girl-child becomes convinced of her inability to save herself and of her need of a male saviour (Prince Charming in fairy tales). When the girl-child becomes a woman conditioned to think that God is male and men are his representatives, she is conditioned:

- to defer to men in work situations;
- to censor herself so husbands and lovers will not be threatened by her;
- to put first and foremost a man's needs and subordinate her own;
- to set aside her own life to serve men and consider it her duty to meet all their needs – sexual, emotional and physical;
- to consider men's interests more important than hers – their conversations, careers and decisions carry more weight than hers;
- to become dependent due to her sense of inferiority and become convinced that she is incapable of taking care of herself.

Efforts at Renewal: The Feminist Theology of Liberation

It is not enough to analyze the situation of women in the Churches or to pinpoint the roots of women's oppression in religion. It is imperative that out of this analysis, efforts must be exerted to remedy the situation through participation in women's movements. Women trained in theology must also rethink the discipline itself and bring about a transformation within the Churches; hence, the feminist theology of liberation. Ruether delineates the critical principles of such a theology:

> The critical principle of feminist theology is the promotion of the full humanity of women: whatever denies, diminishes, distorts the full humanity of women, and is, therefore, appraised as not redemptive. Theologically speaking, whatever diminishes or denies the full humanity of woman must be presumed not to reflect the divine or an authentic relation to the divine nor to reflect the authentic nature of things, nor to be the message or work of an authentic redeemer or the community of redemption. This negative principle also implies the positive principle: What does promote the full humanity of women is of the Holy, it does reflect true relation to the divine, it is the true nature of the thing, the authentic message of redemption, and the mission of redemptive community (Ruether, 1983: 48).

The agenda of renewal must include all aspects of theology: from the reinterpretation of scriptures to the historical-critical reflection of Church doctrine from the woman's point of view; to the rediscovery of the great women in Church history; and to the fundamental questioning of the Church's hierarchical structure, its constricting prescriptions, its discriminatory practices, and the sexist language of its liturgy. This will lead to the stripping away of women's false consciousness, freeing them to discover themselves and their potential.

This theology from the perspective of women has also developed a spirituality that women have to develop in order to arrive at their full humanity. The characteristics of this emerging women spirituality are:

1. *It is self-affirming.* In contrast to the self-denying characteristics of traditional spirituality, the emerging spirituality enables women to affirm themselves, to value their strengths, to nourish their self-esteem, and to strive for self-fulfilment as the only genuine basis for helping others. They exorcize themselves of useless guilt-feelings and allow themselves to bloom.

2. *It is empowering.* Women have realized that there is within them a wellspring of limitless possibilities of growth and development, an inner source of power and strength that goes beyond their wildest dreams. Realization of their situation and renewed self-esteem have made them tap this inner source, making them rise up from their status as victims not only to the status of survivors, but to that of agents of change capable of empowering others to bring about societal changes toward a more humane world.

3. *It is integral.* Women living this spirituality transcend the dichotomies and dualisms of the more traditional form of patriarchal spirituality. Matter and spirit, sacred and profane, contemplation and action are necessary elements of life. Women flow with their positive and negative experiences, living life to the full and with vibrant intensity.

4. *It is liberating.* Having gained self-knowledge and acceptance, women experience an inner liberation especially from fear, guilt and idols, and from bitterness and resentment. Not that they do not feel fear, but they have learned

to distinguish between substantiated and unsubstantiated fear and to act in spite of justified fear. They have transcended neurotic guilt and self-flagellation every time anything untoward happens to them or to their families. They have been freed from the shackles of people's opinions – of people they have been enslaved to in the past from too much love, and of critical people who have paralyzed them into inaction. Having experienced and not denying feelings of bitterness and resentment, they have opted to eliminate these poisonous emotions from their hearts to set themselves free for creative actions.

5. *It is contemplative.* Women see the importance of moments of silence, reflection and contemplation to give themselves a better perspective, a certain distance to evaluate what is happening, to keep in touch with their inner source of life, and to retain their sense of humour amidst difficulties, thus, acquiring an attitude of 'committed carefreeness.'

6. *It is healing.* Women who try to live this way are healed from their psychic wounds. Having gotten in touch with themselves and having gained self-esteem, women transcend their traumas, regaining their spiritual health and vigour. And because of the integrality of matter and spirit, they find that even their physical ailments are alleviated. Like wounded healers, they are able to, likewise, heal others with compassion and empathy.

7. *It is easterly.* It is a spirituality that is exuberant rather than austere, active rather than passive, joyful rather than mournful. It feasts more than it fasts. It is not cold asceticism but a glorious celebration of life. It does not remain with the sadness of Good Friday, but goes on to the triumph of Easter Sunday.

8. *It is a continuowprocess.* It is not achieved once and for all. It is not even a smooth progressive growth. It has its peaks and abysses. It has its agonies and ecstasies. It can retrogress, but it can also enjoy quantum leaps. It is open to great possibilities of life and freedom and, therefore, to more and more opportunities to be truly, intensely, and wholly alive.

This emerging women spirituality can be summarized in a phrase: *it is a passionate and compassionate spirituality.*

Conclusion: A Call to Solidarity

In this symposium, I have tried to share with women theologians of other religious traditions about our efforts in the Catholic Church to ensure that religion contributes to the upliftment of women, and not to their continued subordination. As we have seen, there are both liberating and oppressive factors in all religions. I think the task is to deconstruct those that rationalize and justify the continued oppression or subservience of women, and to emphasize those that contribute to

a woman's full humanity. I would like to work hand in hand with women in other religious traditions to manifest this.

References

Boxer, C.R. (1975). *Mary and Misogyny.* London: Duchworth.

Fiorenza, Elizabeth S. (1979). "You Are Not to Be Called Father: Early History in a Feminist Perspective," *Cross Currents,* 29, 3.

Kelly, Julia (1975). "Women in 16th Century Spain," *Revue Hispanique,* LXX.

Mananzan, Mary John (1988). *Essays on Women.* Manila: Institute of Women's Studies.

Rebera, Ranjini (198511986). "Emerging Patterns in the Women's Movement in Asia," *In God's Image,* December/February.

Ruether, Rosemary (1983). *Sexism and God-Elk: Towards a Feminist Theology.* Boston: Beacon Press.

The Social Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Quebec Bishops (1989). A *Heritage of Violence: A Pastoral Rejection on Conjugal Violence.* Quebec: The Social Affairs Committee.

8

Women and Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia:
Where were the Women?

Lies Marcoes-Natsir

An Expected Surprise

The downfall of Suharto in May 1998 gave rise to the theoretical prediction that Indonesia would be facing an unstable period of transition. The mass media frequently presented interviews with various influential political, social and economic experts, particularly after the violent outbreaks that shook the nation in 1998. Notwithstanding their different backgrounds, the various experts predicted almost unanimously that Indonesia would see many more outbreaks of violence resulting from the government's lack of authority and loss of legitimacy. At the same time, it was said that numerous locally or regionally organized civil initiatives would develop, some of which hoped to achieve nothing less than a complete takeover of power and authority (see Emmerson, 2001).

Paradoxically, within the Indonesian religious context, this period of transition gave rise to two different types of development. On the one hand, the country faced social anarchy and the development of religious conflict, mainly as a result of the state's complete loss of power. The legal system, having lost its authority, was considered ineffective and plagued by corruption and mismanagement, which resulted in questions about the system itself; whether it was fair and transparent, or conducive to a strong sense of lawlessness. This has given rise to strong feelings of suspicion and distrust among the various religious groups, particularly, with regard to the more expansive religious projects and missions, together with some of the repressive measures taken by the government.

Until the 1980s, Islamic groups and organizations in Indonesia experienced an unfavourable political climate. This was mostly a reaction to fears that they would try to establish an Islamic state. On the other hand, the government's measures of repression were imposed also as a reaction to various violent incidents, revolts even, that occurred under the "legitimizing" banner of Islam in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. The most infamous incident was, perhaps, the uprising of DI/TII; some of the less well-known incidents include the violence in Tanjung Priok (and the death of Ammir Bikky in 1984), the Warsidi affair in Lampung in 1993, and the Haur Koneng affair in West Java in 1995. All of these cases, however,

should be investigated further since many believe they were provoked by pro-government elements in an effort to provide an excuse for the continuous employment of excessive government control over the Islamic organizations.

Yet in the 1990s, the political climate changed and government policies were directed at befriending supporting and seeking cooperation with some of the Islamic groups and organizations. This move, in turn, came to be strongly resented by many who felt that these groups were then receiving too much government support.

On the other hand, the recent period of transition has also provided many more possibilies to develop locally organized initiatives. These can, first of all, formulate more suitable social structures and, second, put the ideas for genuine and fair social change into practice, hence, leading to civil action in order to attain these aims. These initiatives are not only possible as a result of the aforementioned loss of power (and, hence, control) by the state, but also aim at fulfilling local/regional needs that are no longer dictated by the interests of the state, as has been the case for such a long time.

This chapter will describe the initiatives of some of these groups – in particular, the peace-seeking efforts of women with different religious backgrounds – as part of the process of developing and establishing a civil society. Paradoxically, the efforts displayed by women – in this case, concerning the peace-seeking process – are extremely significant but receive very little public attention.'

Regional Violence and the Women's Movement

The aforementioned theoretical predictions have, at least partially, come true. Religious conflict has sprung up in a number of regions, like Ambon (in the Moluccas) and Poso (in Central Sulawesi). This usually involves the burning down of places of worship, both churches (of all Christian denominations) and mosques. Ethnic conflicts, too, have erupted and are often rooted in social and religious differences, like in Sampit (Kalimantan). Extremely violent incidents, including the burning down of places of worship and subsequent looting and plundering, have taken place in Situbondo (in East Java in 1995). A quarrel over a seemingly insignificant issue – in this case, a parking space – between parking attendants in Ketapang (Jakarta) in 1996 evolved into the burning down of a Protestant church and an educational centre. Bombs have exploded at both the Istiqlal Mosque and the Catholic cathedral in Jakarta in 1997, and many other incidents have also occurred.

Yet, on a different level, there are the initiatives of concerned citizens and civil society, which hope to attain some form of communication and, eventually,

peace. In some cases, this is done by directly interfering with government policies, as in the case of the Malino-2 peace talks in Malino, Sulawesi, in 2002. In other cases, peace initiatives are taken by the former victims of the violence, in cooperation with other concerned civilians and civil organizations that set up forums, discussion groups and other forms of direct communication in order to put an end to the violence in the region. An example of this is Forum Indonesia Damai, which was established in 2000 one day after the bombing of the Catholic cathedral and one day before the celebrations at the end of the fasting month, *Idul Fitri*.[2]

Various observers have aptly noticed the fragmentation of the women's movement during this reformation period. Many different issues are being addressed by a myriad of different women's groups and organizations, some locally active, and others with a more national scope and interest. These differences make it complicated to find a common basis that might serve as a theoretical framework for defining the form/structure and model of the women's movement. The same assumption might underlie the women's efforts in the peace-seeking process, for there are so many different, seemingly unrelated and invisible initiatives being developed. In fact, the issues and activities of the women's movement that have developed during this reformation period, which do not explicitly centre around women's issues, are perhaps as fragmented. This can be seen from their relative "invisibility" and place within/as part of the general political movement.

Thus, student activists are organized in *Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa* (Students' Executive Body/BEM) and certain NGOs like Forum *Kota* (City Forum/ForKot), and these organizations are often mentioned as having contributed heavily to Suharto's downfall and the subsequent disposing of the former Orde *Baru* (New Order) government. Hardly anyone, however, acknowledges the role of women, who were equally involved in bringing down the former Suharto regime. Women, organized in NGOs like *Suara Ibu Peduli* (The Voice of Concerned Mothers/SIP) led by Karlina Leksono Supeli, organized rallies protesting against the high prices of daily goods, although the SIP is usually mentioned in connection with charity, where one of their projects was the distribution of cheap milk and food parcels (of rice) to demonstrating students. Some writers involved in the women's movement have tried to provide a theoretical background to these women's political roles and the relevance of their actions – the story "behind the rice parcels" so to speak – among them Gadis Arivia (*Jurnal Perempuan*, 1999), Melani Budianta (to be published), and Maria Hartiningsih (*Swara-Kompas*, 2002) (see Budianta, forthcoming).

The relevant "invisibility" of the role of women in the overthrow of the Suharto regime and in the peace-seeking process during this period of social and political

reformation is, as I see it, the result of two different patterns. First, the women's involvement in the peace-seeking process is regarded as a non-political, thus humanitarian, effort. Second, it takes place on an informal level, because women's activities are often seen as taking place at a domestic level. Third, many of their activities take place without any government interference. This is in strong contrast to some of the other activities in the peace process. The documentation of history usually describes the formal activities (of committees, meetings, treaties) that take place in the public sphere and are covered by the media; this often involves interference by the government, formal organizations and powerful leaders (that is, public figures, government members and opposition leaders).

In fact, one of the oldest theoretical frameworks for describing women's roles, lives and activities is the well-documented binary division between the private and the public spheres, where women are supposed to be more active in the private sphere (of home, family, children), while men are supposed to be involved in the public sphere, including decision-making processes, careers and the like. Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was one of the first feminist thinkers who formulated the way in which women are "domesticated" and raised to be kept inside the house(hold). She describes this as a result of the division of labour and the division within the work sphere that she saw occurring on a massive scale in the early years of the capitalist-industrialist mode of production (Wollstonecraft, 179211975).

Indonesia: A Multiethnic Country with Many Different Cultures and Religions

Once we realize that Indonesia is a country made up of more than 17,500 larger and smaller islands scattered over 3,200 miles of ocean, it is easy to understand the enormous variety of cultures, ethnic groups, languages and religions it hosts. It has over 210 million inhabitants, the majority being Muslim. One should not, however, call Indonesia an Islamic state or nation, because there are at least four officially recognized religious denominations (and many others that are often ethnically and locally organized, ranging from animism to different variations of Islamic thought and practice). Based on archaeological findings and literary references, it has been established that Hinduism spread all over these islands until the 14th century. Now, only two per cent of Indonesia's inhabitants consider themselves Hindus, and the majority of this group is limited to the island of Bali and some remote areas in East Java (notably, the mountainous Tengger region).

Christians, be they Protestants or Roman Catholics, make up about eight per cent of Indonesia's inhabitants. Most Protestants can be found on the large but sparsely populated island of Papua in North Sulawesi and North Sumatra (which

borders directly on the Islamic province of Aceh, in Sumatra's most northern part), in the central and southeastern parts of the Moluccas, and on the island of Timor. Most Catholics can be found in the eastern parts of Indonesia, notably the island of Flores, the Kei Islands (which are part of the Moluccas) and Java, particularly, Central Java. Budhism and Taoism, or Kong Hu Cu, are also recognized as major denominations and are mostly practised by the country's Chinese minority, who live in the larger cities and in some regions of Kalimantan.

From an ethnic point of view, one could say that there are about 300 different ethnic groups. Of these, the Javanese, including the West Javanese or Sundanese and East Javanese or Madurese, each with their own language, is the largest group. They make up about half the country's population. Other influential ethnic groups include the Malays, whose own language, Malay, developed into what is now known as Indonesian. There are also the Balinese; the Bataks, Minangs and Acehnese in Sumatra; the Dayaks and Banjarese in Kalimantan; the Dani in Papua; and the Makasarese, Toraja and sea-faring Buginese in Sulawesi.

Unity under Pressure

It was not until the 1970s that massive, violent and extensively covered ethnic and religious conflicts were often heard of in Indonesia. The most infamous ones were the sometimes violent racial conflicts between Indonesians and Chinese. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there were a number of these conflicts in the cities of Tasikmalaya, Solo, Pekalongan, Medan, and in South Sulawesi. In 1974 in Jakarta, violent anti-Chinese demonstrations erupted and went out of control, resulting in what is now known as the *Malari* affair. Students and other activists protested against the domination of foreign capital, notably from the Japanese. Other violent anti-Chinese incidents occurred in Sukabumi in 1963, not long before the establishment of Suharto's military-led *Orde Baru* regime. According to leading, originally Dutch theologian Steenbrink, who has worked for many years at an Indonesian Islamic university, a very serious outbreak of anti-Chinese violence occurred in the late 1940s during the struggle for independence in Tangerang (near Jakarta). At least 653 people of Chinese descent were killed, including 136 women and 36 children (see Widjaya, 2002). Since most Chinese are non-Muslims, anti-Chinese sentiments could probably be labelled as having a religious basis; yet, it is generally acknowledged that underlying the violence, there are strong feelings of social envy fueled by and based on economic considerations.

The apparent lack of religious conflict during the first decades of Suharto's New Order regime has impressed many observers, who have generally labelled

this as an enormously positive achievement. The country has, subsequently, been characterized as a successful example of religious pluralism (Bush, 2000: 199). It has elicited the following comment from Steenbrink:

> For the past 45 years there has been an unprecedented religious tolerance, almost without any serious conflict. This is considered to be an enormous achievement, and an unthinkable development anywhere else (Steenbrink, 1995: 217).

According to Soetrisno (editor of *Meretas Horison* Dialog), many Indonesian religious leaders have regarded this harmony as the result of the successful implementation of Indonesia's state ideology known as Pancasila, particularly, the principle of "unity in diversity" or *Bhineka Tunggal Ika*.[3] In another part of his article, Steenbrink admits that in many instances where religious leaders have been engaged in interreligious dialogue, the inspiration for this was/is not so much from searching for ways of understanding one another's theological principles and addressing pressing social problems but is rather a reaction to the idea of mutual respect and care in not treading on the other's turf.

In order to successfully achieve the aims of national development, the leaders of Suharto's New Order government implemented and maintained strict means of control over society, including control on relations between the various religious denominations. It is clear that the government feared that the multicultural character of the country would and could potentially fuel conflicts. A strict policy known as SARA (an Indonesian abbreviation for ethnicity [suku], religion [agama], race [ras], and social strata/group [antar golongan]) was implemented. This provided a much feared and abused legitimation for strict measures of control and separation for all groups in society. The obvious differences between the various groups were impossible to discuss openly, and possible moments for dialogue were stifled in internal discussions. As a result, there developed a complex of extremely biased misunderstandings, based on hearsay and provocation. All over Indonesia, we were forced to hide our curiosity about others and about the many elements in our own cultural, or rather, subcultural identity; instead, we were presented with an extremely one-sided view of national unity as issued by the state. To make things worse, this view was unknowingly supported by the favourable comments of foreign researchers.

During the same period, Indonesian religious organizations, in particular, Islamic ones, experienced a complete depoliticization. Political organizations were restricted from having a religious basis, and vice versa. Islamic political parties could not express any religious views in the political arena and, for instance, the use of religious symbols was banned absolutely. This led the eminent Dutch social scientist, Wertheim (as paraphrased by Steenbrink, 1995: 212), to say that

> Just like in the colonial era, the government did not allow the Islamic parties to be very visible or active in the political arena, restricting themselves instead to purely religious affairs …

In the same period, many Muslims believed that Suharto was on better terms, both economically and politically, with the non-Muslim Chinese businessmen rather than with the Muslims. They also suspected that Suharto, at the expense of and contrary to the Islamic parties, allowed the non-Islamic groups to spread their religion. This belief was fuelled by the construction of many Christian churches, which was seen as proof of a process of "Christianization." The Islamic groups reacted by disallowing mixed marriages (that is, between partners with different religious backgrounds) from taking place. There was also a strong reaction towards the overwhelming majority of Muslims in state institutions and the bureaucracy. Some Islamic groups believed that the government tried to create in East Timor a place designated for Christians only, even though the Timorese formerly adhered only to their own, local belief system.

This situation, however, seemed to turn around completely when the national development policies – as implemented by the successive Suharto-led cabinets – started to receive criticism, particularly, in view of the corruption and nepotism that characterized many of the New Order development schemes. Strangely enough, and cleverly so, Suharto reacted to the criticism not so much by trying to improve the situation, but by drawing nearer to the various Islamic groups, particularly, Islamic businessmen. As leader of the nation, he (and the members of the government) began to accommodate the interests of the Islamic groups. Suharto even went so far as to bring his family to Mecca, followed by regular public expression of their adherence to Islam. Various Islamic groups, such as the Islamic intellectuals united in ICMI (Association of Indonesian Islamic Intellectuals), obtained direct funding. Many Islamic newsgroups, magazines and other publications also started to appear, and funding was made readily available for the construction of many mosques.

Besides *Nuzulul Qur'an* at the Presidential palace, and *Isra Mi'raj* and *Maulid Nabi* at the grand, national Istiqlal Mosque, other Islamic holidays and religious festivities began to be publicly celebrated. Foreign guests and dignitaries from befriended Islamic countries were invited to attend other festive or official Islamic events, such as the celebration of *Idul Fitri* (at the end of the fasting month or *Ramadan*). Suharto himself led the ceremonies, playing the great *bedug* (religious drum in front of the mosque) and reciting the *takbir* (laudation that "God is great") in public at the national square in the capital. Previously, such actions were unthinkable.

Suharto's closer association to the Islamic groups in society evoked a particular reaction by and in the country's bureaucratic institutions. From then on, a person's religious background became a means to measure eligibility for public office, with Muslims being favoured (somewhat later, ethnic background became a factor as well). This was bound to be problematic; outside Java, in particular, a position in the bureaucracy was the only means to obtain some form of economic and political power and influence. As a result, a fierce and humiliating scramble for positions within the bureaucracy began.

A well-known Indonesian Muslim scholar gave a lecture in Amsterdam (in 1999) and, upon finishing his lecture, commented on this phenomenon. He admitted that friends and colleagues from an Islamic student organization used to triumphantly report that they managed to obtain important positions in the bureaucracy, successfully ousting the non-Muslims who had formerly occupied these positions. Using wordplay, they called the non-Muslims "Palangists," which referred to the word Phalangist (Middle Eastern Islamic extremists) and to the Indonesian *palang*, meaning (Christian) cross. Since this particular event happened in a predominantly Protestant region, the researcher could only express his disagreement, being aware that in the long-run, this would certainly fuel possible conflict; yet, he felt powerless to change his former friends' attitudes.*

Subsequently, it was the state – in this case, Suharto – that became the only party that defined the relationship between the state and religion. This was the case when relations between the state and Islamic groups were close or, conversely, distant. This policy of "push and pull" was implemented by the Department of Religious Affairs, which also wholly controlled the (non)development of any meaningful religious dialogue among the various religious groups. Under the New Order, each time an initiative for an interreligious dialogue was formulated by any one of Indonesids religious groups, the directorate for Social and Political Affairs in the Department of Internal Affairs would interfere. Approval from this department had to be given before such meetings could be organized.

Suharto, however, was aware of the potential for interreligious conflict. This was why he wished to be seen as supporting programmes for the development of interreligious dialogue. According to Steenbrink (1995: 212), the first formal initiative for such a meeting, known as "Interreligious Consultation," was held in 1976, shortly after violent anti-religious incidents occurred in South Kalimantan. One of the outcomes was that the representatives of all the major religious denominations, particularly Islamic and Protestant ones, were told to minimize efforts at spreading their religions. This decision later received a legal basis by means of an official policy decision,[5] which was subsequently supported by three State Ministers, namely the Minister for Religion (Agama), Internal Affairs (*Dalam*

Negeri), and Education and Culture (*Mendikbud*).[6] In short, the article states that missionary endeavours were only permitted in areas where the inhabitants "do not have" or "do not yet have" any religion.

Another initiative was the formation in 1980 of the "Place for Interreligious Discussion," a forum to stimulate interreligious consultation. Yet, from the start, it was clear that this forum served the interests of the government, and not of the religious groups. This, and a number of other so-called projects to "harmonize relations," was the Department of Religion's contribution to government efforts in seeking enough popular support for its national development schemes.

The recent publication, *Catatan* dari *Empat* Daerah (Notes from Four Regions), mentions that this forum did not serve the purpose of exploring or creating possibilities for more intimate relations between the various religious groups, whether from a theological or any other point of view (MADIA, 2002: 33). On the part of the Ministry of Religion, there did not seem to be any interest in advocating or supporting efforts to better interreligious understanding. This is not to say, however, that some of the other initiatives developed in this period were not important. Some of the more genuine efforts that did touch upon theological matters, in fact, occurred under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion, particularly in the 1970s, and led by Mukti Ali.

Another initiative undertaken by the Ministry was the organization of local meetings for youth and students. In the Ciawai area (near Bogor, West Java), some 30 university students were involved in these meetings. They consisted of Catholics, Muslims and Protestants. Besides having regular discussions, this group also organized a number of social activities. Informally, this group became known as the Ciawai group. It remains a fact, substantiated by information in the MADIA team's publication (2002), that most other religious meetings held under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion served the sole purpose of discussing social and other problems encountered by the government. To the Ministry of Religion, the terms "meetings," "discussions," "forum," and "formal and informal talks" all meant the same thing. None of these, it must be admitted, seemed to be aimed at providing conducive conditions for the development of a meaningful form of interreligious dialogue.

Women and Interfaith Dialogue

Based on this outline, we should ask ourselves where the women were while these New Order dialogues were being organized. Part of the answer may be found in the form these efforts took. These efforts were held in public (the public sphere is not easily accessible to women), organized for religious leaders (who are mostly

men), and were of a highly political/politicized nature. Not many women were considered or would consider themselves comfortable enough to voice their opinions in such a format.

The women who are known to have been engaged in efforts at interreligious dialogue include Ibu Gedong Oka (who comes from a Hindu-Bali background); Musda Mulia, Sinta Nuriyah and Farha Ciciek (all active in Islam); Marianne Kattopo, Sylvana, Lies Marantika and Elga Sarapung (Protestants); Nunuk P. Murniati (a well-known Catholic activist); and Parwati Supangkat (who is from a Budhist background). For the past 10 years, most of these women have preferred to work through women's NGOs or religious women's organizations, and most of their activities centre on seminars, workshops and other forms of (in)formal meetings, most of which have been organized under the auspices of the National Commission on Women's Rights (KOMNAS *Perempuan*).

While the one-sided, state-sponsored dialogues organized by the Ministry of Religion took place, several other more genuine forums for interreligious dialogue appeared. These were held without state intervention and were aimed at the development of interreligious understanding and tolerance. Some of these subsequently developed into more formal organizations or NGOs, two of which are DIAN/Interfidei and MADIA.

DIAN/Interfidei was established in Yogyakarta in 1992 by Th. Sumarthana, a Protestant, with Farid Wajidi, Khairus Salim and Ahmad Suaedy (who are Muslims), and St. Sunardi (a Catholic). The women involved in this organization are Farha Ciciek (Muslim) and Elga Sarapung (Protestant), and they have all successfully introduced women's issues and religion. The latter two have also published a number of books based on meetings, workshops and discussions held by their organization.[7]

In Jakarta, too, two different organizations developed long before the general public began to understand the need for interreligious dialogue and understanding. These are MADIA and Paramadina. The latter is headed by Islamic leader Nurcholish Majid, who has been actively involved in holding religious courses. These courses are not only attended by Muslims, but have attracted others who feel that there should be more efforts at creating a genuine understanding among the various religious denominations, particularly at a grassroots level in society. They are worried, for instance, about a recent religious decree (*fatwa*) by the Indonesian National Council of Islamic Religious Leaders (MUI) that forbids Muslims to exchange greetings with Catholics and Protestants during Christmas. This denies the reality of a plural society, and defies feelings of mutual respect that are necessary for living side by side in an often overcrowded metropolitan environment. Some also feared that the fatwa might be interpreted as a religious

doctrine. In trying to come to terms with this, various meetings took place. These subsequently developed into a more formal organization, known as MADIA (*Masyarakat Dialog Antar Agama*) formed in Jakarta in 1994. Headed by Amanda Soeharnoko – who was also involved in setting up MADIA – the organization includes representatives from various religious groups, such as Budi Munawar Rahman, Djohan Effendi, Ulil Abshar Abdalla and the author (who are all Muslims); Sutrisno, Lies Marantika, Sylvana and Martin Sinaga (all Protestants); Romo Ismartono and Romo Muji Sutrisno (who are Catholics); and many others.

One characteristic that unites these organizations is the fact that they function without government interference, and without guidance from any government institution. The discussions held by these organizations are far from formal, and are based on a willingness and readiness to acknowledge mutual differences and open up to "the other." This is not done as a means of polite conversation, but is based on religious (and, therefore, subjective) experiences.

The idea to include women's experiences as a basis for dialogue did not develop until the government's efforts at organizing "dialogues" finally ground to an inevitable halt. It was, however, the celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March 1998 that became the most important event in bringing women's experiences to the forefront of the dramatic developments that were taking place in Indonesia at that time.

On that day, a women's group known as Seruni (an abbreviation of *Seruan Perempuan Antar Iman*) or "the call of women from different faiths" organized a remarkable meeting in one of Jakarta's Catholic schools, Kanisius. Headed by representatives from various religious backgrounds, the hundreds of men and women assembled were asked to join in a unique prayer session. The atmosphere was solemn and respectful. The most impressive moment came during what has now become known as "the women's prayer," in which certain leading women personalities are presented, each from a different religious context but united in their efforts at attaining peace and understanding. The prayer referred to Asiah, who was married to Lord Firaun, but dared to face him in battle; to Mary, who gave birth to Jesus, the bringer of love and peace to mankind; to Yasodara, Prince Siddharta's wife, who supported his decision to follow the path of enlightenment; and to Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, whose finger was bitten by her child when she took a seed of wheat out of its mouth that was not meant for it. According to the well-known Indonesian academician Melani Budianta, this Women's Prayer is read at virtually every event where women gather (Budianta, undated: 15-16).'

The political situation at the time was very tense. A few days before Seruni's prayer session, two renowned women activists, Karlina Leksono Supeli and Gadis Arivia – who worked together in the women's group *Suara Ibu Peduli* (SIP), and

who actively supported the student demonstrations against the government – were arrested. They were part of a group rallying against the government's price hikes at the famous roundabout in front of Hotel Indonesia (Bundaran Hotel Indonesia or HI) in Jakarta. One of the oustanding features of this rally was the unanimous anger of the women, all of whom were from different religious backgrounds. One of the newspaper photographs taken of this rally and transmitted all over the world shows women wearing the Islamic veil (*jilbab*) side by side with Catholic nuns in their habits, and all of them were expressing their genuine concern for the future of the people and the nation. They distributed their concerns, quite literally, to the public by handing out flowers tied to a small parcel containing some powdered milk and a printed card. Following the arrest of the two activists, similar rallies took place in other areas, such as Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang, Surabaya (Central/East Java), the island of Lombok and Medan (Sumatra).

The rally at Hotel Indonesia's roundabout continued until the fall of Suharto and his successor, Habibie. The rallies were usually held every Friday, and gained momentum whenever interreligious violence, conflict and murders occurred in Ambon. At the time, Ambon experienced the most serious outbreaks of interreligious violence that had occurred in Indonesia for a long time. The rallying women were subsequently known as "Kelompok Perempuan untuk Seruan *Perdamaian*" or "Women's Pressure Group for Peace."

Outside Jakarta – particularly in the areas where people were fighting, murdering, raping and mutilating one another in the name of religion – it was, obviously, not as easy to organize such massive gatherings. The state seemed inert and powerless, and it was reported that it was, in fact, a party to the atrocities. It did become clear, although in a terrible manner, that the interreligious meetings previously conducted by men had been unsuccessful. The violence in Ambon and the Moluccas were proof that interreligious dialogue, reportedly initiated by the state, had never taken place.

In this situation, without any hope of a dialogue taking place, many different women's groups began their activities with very simple means. They started, for instance, by exchanging goods and daily products like oil and foodstuff. Without intervention, notably the state's, they discussed with one another the need for creating a sense of togetherness and unity in order to end the conflicts. They presented the aim of searching for solutions to the violence through various forums. One of the most well-known of these was the Ambonese Gerakan Perempuan *Peduli* (Movement of Concerned Women). The members of this group persuaded other women to influence and pressure their husbands, brothers, male relatives and the island's youth to see the futility of the violence directed at one another. This movement later came to be known as Pita *Hijau* (Green Ribbon). Some of

the activists united in this group include Laila Suad (Muslim), Sister Brigitta (Catholic), Margareta Hendrik (a Protestant priest) and Sartje Puasa Popoeling.

Other women's initiatives at attaining peace were also presented through a number of different forums. One of these is the *"Forum Dialog Tokoh Agama Perempuan,"* organized by the ICRP (Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace) in Jakarta on 25-27 May 2001. In this forum, it was made clear that the violence in Ambon was not yet over, and that the end of the fighting, looting and other atrocities was merely the result of a tentative ceasefire. It also became clear that these women acknowledged the need for genuine and open dialogue. Their experience counts as a worthwhile and legitimate basis for further action.

Conclusion

The development of meaningful interreligious dialogue has certainly been inspired by women's actions, and is now generally being supported by many – men and women alike. Yet, the situation remains very problematic. There is very little reliable information, there are not enough witnesses who dare to come forward, there is limited time, and a crippled, corrupt legislative system. At the same time, the tradition of conducting dialogue, as is being done by the various women's and other groups, is not yet part of mainstream political life. Many would say that when women dare to express their disagreement with certain decisions, it is "too emotional." This was felt, for instance, when a prayer was read and the texts were read by persons from different religious backgrounds, even though this in itself points to the true meaning of the word "dialogue"! In a true dialogue, religious principles are questioned, and religious (re)interpretations are presented together with possible solutions with a religious basis.

In addition, it must be said that not all women dare to, or are able to open themselves up to conduct a true, meaningful dialogue – and the same can be said for men. In particular, Muslim women's groups are often seen as being intolerant, but this may be seen as a mere result of women's subordinate position within most Islamic organizations; they are the victims of their organization's patriarchal and pyramidal set-up and attitudes. Besides, the whole issue of interreligious dialogue had, previously, always been a matter of their leaders' (that is, men's) programmes. Second, in being a majority in Indonesia, the men find it hard to engage in any kind of dialogue, for there is no tradition of listening to a minority. Certainly, this element, too, needs to be further explored, and might become one more issue in women's efforts at developing dialogue.

Notes

1. See, for instance, Meretas Horison Dialog: *Catatan dari Empat* Daerab. Madia/ISAI/The Asia Foundation, 2000.
2. Some of its members include well-known leaders and activists like Saparinah Sadli (National Committee on Human Rights/Komnas HAM), the journalist Goenawan Mohammad, Mayling Oey-Gardiner (activist from one of the well-known NGOs in Indonesia), Hidayat Nur Wahid (politician from Justice Party/*Partai Keadilan*), Mari Muhammad, Imam B. Prasojo and others.
3. Interview on 29 August 2002.
4. The author wishes, for the time being, not to reveal the researcher's identity.
5. Pedoman Penyiaran Agama, Ministry of Religion, No. 70/1978.
6. SKB (Surat Keputusan Bersama), No. 1/79.
7. For instance, Perempuan Di *Tengah Arus Gelombang* by Dian/Interfidei in 1995.
8. The author wrote the Women's Prayer.

References

Budianta, Melani (forthcoming). "The Blessed Tragedy: The Making of Women's Activism during the Reformasi Years (1998-1999)," in A. Heryanto and S.K. Mandal, eds. *Challenging Authoritarianism in Southeast Asia: Comparing Indonesia and Malaysia*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

_____(undated). "The Blessed Tragedy: The Making of Women's Activism during the Reformasi Years (1998-1999)," draft paper.

Bush, Robin L. (2000). "Pluralisme Agama," *Penihian Demokratisdsi di Indonesia*. Jakarta: Lembaga Internasional untuk Bantuan Demokrasi dan Pemilu (Internasional IDEA).

Dian/Interfidei (1995). *Perempuan Di Tengah Arus Gelombang*.

Emmerson, Donald K., ed. (2001). *Indonesia Beyond Suharto: Negara, Ekonomi, Masyarakat, Transisi*. Jakarta: Gramedia/The Asia Foundation.

MADIA (2002). *Catatan dari Empat Daerah*.

Meretds Horison Dialog: Catatan dari Empat Daerah. MADIA/ISAI/The Asia Foundation, 2000.

Pedoman Penyiaran Agama, Ministry of Religion, No. 70/1978.

SKB *(Surat Keputusan Bersama),* No. 1/79.

Steenbrink, Karel (1995). *Kawan dalam Pertikaian: Kaum Kolonial Belanda dan Islam di Indonesia (1596-1942)*. Jakarta: Mizan.

Widjaya, Yahya (2002). *Business, Family, Religion: Public Theology in the Context of the Chinese Indonesian Business Community*. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Wollstonecraft, Mary (1975). *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books (a reprint of the original 1792 edition published by J. Johnson, London).

Appendix

The Women's Interfaith Prayer
Lies Marcoes-Natsir
(Translated by Melani Budianta)

Truly it is men and women who bow down,
men and women who are obedient,
men and women who are faithful,
men and women who are patient,
men and women who are pious,
men and women who are full of charity,
men and women who fast (show chastity),
men and women who respect dignity,
men and women who always remember God,
for them God gives His mercy and His everlasting Grace.
(Q.S. Al Azhab: 35)

> O God, who created Eve,
> grant us, the women of this country
> Eve's stoical strength
> to give birth to humane civilization
> through her suffering in childbirth.
>
> O God, who created Hagar and Sarah,
> grant us, the women of this country
> their perseverance,
> with which they can strengthen Abraham's spirit
> to lead his people
> upon the road of salvation.
>
> O God, who created Asiah, the pharaoh's wife,
> grant us, the women of this country
> Asiah's strength to fight tyranny,
> even when the enemy she fought was her own husband.
>
> O God, who created Masyithah, the pharaoh's servant,
> grant us, the women of this country
> Masyithah's faith,

when she had to fight the King of her country,
who was greedy and who idolized himself,
and punished Masyithah with the burning melted tin.

O God, who created Balqis from the country of Saba,
grant us, the women of this country
Balqis' ability to lead
with which she changed a barren earth into fertile land
to lead her people out of starvation.

O God, who created Yasodara, Siddharta's wife,
grant us, the women of this country
the Queen's generosity
in letting her husband choose the path of light
leaving her and the throne.

O God, who created Mary the Mother of Jesus,
grant us, the women of this country
Mary's holiness
to accept your decree
to give birth to a child who teaches love and peace.
Have not your decrees
now been used to support power
rather than to speak for justice and truth?

O God, who created Khadijah, Mohammed's wife,
grant us, the women in this country
Khadijah's business ability
so that with all the wealth
the Prophet could spread his teachings.

O God, who created Aisyah Ummul Mu'minin,
grant us, the women of this country
Aisyah's intelligence
in giving meaning to Your presence
from her notes on the prophet's exemplary life.
How truly does the prophet teach us to
empower and respect women.

O God, who created Fatimah, Mohammed's daughter,
grant us, the women of this country
Fatimah's integrity and piety.
Although she was the prophet's most beloved daughter and the wife of a
Khalifah,
she let her hand bleed
in taking out one grain of wheat
out of the small mouth of her unknowing child,
who did not understand yet, that the wheat
did not belong to the parents but to the people,
that it belonged to the people his father governed.

O God, who has created Mother Theresa of Calcutta,
grant us, the women of this country
Mother Theresa's strength and perseverance
so that we could warmly greet the poor
who are not treated as human beings by their neighbours.

O God, who has created Marsinah
grant us, the women of this country
the courage shown by Marsinah
defending the rights of women workers,
although she had to pay with her own life.

O God, who created millions of other women,
grant us, the women of this country
their exemplary behaviour
in order to continue
what they have struggled for.

But, O Divine Teacher,
are we worthy still
to ask for more courage
for millions of women on the brink of despair
torn between suffering and pain
between life and death
because of all of the violent abuses?
Are we worthy still to ask for more patience
while cruelty is treated as normalcy,

while the will to power,
overcomes conscience and common sense,
while voicing justice
is considered treachery?

O, God, listen to our prayers tonight
(lead us through the straight path
the paths of those you have enlightened,
not the path of those you condemned,
not the paths of those in the wrong).

Amen

Part III

Religion, Education and Interfaith Dialogue

9
Religious Toleration and Beyond
C.L. Ten

Religious toleration has rightly been regarded as the model for toleration in plural, diverse societies. Certainly, toleration in religious matters was the first area in which the case for toleration was acknowledged. As the nineteenth century British philosopher John Stuart Mill remarked in his essay On *Liberty*: "The great writers to whom the world owes what religious liberty it possesses, have mostly asserted freedom of conscience as a indefeasible right, and denied absolutely that a human being is accountable to others for his religious belief" (1972: 71). But Mill warned that "intolerance in whatever they really care about" is "so natural to mankind that religious freedom has not been practically secured unless religious indifference prevails (1972: 71). So "even in the most tolerant countries, the duty of toleration is admitted with tacit reserves"; religious toleration is still threatened whenever the feelings of the majority are "genuine and intense" (Mill, 1972: 71).

Today, as in Mill's time, religious intolerance breaks out – sometimes tragically – whenever feelings are "genuine and intense." We are in perpetual danger of losing the toleration that was so difficult to achieve in the first place. There is a need to rediscover the grounds for it, and the reasons we require and value it. This will not in itself eliminate the political, social, economic and psychological conditions that generate intolerance. It will, however, provide us with some understanding of the basis for toleration, and help to redefine and reshape the goals which we must always struggle for and defend against the forces of intolerance, or even the misplaced benevolence of those who try to save our souls by destroying or maiming our bodies.

We could do worse than to begin with one of the classics of toleration in the western world, namely John Locke's A Letter Concerning *Toleration,* which was first published in 1689. Locke's views are particularly interesting because he was himself a committed Christian, yet he argued passionately for religious toleration. Insofar as this involves tolerating religions – some of whose beliefs are incompatible with those of Christianity – Locke maintains that toleration requires putting up with those whom he thinks are wrong. The basis of this right to be wrong in matters that do not harm others, is a central element in the case for religious

toleration. So what are Locke's arguments for toleration? We need to distinguish between unsound arguments, however well-meaning they are, and those arguments which we can rely on and develop.

The argument, which seems to have the most restricted scope, is the one that appeals to the internal demands of Christianity itself. Locke maintains that "no man can be a Christian without charity, and without that faith which works, not by force, but by love" *(1955: 14).* Others have maintained that the gentleness of Christianity is incompatible with religious persecution. Parallel arguments have been used by believers of other religions to persuade their fellow religious believers to tolerate religious diversity. Thus, Muslims have appealed to passages in the Quran such as:

> Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects Evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy handhold, that never breaks. And God heareth and knoweth all things (Alhabshi and Hassan, 1994: ix and 51).

Tertullian, the Roman who converted to Christianity around the year *197,* went further in extending the argument to cover the nature of religions, and not just a particular religion.

> It is against the nature of religion to force religion; it must be accepted spontaneously and not by force; the offerings demanded, indeed must be made willingly. That is why, if you force us to sacrifice, you give, in fact, nothing to your gods: they have no need for unwilling sacrifices (John-Stevas, 1964: 13).

The argument, which is often directed to the members of the dominant religious group, is very powerful if the element of toleration in religion can be established beyond controversy. In fact, there will almost inevitably be members of a dominant religion whose interpretation of their religion, and the relevant holy book or text, will yield a different result. The fate of the argument will then depend on how conflicting interpretations are perceived by influential believers, or by the political authorities who have to implement the relevant policies. Even if it is established that toleration is an element of the religion, there will be disputes about the relative weight to be given to it when compared with saving souls through a common acceptance of the 'true' belief. It is, therefore, not surprising that the argument for toleration, derived from an appeal to the internal values of the religion, has to be supplemented by other arguments. It should also be noted that interpretative disagreements about the most cherished values of a religion are not solely motivated by a purely disinterested study of the character and authoritative texts of the religion. They are also, in part, a reflection of the different externally grounded values of different true believers. So those who are already convinced of

the importance of religious toleration, or of toleration in general, are more likely to support an interpretation of their religion that gives prominence to toleration. On the other hand, those who are more concerned about sharing the true belief with all or those who unjustly fear the socially destabilizing effect of religious diversity, are more likely to favour an interpretation that supports their aims and values. Then, the internal argument about the true character of a religion does not stand or fall on its own merits, but relies instead on independent arguments about the value of religious toleration. Locke's argument is appealing to those who already have such an independent basis for tolerating different religions, and want their fellow religious believers to acknowledge the value of toleration. Stripped of the external motivation, however, the argument might not be sufficiently convincing. In any case, it will involve increasingly esoteric textual interpretations among scholars, which will fail to engage the ordinary believers.

Locke also invokes a version of the Golden Rule argument: Do not do unto others what you do not want them to do to you. If a Christian magistrate is allowed to eradicate what is regarded as a false and idolatrous religion, then the ruler in another country, where a different religion holds sway, would have the same right to eradicate Christianity.

> ... what power can be given to the magistrate for the suppression of idolatrous church which may not in time and place be made use of to the ruin of an orthodox one? For it must be remembered that the civil power is the same everywhere, and the religion of every prince is orthodox to himself. If, therefore, such a power be granted unto the civil magistrate in spirituals, as that at Geneva, for example, he may extirpate, by violence and blood, the religion which is there reputed idolatrous; by the same rule another magistrate, in some neighboring country, may oppress the reformed religion, and, in India, the Christian (Locke, 1955: 40).

Louis Veuillot is supposed to have said, "When we are in the minority, we demand for ourselves freedom according to your principles; when we are in the majority we refuse you this freedom according to our principles" (John-Stevas, *1964:* 8). But if it is a principle of justice that justice has to be done *and* seen to be done, then true believers who demand to be tolerated when they are in the minority but who refuse to tolerate others when they themselves are in the majority, will be seen as hypocritical and unprincipled. A just society must be based on principles whose social implementation is recognizably fair, and not perceived as involving special pleading. This is a point to which I shall return later.

Locke also invokes the fallibility argument, which draws attention to the fact that the state and its agents are no better placed to discover the true religion than are ordinary citizens, who are also better motivated to seek their own salvation. The art of government does not give rulers any special insight into other areas; in

particular, it does not equip them to pronounce the true religion. The absence of such special insight is shown by the fact that rulers disagree greatly about religious matters. Locke argues that while it may be safe to allow the state to dictate to us what to do in matters of trade, it is never safe to let it dictate in matters concerning the afterlife. In the former case, the state can compensate us for mistakes it makes in its direction, but in the latter case no such compensation is possible. We are no more likely to follow the true religion if the state required that we follow whatever a particular church dictates, for churches, too, are fallible.

As a general argument against state enforcement of religion, the fallibility argument is weak. The discovery of the true religion requires knowledge of an impersonal kind that does not vary with the particularities of each person's interests and personality. The choice of a career or lifestyle needs to be sensitive to the characteristics and experiences of each person. Locke does not relativize the correct religion to the circumstances of the believer; if a religion is true, then it is true for all. In which case, individuals do not have any special knowledge or perspective that gives them an advantage over the state in the pursuit of truth. On the other hand, it is likely that, as opposed to most individuals, the state has more abundant resources and access to more information to help it in discovering the true religion. Locke's claim that the state is incapable of compensating individuals for a spiritual mistake is odd without some account of the requirements of salvation. Why should it be assumed that God would punish those who believe in a false religion as a result of state enforcement of religion?

So, Locke needs an additional argument to rule out state enforcement of religious belief for the purpose of salvation. That additional argument seems to be an implicit appeal to the value of allowing a free collision of ideas as a means to discovering the truth. In tolerating different religious views, and in allowing these to interact with one another in a free environment, we make it more likely for the truth to emerge. No one needs to rely entirely on her or his own intellectual resources, for she or he may, in addition, draw on the pooled resources of others when they present their varied and conflicting ideas for consideration in a public forum. Locke need not think of the free competition of ideas as a sufficient condition for the emergence of the truth. At most, he has to regard it as a necessary condition. Perhaps, he need merely regard it as a condition which, in the circumstances of the real world of fallible human beings, is the best way of arriving at the truth. As we shall see, the case for toleration is further strengthened if we think of the desirable goal as not merely acquiring true beliefs, but also as having a proper understanding of the basis and significance of those beliefs, and of the way in which they are to be applied to changing circumstances. Even those who think that they already have the truth will benefit from discussion. It is in the free

exchange of ideas that we come to have relevant understanding. Those who arrive at a view, even if it is correct, without hearing and discussing alternative or competing views will lack the capacity to evaluate different views, their respective strengths and weaknesses, and the limits of their application.

Another argument advanced by Locke is that toleration provides the ground for peace and stability in society. Those who believe in intolerance and persecution

> … would do well to consider with themselves how pernicious a seed of discord and war, how powerful a provocation to endless hatreds, rapines, and slaughters they thereby furnish into mankind. No peace and security, no, not so much as common friendship, can ever be established or preserved amongst men so long as this opinion prevails that dominion is founded in grace and that religion is to be propagated by force of arms (Locke, 1955: 27).

There is no doubt that Locke's argument carries much force. We have ample evidence, from many countries over different periods of time, of the destructive effects of religious intolerance. Religious civil wars have wrecked many societies. The fierce passions that religious conflicts arouse and the unshakeable belief that God is on their side have led believers to some of the worst excesses. Believers, acting in the name of a higher cause, feel licensed to commit atrocious acts that few of them would think justified if they were done for purely personal benefit. Yet, is the fear of "discord and war" and the "endless hatreds, rapines, and slaughters" sufficient in itself to deter a religious person from intolerance?

David Lewis (1997) considers a contest between the orthodox and the heretical about what will maximize happiness. Each thinks that the other holds dangerous opinions that should be suppressed. Now, suppose the two sides are almost equally matched. Each thinks that the best outcome is victory, and the worst is defeat. But each fears that by aiming for victory, it runs a substantial risk of defeat. If orthodoxy triumphs, heresy is suppressed, and vice versa. For various reasons, each might prefer mutual toleration to war: the suppression of their view might be a greater loss than the gain of suppressing the other side; the chances of winning in war might be less desirable than the chances of defeat; each side believes that it has the advantage of saving the most souls under mutual toleration. Under these conditions, both sides might settle for mutual toleration as providing the best hope of maximizing happiness. What each counts as a benefit or loss will, of course, be different, but each has a reason to value mutual toleration (Lewis, 1997: 1-29).

With the assumptions he makes, Lewis' argument is persuasive. Indeed, even if one side is more powerful than the other, victory in war is not assured. A sustained guerrilla war launched by the weaker side can cause considerable damage and uncertainty over a long period. The cost of war might outweigh the hope for

victory and even if defeat is not feared, the continuation of war over time will taste almost as bad as defeat. In the real world, however, a treaty of toleration is hard to sell because each religious group is likely to believe that, with God and the truth on its side, eventual victory and all the great benefits it brings is certain.

Lewis anticipates some of the inadequacies of a treaty of toleration for the defence of toleration in the real world. One such problem is that we believe that the weak should be tolerated but, so far, the considerations that underpin the treaty do not bring the weak within its scope. Lewis' response is to point out that there are many different factions in the real world, and these factions "wax and wane, and split and merge" (1997: *23*). For example, the weak may have a strong ally. To cater for changing circumstances, and to avoid "endless doubt and haggling about what the exceptions do and don't cover," it is best to have "one big simple treaty, loose in its terms, prescribing indiscriminate toleration all around" (Lewis, 1997: *25*).

The trouble is that in the real world, the weak often do not have strong allies, and the weak can be quite easily identified for exclusion from a treaty of toleration. The waxing and waning, merging and splitting of factions that Lewis mentions are sometimes themselves the products of toleration. They might not exist with persecution, which prevents the free mingling of different groups, and out of which common interests are discovered and developed, and alliances forged. Sometimes, the allies that the weak gain are external groups that already operate in a tolerant environment.

Moreover, Lewis' argument will, at best, deliver toleration only to rival religious groups. For it is group conflict that is socially most disruptive and dangerous, and a treaty of toleration among groups will help to prevent harmful conflict. When it is properly grounded, religious toleration must be extended to individuals, to move out of their current group and join another group. No one should remain imprisoned to a group she or he was born in but which she or he no longer wishes to associate with. In incendiary situations, some limits may have to be set – if only temporarily – on proselytism. Yet, individuals should still be free to associate with groups of their own choosing.

Locke's argument, which has attracted the most attention among philosophers, is the argument that religious salvation requires true belief, which cannot be obtained through coercion. State persecution is, therefore, useless. Coercion can alter people's behaviour and make them conform to a required pattern of conduct, but it cannot change their beliefs. Salvation, therefore, cannot be effected by forcing people to profess the true religion, or by compelling them to attend church, or conform to "any outward form of worship."

And such is the nature of understanding that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force. Confiscation of estate, imprisonment, torments, nothing of that nature can have any such efficacy as to make men change the inward judgment that they have framed of things …

For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this case are absolutely impertinent, because they are not proper to convince the mind … But penalties are no way capable to ptoduce such belief. It is only light and evidence that can work a change in men's opinions; which light can in no manner proceed from corporal sufferings or any other outward penalties (Locke, 1955: 18-19).

Here then is an argument for toleration that does not appeal to any higher principle, but rather to the simple claim that coercion is not a proper means for saving souls because it will never succeed in turning the false religious beliefs of heretics into the true belief required for salvation. The argument, even if correct, does not apply to those cases where the intolerance shown is not intended to change beliefs but to enforce a certain standard of conduct, or to contain the spread of false religions by preventing proselytizing, or by asserting the dominance of the favoured religion in the life of the community by ensuring that the symbols and practices of other religions are not visible.

Certainly, we have many examples of religious intolerance that are expressed through requirements of conduct rather than through attempts to change beliefs. The burning down of Muslim mosques, Buddhist temples and Christian churches by rival religious groups in different parts of the world are manifestations of religious intolerance that are not designed to change religious beliefs.

Furthermore, Locke's claim that "only light and evidence" can change belief is dubious. By "light and evidence," Locke presumably means reason and argument, revelation and facts. Yet, even when such "light and evidence" are insufficient to produce belief in God, another 17th century thinker, Pascal, maintained in his famous Wager that it is rational to believe in God. The alternatives for him are that God does not exist, in which case we would have suffered some minor disadvantages in believing the contrary; or that God exists, in which case unbelievers would be sent to Hell. Being sent to Hell is far worse than minor disadvantages, so in the face of uncertainty about God's existence, it is rational to want to believe that God exists. Pascal then suggests that acting as if we believe in God's existence will, in time, produce that belief. The idea seems to be that by acting as if we believe even though we do not, by doing the things that true believers do, that is, go to church, pray, etc., we might at first act without belief, but belief will come eventually.'

If Pascal is right, then Locke is at least partly wrong. He is wrong about what can change belief; it is not only "light and evidence" that can be effective. Although

this shows that there are more effective means of changing beliefs than are dreamt of in Locke's philosophy, it does not show that he is wrong about the ineffectiveness of coercion. The means of inculcation of true belief that Pascal recommended, namely, acting as a true believer would, does not involve the use of coercion. There is another reason why the success of Pascal's methods does not undermine Locke's claim about the impossibility of changing belief through coercion. The change, in Pascal's case, is from the state of uncertainty about God's existence to belief that God exists. This is different from the cases Locke had in mind, of trying by coercion to supplant one firmly held religious belief with another. It might, perhaps, be conceded that it is more difficult to do so. But is it impossible, as Locke thought?

It has been suggested that Locke's argument "fails to rule out the use of force in religious matters because force may be used not instead *of* reason, but to bring people to consider reason" (Vernon, 1997: 18). This response to Locke was made by Locke's contemporary, Jonas Proast, who acknowledged that the form of religious persecution by "fire and sword" that Locke had in mind would indeed be irrational and even counterproductive. Moderate penalties such as compelling church attendance through fines, however, might be effective in changing belief.

More generally, it has been persuasively argued by Jeremy Waldron that although direct coercive means cannot change people's beliefs, indirect coercive means might be successful in doing so (1988: 81). For example, there might be books which, if read by heretics, would incline them to accept the orthodox faith. Forcing them to read these books could, thereby, change their beliefs. On the other hand, there might be other books which, if read by orthodox believers, would shake their faith. The burning of such books might then help to keep the orthodox within the fold. Waldron also points out that religious practice may help to sustain religious belief, so the laws that require certain religious observances may help to arrest a decline in religious faith.

It has been argued by Susan Mendus that religious beliefs are "ultimate and compelling":

> Ultimate in the sense that in a profession of religious faith a person states the most powerful conviction that it is possible to make. Compelling in the sense that sincere religious believers have no choice in the matter: they simply acknowledge what is for them an undeniable reality (Mendus, 1989: **33).**

There is, however, no reason to think that beliefs generated in the manner suggested earlier – by manipulating the social environment – cannot be held in an ultimate and compelling manner. On the contrary, people who have been indoctrinated, or religious believers who have been brought up in a social environment in which are only permitted views favourable to the orthodoxy, have

powerful convictions that their beliefs are in accord with an undeniable reality. How else could reality look to them if it has been doctored to fit the orthodoxy?

Of course, it is easier to induce what is regarded as the right belief in children than to change the strongly held beliefs of adults, even through indirect and subtle means. In the case of children, there do not exist powerful convictions to fight against attempts at inculcating particular beliefs. Yet, wen this shows the limitations of Locke's argument because it means that indirect coercion can eventually, in the next generation, produce a population with the 'right' belief.

Let us now focus on the issue of the difficulty of changing the beliefs of those who already hold strong convictions.

Mendus also includes in the idea of the ultimate nature of a religious belief that it is all-pervasive, or at least, it affects many areas of a believer's life. This is one reason why it is extremely difficult to change a religious belief. It is unlike changing a preference, such as for eating unhealthy food. A preference can be changed without affecting large tracts of a person's life, but "virtually everything will have to be dismantled if religious belief is to be stamped out or radically transformed" (Mendus, 1989: 34).

The idea that a belief is difficult to change because it affects large areas of one's life seems to rest on a scenario of how different parts of the affected areas are connected. If one has to dismantle each part in turn, bit by tedious bit, then of course it will be very difficult and it will take a long time to bring down the whole structure of belief. Suppose then that the whole structure is like an inverted pyramid, resting on a very narrow base, such as belief in God and the afterlife. The base supports a huge edifice; if it is destroyed, then the whole edifice will come crashing down, not in parts, but all at once.

Can we assume that religious beliefs are much more difficult to dismantle than particular preferences? The difficulty of changing a belief or a preference does not necessarily depend on its scope. Some very specific preferences for particular types of food or for sex are very difficult to change. On the other hand, it is a feature of some of the new cults, which dominate so much of their followers' lives, that their leaders are very much concerned about keeping their followers isolated from family and friends, and away from the influences and 'contagion' of the outside world. Why? Because they fear an undermining of all-pervasive beliefs. Again, pervasive as a religious belief may be, it is sometimes no match against very specific traumatic events in life that change one's whole outlook, or even against a desire to be thought well of by those one respects or fears. This does not mean that one can simply will oneself into a particular belief. The forces that make one wish for the comforts and advantages of orthodoxy, however, may help

to shape perspectives and persuade one to look at the features of the world differently, and to give them a different significance.

Of course there are individuals, the Nelson Mandelas, who remain faithful to their original ideals even in the face of prolonged repression. Even though coercion can change religious beliefs in certain situations, there are other situations where coercion might be counterproductive and merely breed costly resistance. Once it is acknowledged that Locke is wrong in thinking that religious belief resides in an inner sanctuary of the mind that the external weapons of state coercion cannot touch, then his argument no longer creates an insuperable barrier against religious intolerance. We have to find firmer foundations for religious toleration.

No such firm foundation can be found if toleration is valued simply as a means to the discovery of true belief. Declaring that "The telos of tolerance is truth," Marcuse argues that "the realization of the objective of tolerance would call for intolerance toward prevailing policies, attitudes and opinions which are outlawed or suppressed (1969: 104, 95). He attacks the granting of universal or "pure" tolerance. Such tolerance will be extended to "manipulated and indoctrinated individuals"; it tolerates "sense and nonsense" alike; it generates a "spurious objectivity" that will only work in favour of false and regressive established views and against progressive policies, opinions and movements. The present "regressive indoctrination" would have to be replaced by "progressive indoctrination."

> To enable them to become autonomous, to find by themselves what is true and what is false for men in the existing society, they would have to be freed from the prevailing indoctrination (which is no longer recognized as indoctrination). But this means that the trend would have to be reversed: they would have to get information slanted in the opposite direction (Marcuse, 1969: 112).

> Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left. As to the scope of this tolerance and intolerance … it would extend to the stage of action as well as of discussion and propaganda, of deed as well as word (Marcuse, 1969: 122-3).

So Marcuse knows that he, and those who agree with him, are on the side of progress, and others who disagree are to be silenced and indoctrinated out of false beliefs. He writes "that there are issues where either there is no 'other side' in any more than a formalistic sense, or where 'the other side' is demonstrably 'regressive' and impedes possible improvement of the human condition" (Marcuse, 1969: 134). He is not worried that he is instituting a "dictatorship of an 'elite'," declaring that in the present situation, there is no alternative. He even invokes Mill for his purposes. After all, had not Mill advocated plural voting for the educated in order to give their opinions greater weight? Mill, however, did not suggest that people

should be given extra votes on the basis of their views. Although he envisaged an eventual consensus of opinions, this consensus would only carry authority if it emerges from freedom of discussion. On the other hand, Marcuse identifies his elite by their opinions, and the agreement that is generated will be the product of intolerance and indoctrination. Mill's proposals about plural votes, like his proposal on proportional representation, are intended to encourage greater freedom of discussion. With increased representation of the educated in parliament, there will be greater diversity in the views expressed. Parliament will, he had hoped, become a forum of discussion rather than an arena for clashes of conflicting interests. Mill wanted to avoid a situation where any single group with a restricted set of interests can dominate over all others. Political participation will have educative effects, enlarging interests and sympathies among people (Ten, 1998).

Like Marcuse, Mill also thought poorly of the prevailing state of mind among the masses. There was a "despotism of custom" and a social tyranny of the majority "more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself" (Mill, 1972: 68). Unlike Marcuse, Mill's weapon for combating indoctrination was not counter-indoctrination but rather, greater freedom, greater tolerance and increased variety of situations. He wanted to put in place, develop and strengthen the institutions and social attitudes of a free society in which individuals can truly be free (Ten, 1995: 194).

For Mill, freedom of expression and toleration cease to be mere means, not even indispensable means, to progress. Rather, they are constitutive elements of progress. Those who truly *know* the truth have the correct belief and they hold that belief in a certain manner, revising and adjusting it as evidence and argument dictate. A society that seeks to cultivate such knowledge of the truth will develop in its members certain intellectual and moral capacities, a certain openness in the search for truth, a willingness to listen to alternative views, a receptivity to new ideas and a willingness to follow arguments to whatever conclusions they may lead to.

> Truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers, that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much and even more indispensable to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of (Mill, 1972: 94).

It is only in a progressive society that there will be "an intellectually active people," and a society in which "even persons of the most ordinary intellect" can

rise to "something of the dignity of thinking beings" (Mill, *1972: 94-5).* Unless people truly understand the meaning of and the grounds for, for example, the religious doctrines they purport to believe in, their lives are not going to be properly guided by those doctrines. Coercion, which suppresses debate and removes from consideration the arguments and evidence that go against the favoured belief, cannot generate the necessary understanding. "Light and evidence" are necessary. But "light" includes revelation, and it might be tempting to think that it is still possible to bypass religious toleration by giving knowledge of true beliefs through revelation. Human societies, however, are constantly changing; circumstances change, new cases arise, human ingenuity and inventions create novel problems. We may receive through revelation the general principle "Thou shall not kill," but should this apply to euthanasia and abortion? Again, the revealed principles have to be interpreted, understood and applied to new situations before we can determine whether surrogate motherhood or cloning is wrong.

With toleration and the resulting religious diversity operating against a background of free and reflective thought, the truths we hold are unlikely to regress into dead dogmas, with little or no understanding of the meanings of or grounds for these truths. Such an environment satisfies the interests of rational people. There are those who want to communicate with others about the world in which they live, about human relationships, interests and emotions, about conceptions of what are good or evil, etc. Others would wish to find out who else shares their beliefs, or what views to hold on fundamental issues, and what the case for alternative views are. Some of our beliefs are important to us partly because they are linked to our sense of who we are, and we want to register our identity for all to see and acknowledge. But once we put our beliefs into the public domain and make claims about the world we all share, these claims compete with the rival claims of others and should not be shielded from them. Others are free to reject our claims, just as we are free to reject theirs. In the process of discussion with others, we are likely to discover that reasonable people may disagree about fundamental issues, and we then have to acknowledge that they may choose to live their own lives in accordance with their own views and values, so long as they do not harm others and respect their similar right. We should respect them as people who are capable of forming such views under conditions of freedom, and of acting on them. We do not have to share their values but we acknowledge that they may take responsibility for their own lives, shaping them in the light of their fundamental commitments. It is respect for them, and not an endorsement of their values or way of life, that underpins our toleration.

Religious fanatics, however, do not treat religious difference as a matter of toleration. Instead, they seek to coerce others into conforming to certain practices.

The alleged errors of others are seen as threats to fanatics' well-being. They believe that they have a duty to force others onto the right path. With real fanatics, there is no scope for rational argument. Where they are not in full control of the situation, they might accept toleration purely on grounds of prudence. Where they depend on winning the support of others in implementing their repressive policies, then we might be able to offer arguments to the as yet uncommitted – arguments that try to show that a society built on toleration is fairer and more attractive than one in which fanaticism triumphs. If we fail, and when true fanatics cannot be deflected from their intolerant policies, then there is no alternative but to fight them as best we can without sacrificing too much of the values for which we are fighting.

Classical defenders of toleration, like Mill and Locke, provide us not only with the specific arguments for toleration, but also give us some of the sentiments, vocabulary, and most importantly, the general framework that we need to construct the case for toleration. That framework rests, in the end, on the idea that the state should not be held together in the same manner that a religious group is held together, nor should the state seek to perform the functions of a religious group.

The members of a religious group share a comprehensive set of values, and they voluntarily gather together to express those values in their lives and to promote them. In the modern world, however, societies are typically religiously plural, with each group sharing a different set of fundamental values from others. Yet, they have to live together and cooperate. On what terms can we fairly expect them to cooperate?'

If each group can dig deep down into its own shared values and find something common to bind them together, then that would indeed be excellent. But, as we have seen earlier, such attempts are likely to end up in interpretative disagreements about the true nature of a particular religion, and these disagreements will eventually be confined to specialist scholars of the religion. If we are to have a basis for toleration that engages the ordinary person, then we need to find a set of more general values that people with different comprehensive values can accept as a basis of cooperation. Mutual toleration is the only fair basis for cooperation that does not require that members of one group must cease to lead their own lives in accordance with their own values, and instead act in conformity with the values of another. Of course, mutual toleration prevents me from insisting that others also act on the guiding principles of my religion, but there is no way in which I can fairly privilege those principles. If I try to convince others that my religious principles are superior to theirs simply because mine are true, I cannot convince them. Even if I am right, I cannot show this in social life. Social policies cannot be judged simply on the basis of their abstract truth or their objective value taken in isolation from the social contexts of their application.

Policies that are not socially sustainable have to be abandoned. Those who claim that the state may impose the *objectively* true religion will, in practice, simply license the state to impose what it *subjectively* thinks is the true religion. We can safely say that since after all these years, reasonable people still subscribe to different religions, religion is a subject on which reasonable people disagree. Yet, if they acknowledge such disagreement, then they should seek to regulate their lives by a common value of mutual toleration, rather than by what each of them believes to be the true religion.

Still, the price that a religious group, particularly a minority group, pays for toleration may be heavy. To be tolerated is to be put up with, suggesting there is something wrong or unacceptable in what you do. Those who tolerate you have a negative attitude toward you, but unlike the intolerant, they do not seek to suppress you. Maurice Cranston drew attention to a remark that T.S. Eliot once made. Eliot said that the Christian does not want to be tolerated (Cranston, 1967: 143). Eliot was not inviting intolerance to be visited upon Christians like him, instead, his point was that Christians wanted something more than toleration, some form of recognition. This is an important point, particularly for members of minority religious groups who may find that in a society in which they are merely tolerated, they would still be treated with condescension or incomprehension. So long as they are left alone, the strict requirements of toleration would be satisfied. We must now consider briefly why, in a healthy society, we need to go beyond the minimal demands of toleration. This in no way diminishes the importance and difficulty of meeting and sustaining these minimal demands.

In moving beyond toleration, what we need are appropriate attitudes among the different religious groups, both majority group and minority groups. Among members of minority religious groups, there must be some recognition that no matter how important their religion is to them, it should still not be the sole basis on which their sense of identity is built. When Marx asked workers of the world to unite, he made the mistake of thinking that the interests of the working classes transcended national boundaries. A look at some of the constraints on the migration of Asian workers to Western countries indicates that, sometimes, the strongest resistance comes from some sections of the working class in those countries. Not for them the unity of all workers. Even Locke, who was so passionate in his defence of religious toleration, wrongly maintained that such toleration should not be extended to Roman Catholics in the England of his day because they owed an overriding allegiance to an alien power – the Pope in Rome. Again, the assumption is that the community of interests based on shared religious views overrides all other common interests. In the present time, it would be a mistake for religious people to think that a shared religion necessarily generates stronger

common interests than all other bonds of solidarity, including the bonds of citizenship in a just society. This is not the case, nor should it be the case. In a tolerant society, the common interest of fostering and sustaining an environment of mutual toleration is the basis of justice among groups. It is a bond of citizenship that fairly protects the more specific interests of all to practise their religion.

Other elements that should strengthen the bond of citizenship revolve round a shared political framework within which all can participate in making decisions about issues of common interest in social and economic life. Such participation diminishes any sense of alienation, and opens up further opportunities for cooperation and mutual understanding. In preparing their youth for both active participation in political life and meaningful choices in their own lives, a religious group needs to give them an education that is broad, and in touch with contemporary developments; an education that develops their multifarious talents and potential interests. Not to do so is to condemn the young to a very narrow range of options and eventual marginalization. But once the young have the benefit of a good education, the associations that are formed are dictated by those developing interests, which cut across differences in religious beliefs. Whether these interests are in music and the arts, or sporting activities, or other professions, they do not depend on shared religious values for their enjoyment or their success. Religion will continue to play a vital part in their lives, but it is not the sole source of their sense of identity. When social and economic life produce associations of people from various religions, drawn together by non-religious common interests, the religious differences themselves may become less significant in the formation of attitudes. If we have been propelled closer to others by our shared associational interests, then we may begin to better understand and appreciate their religious values.

We may find that some religious differences do not mark deep and irreconcilable values, any more than differences in forms of greeting and rules of etiquette mark major disagreements in values. Perhaps, many religious practices and rituals merely reflect different ways of expressing the same fundamental attitudes toward God. Religious people can then appreciate religious diversity in the same way that a multitalented professional athlete who can only participate at an advanced level in one or two games, is nonetheless able to be an appreciative spectator of many other games. The athlete's devotion to one game does not lead him to harbour negative attitudes toward other games. Instead, the athlete is drawn to them not as a player, but as an enthusiastic spectator.

Similarly, we may hope that different religious groups, including those in the majority, will, through their common participation in the political, social and economic spheres of their society, treat their differences positively and with

approval. If this happens, they would have gone beyond toleration toward some degree of recognition, or even endorsement, of another's religion. We cannot be too sanguine, however, for religions do make incompatible claims, and there are genuine – and sometimes fundamental – differences among them. When they truly understand one another, they may also be more aware of such claims. We cannot then expect them to endorse one another's views, or to treat their disagreements as matters of indifference. Negative attitudes toward others' beliefs may then be unavoidable, so long as they regard the differences as centring on issues of importance. Yet, we can still expect them to tolerate one another, and to provide space for each one to flourish. If we fail to go beyond toleration, we must at least fall back on the virtue of mutual toleration. For without it, there will be no justice.

Notes

1. I know someone who, for the amusement of his friends, at first acted as if he was in love with the young woman who was obviously besotted with him. He kept the pretence long enough to actually fall in love with her. Alas, by then she had fallen out of love with him! The story has a happy ending: they are both happily married, but not to each other.

2. This is an issue that has been discussed at great length and with enormous subtlety by Rawls, and his version of "political liberalism" is a suggested solution (Rawls, 2001). Rawls' theory, however, involves the use of complex, conceptual tools, and I shall not discuss those here.

References

Alhabshi, Syed Othman and Nik Mustapha Nik Hassan, eds. (1994). *Islam and Tolerance.* Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia.

Cranston, Maurice (1967). "Toleration," in Paul Edwards, ed. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Vols. 7 & 8. New York: Macmillan and the Free Press, pp. 143-6.

John-Stevas, Norman St. (1964). *Law and Morals.* London: Burns & Oates.

Lewis, David (1997). "Mill and Milquetoast," in Gerald Dworkin, ed. *Mill on Liberty: Critical Essays.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 1-29.

Locke, John (1955). A *Letter Concerning Toleration.* Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.

Marcuse, Herbert (1969). "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jr. and Herbert Marcuse, eds. A *Critique of Pure Tolerance.* London: Jonathan Cape.

Mendus, Susan (1989). *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism.* London: Macmillan.

Mill, John Stuart (1972). *Utilitarianism, Liberty, Representative Government.* London: J.M. Dent.

Rawls, John (2001). *justice as Fairness: A Restatement.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Ten, C.L. (1995). "Mill's Place in Liberalism," *The American Political Science Reviewer,* 24, pp. 179-204.

_____ (1998). "Socialism, Democracy, and the Working Classes," in John Skorupski, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Mill.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 372-395.

Vernon, Richard (1997). *The Career of Toleration: John Locke, Jonas Proast, and After.* Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Waldron, Jeremy (1988). "Locke: Toleration and the Rationality of Persecution," in Susan Mendus, ed. *Justifying Toleration.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 61-86.

10

Education for Tolerance among Religious Communities: The Case of Indonesia

Franz Magnis-Suseno, SJ

Introduction

The period of euphoria after the downfall of Soviet communism, during which hope grew for a "peace dividend," ended a long time ago. Global confrontation between the countries that practise "western-style democracy" and international communism has been replaced by an increasing number of communal conflicts that are smaller in scale and localized. In Asia especially, religion is often a key factor in these conflicts. Increasingly, the question of creating social environments that are conducive to positive tolerance among religious communities living in the same society and state system is of crucial importance in the work to overcome communal conflicts and to achieve peace. Simply put, the challenge facing people in Southeast Asia is how religion, instead of being an element of potential conflict, can become a bulwark of peace among the respective communities.

In this chapter, which takes Indonesia as its context and uses it for illustrative purposes, I will focus on the issue of education for positive tolerance among communities of different religions that exist together within one country. Firstly, I wish to postulate that the development of two attitudes is crucial in achieving stable peaceful relations among different religious communities: *tolerance* and *fairness.* Specifically, as regards tolerance, I will show that *positive tolerance* means more than just *tolerating* the other and is, thus, not merely a negative, but also a positive attitude and psychological capability of the greatest relevance to intercommunal peace. In the second part, I will sketch the history of interreligious relations in Indonesia. I want to show that religious tolerance was, and still is, a social fact in Indonesia. I also want to argue that, although there have always been tensions between different religions in Indonesia, it is still necessary to pose the question: why has religious conflict exploded into open violence in the last five years? In the third part of this chapter, I will examine the relationship between education and religious tolerance.

Tolerance and Fairness

What should be the content of an education that fosters interreligious peace and helps to develop attitudes that would enable the members of different religious communities to communicate in normal, peaceful ways with one another, and to manage their conflicts in a non-violent way? In my opinion, there are two basic attitudes – both of which have to be learned anew – that have to be inculcated in the members of a pluralistic society. These are the attitudes of tolerance and fairness.

Tolerance

Tolerance is sometimes regarded, rather negatively, as a practice of merely letting others be and of letting them have their own way, not out of respect or sympathy, but because of indifference or laziness. You tolerate many things although you do not like them, since you either cannot change them or because trying to change them would involve too much trouble. Hence, rather than encouraging mere tolerance, we should encourage mutual respect.

Of course, this is quite true, but it is also misleading. In fact, to demand mutual respect is, as a broad social attitude, an attempt to demand too much. On the other hand, tolerance goes beyond just not interfering. Tolerance means letting your neighbours believe whatever they want as long as they do not interfere with your own way of life or break the law. It also means that we feel at ease and relaxed in living together with people of different cultural and religious orientations. Erving Goffman conceived of the expression "civil inattention" as a fundamental 'virtue' of modern societies (quoted from Sznaider, 1999: 394). It concerns people being at the same place at the same time, for instance, in a supermarket or at the underground railway station, but having nothing to do with one another. In such a situation, the psychological capability of not caring about your neighbour – with the condition that he or she is not facing an emergency – or of not feeling disturbed in the least, for example, by the idea that he or she may be an atheist or may have unfamiliar beliefs is a most important positive social asset. This inattention leaves everybody free to be his or her own self. It is 'civil' because one behaves, generally, in a polite and civilized way toward others. It provides others in a society the confidence that they need to not be afraid of being their own selves.' Modern pluralistic societies succeed in large measure because of the prevalence of tolerance and because the sense of civil inattention becomes routine. Thus, it is crucial that education provides for this attitude of positive and relaxed tolerance.

Fairness

Fairness means a chivalrous attitude towards one's adversary, for instance, in sports or business. It means that we judge others with the same yardstick we use to measure ourselves, and that we measure ourselves by the same criteria we use in evaluating others. Fairness, specifically, means the willingness to judge another in a just way even if he or she does not belong to our side. Although traditional societies did not necessarily behave in an unfair way, the idea of being fair to everybody is distinctly modern. In traditional societies, the demands of fairness towards strangers or enemies were embedded in specific customs. Fairness is an extremely important virtue for citizens in modern democratic societies. Only people who have internalized what fairness means are able to fully and competently participate in a modern pluralistic society. Thus, high priority should be given to educating people to imbibe the value of fairness.

Before asking how positive tolerance and fairness could be made a goal of education, I will pose the question of interreligious peace in the context of Indonesia.

The Indonesian Case

Tolerance and Conflict

The Indonesian state has, from the beginning, embraced a policy of religious tolerance. The five principles of Pancasila are the expression of a fundamental consensus among the founding fathers of the Indonesian Republic – that the Indonesian state and society are equally owned by all citizens, regardless of their religious creed. Both the Constitution of 1945, which was again enforced since 1959, and the "provisional constitution" of 1950 contain the principles of Pancasila. Both guarantee the same human and civil rights to all citizens without discrimination. Different religious allegiances do not result in different degrees of access to fundamental human and political rights, or to the law in general in Indonesia. This is the more remarkable since almost 90 per cent of all Indonesians belong to the majority religion, Islam.

This remarkable fact may also be partly related to the dominant role of the Javanese in Indonesian politics. The Javanese are the original Javanese-speaking inhabitants of central and eastern Java. They constitute about 40 per cent of all Indonesians. Javanese culture gives great value to religious tolerance. According to this way of *inner feeling,* religion – although it has to be taken seriously – should always be regarded as belonging to the category of a **way,** rather than of being a goal in itself. Religions are God-sent ways to achieve the goal of one's life. Thus, growing surrender to God would be reflected in a growing feeling of inner

lucidity, quiet self-assurance, tolerance towards others, and the ability to put experiences into correct perspectives (see Magnis-Suseno, 1997). The Javanese abhor fanaticism, dogmatic purism and exclusivism. They believe that everybody should follow his or her inner feeling. This does not mean that Pancasila is something exclusively Javanese. It means that the deep sense of tolerance and fairness that our founding fathers felt received strong cultural support from the fundamental attitude to life of the Javanese, and their perception of reality.

Although there have always been tensions among religious communities, with occasional incidents of violence (mainly directed at building, not people, it should be pointed out), religious tolerance has been a reality in Indonesia, and it still is. Christian churches have been flourishing in Indonesia for a long time. Up to now, the religious life of Christian communities in Java, Sumatra, South Sulawesi and other Muslim regions of Indonesia goes on without much hindrance. There is freedom of worship (with the exception that the freedom to build much needed churches has been extremely restricted since the beginning of the Suharto era), freedom of religious instruction, freedom to baptize and freedom to become a Christian or Muslim. Church bells in Java ring during liturgical hours every day. Although for a long time now, being a Christian has not been an advantage if one wants a career in the government or as a state employee. Yet, Christians are not discriminated against, and there are Christians in the government, state administration, universities, military and in many other institutions. I believe that this will not change even in the event of an Indonesian government with a stronger Muslim orientation.

At the same time, religious tension and violence against religious minorities have been sharply on the increase in the last ten years. The most terrible instances are the civil war-like confrontations between Christians and Muslims in parts of the Molukkas and central Sulawesi. Clearly, religious hatred can grow, and develop its own momentum. Add to it existing and newly-created suspicions and prejudices among religious communities, and it is easy to see a situation of new outbreaks of conflict that are easily provoked by interested parties, including those that are politically inclined. There is also the phenomenon of the emergence of religious hard-line groups that openly advocate religious exclusivism and sometimes resort to violence against what they regard as 'sinful places.' There have also emerged groups which, in their publications, openly voice extremely sectarian views, and encourage an atmosphere of fear and violence. There has been, in my view, an unfortunate tendency to religious segregation. For instance, 20 years ago, the (National) Council of the Islamic Community (MUI) promulgated a *fatwa* that Muslims should refrain from expressing Christmas greetings to Christians. Since then, a whole tradition of grassroots level interreligious contacts has dried up. I

have also heard Muslim friends express their dismay at the situation in schools where teachers of religion have told their children not to have contacts with Chinese children or children of other religions.

A Complex Background

Why has religious tolerance deteriorated in Indonesia during recent years? The factor of 'provocation' is often cited. In Indonesia, this is a stereotyped explanation for communal conflict, but it raises the question: why are people so easily provoked? It cannot be denied that exclusive tendencies are on the increase, both in religious and tribal communities. People of other religions are declared 'godless' and children are told to avoid contact with 'heathens.' There are many 'horror stories' about rival religious groups. Mutual distrust and prejudice accumulate, and intercommunal relations subsequently heat up. With regard to relations between Christians and Muslims, one always has to remember that we are burdened with a very difficult common history that has become part of our collective identities: a history of crusades and colonialism, of Arab invasions and 300 years of the "Turkish threat." Muslims in Indonesia have also been suspicious of Christian intentions since Christianity arrived with the colonialists. These suspicions have been reinforced by reckless proselytizing by certain Christian sects. Christians, on the other hand, are suspicious that Muslims, should they come to power, would restrict their religious freedom. If conflicts break out, regardless of the cause, or if they are provoked by outside parties with certain political intentions, they may feed on old suspicions and prejudices and become widespread. Thus, religious sensitivities constitute a constant danger to religious harmony and practical tolerance.

But this does not explain why negative emotions have become so strong in recent years. One of the reasons is that Indonesian society has, generally been in the grip of a *culture of violence.* The readiness for violent action, and the utter brutality with which such action is taken, shows that something is deeply wrong. Indonesian society is in a sick condition. Indonesia is essentially a pluralistic nation; it consists of hundreds of tribes, ethnic groups and local cultures. People belong to various religions; they are dispersed over thousands of islands, and have high mobility with many spontaneously going to other places, while others migrate through government-sponsored programmes of transmigration. Such a pluralistic nation can only live together peacefully if it develops the psychological capability for tolerance, that is, the acceptance of a plurality of traditions, way of life and communication, world views, and religious customs, while simultaneously not experiencing excessive stress as an outcome of this coexistence.

Yet now, the fabric of national unity seems to be starting to rupture. Society seems to be undergoing a process of atrophy in its capabilities to build solidarity above the level of primordial bonds. There is a kind of narrowing of the focus of attention to one's own group in an exclusive way, where the feeling of 'we Indonesians' is being broken up by a perspective of 'us' against 'them,' where 'them' can mean the government, the military, the Chinese, people of other religions or tribes, or even the neighbouring village.

But again, why have these disintegrating tendencies increased so much in the last ten years? This fact cannot be explained by the characters of those involved or by religious teachings (which have not changed much), or by new tribal traditions. The decisive factor must be looked for in the experiences of the Indonesian people in the last decades. When we look at this experience, we come to understand the impact of the political system of Suharto's "New Order." The New Order was, essentially, a system of institutionalized violence. Real power, down to the village level, lay in the hands of the military. Dissent and protest were always brutally suppressed. The people were depoliticized through a policy of "floating mass" where the two legal political parties, themselves severely incapacitated, were not allowed to operate at the village or local level; the government party, Golkar, held power through village officials. Thus, the people had no way of expressing themselves politically. Although most people did benefit somewhat from 'development' (pembangungan), the extreme differences between the common people and those who really profited from 'development' were obvious to everybody. More and more people had to give up their land or homes for government-sponsored projects that profited the rich, while displaced groups received inadequate compensation, which often did not even reach them. People felt themselves becoming "victims of development" but they had to be silent because, if they protested, they would be accused of being communists or Muslim extremists. The only thing people really learnt was that the government understood only one language – violence.

Besides this, there is a more general background for the emergence – not only in Indonesia but all over the globe – of communal conflict. This general background is made up of the process of modernization and now, of globalization, resulting in a far-reaching transformation of Indonesian society. Modernization and globalization exert enormous pressures on people since benefits and threats are not distributed equally. Only the upper middle class and the elite enjoy the benefits, while the lower middle class and poorer people mostly feel the negative impacts and threats. Modernization is pushing society into a continuing condition of stress. Besides setting in motion the process of cultural transformation from a traditional society to a post-traditional one, it is also creating disorientation,

dislocation and dysfunction of traditional social mechanisms and traditional individual capabilities. Individuals and whole communities experience this process as economic, psychological and political threats to their identity and even, their existence. The most obvious sign of this dislocation is urbanization, where the only effective law is that of brutal competition for scarce opportunities for survival. In this situation, the old ways of conflict management are no longer effective. Traditional modes of coping with pluralism in society no longer work. As a consequence, primordial tendencies are growing, leading to exclusivist attitudes within groups, and aggressive outlooks and perceptions towards those outside one's own community. Modernization is experienced as a situation of existential insecurity and injustice. What this means also is that Indonesians are beginning to understand how extremely demanding the task of building a pluralistic modern society is.

Education for Religious Tolerance

How then can the capacity for religious tolerance be improved? In this section, I point to the importance of successful interfaith dialogue and the need for an official and normative insistence on tolerance as an essential religious virtue. I also venture to propose some suggestions directly concerning education for religious tolerance.

Macro Conditions

It has to be stressed that education alone will show no results if the *macro* conditions for ending the general climate of violence in Indonesian society are lacking. Here, the state and all social groups have to be taken to task. There will have to be action both at the national and the local levels. On the national level, work has to begin immediately or, better still, has to be resolutely implemented, in four directions:

- We have to re-establish the *rule of law* (rebuild the *Rechtsstaat*). People are now taking the law into their own hands because they do not believe in the willingness, or even the capability, of the government to uphold the law.
- We have to *decentralize* political and economic power in Indonesia in an orderly and well-organized way. Unity of the Indonesian state and nation does not mean that we have to be fixated on a unitarian state. On the contrary, only if all regions, tribes and religious communities in our huge country *want themselves* to be part of Indonesia, will Indonesian unity become stable. This presupposes that people have authority over their own lives, identities and development.

- We have to build a *democratic society* with a *democratic culture.* Authoritarianism has been shown to have a most devastating effect on the social coherence of a country; it has been the main reason for society's regression into violence:
- We have to build up our *economy* in such a way that ordinary people $an experience it as being *just,* or at least, as not being grossly unjust.

Interreligious Dialogue

If dialogue among religious communities is mainly confined to elite circles, this would not have a very direct impact on the communities themselves. Nevertheless, this dialogue is important for several reasons. One is that it is a means for respective trendsetters to overcome social alienation and conflict, to become acquainted with one another, and to build up trust and sympathy among different groups. Secondly, interreligious dialogues encourage various parties to new levels of theological reflection. Theological reflection always requires the inspiration of new impulses from the outside or insights from new situations that challenge traditional patterns of interpretation. In this way, it will produce more open and positive views towards others and establish sound foundations in the faith of one's community. These dialogues are especially valuable since they often show that different religious communities share common values and should also be able to face social problems from a common base.

Back to the Normative Foundations of Tolerance

In order to build positive relations among different religious communities, general moral appeals are not sufficient. Religious leaders and other religious members of communities have to be convinced that religious tolerance is demanded for by their own religion. Generally speaking, in the religious teachings of most religions, one can find exclusive and inclusive elements. Very often, because of psychological reasons, the exclusive ones are more popular and widely known than the inclusive ones. If one looks at these elements from a deeper theological point of view, however, it becomes clear that the exclusive elements have to be interpreted in the light of inclusive ones. This is the reason why theologians who have delved deeper into the roots of their religion tend to be more open-minded than others who have not studied their religion deeply. Thus, a concerted effort has to be made by all religions to do justice to the inclusive elements of their teachings, not only to advance religious tolerance but in order to be more faithful to their own faith.

Since I am a Catholic, let me, as an example, refer to the official teachings of the Catholic Church on these matters. It may be of relevance to point out (hat these inclusive convictions were only systematically formulated and officially endorsed by the Second Vatican Council less than 40 years ago. According to

seeks to establish and nurture channels of communication between various religious communities. This loosely defined category encompasses much of the work carried out through the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the Vatican, the World Council of Muslims for Interreligious Relations and others. Numerous variations of this dialogue are discernible at the local level. Institutional dialogue encompasses much of what is recognized and organized, but other activities carried out by NGOs and other groups deserve more exploration. Such dialogue is within the ambit of an institution, too, but it is difficult to keep tabs on these. For example, there is no universal core or hierarchy, or even the equivalent of the WCC, in Islam. Thus, there is less recognition of the kind of interreligious dialogue that is more informal and undertaken by NGOs or individuals, many of whom are distinguished scholars.

In part, because of their history of intolerance and world domination, Christians and Catholics are committed to interreligious dialogue, and over the years, have resourced to many fora and texts. The important document, "Zurich Aide Memoire," which outlines the basis of interfaith dialogue, was presented to the Central Committee of the WCC meeting in Addis Ababa in 1971. This led to the creation of a new sub-unit, "Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies" in the WCC. The primary function of this sub-unit was to build up relationships between Christians and peoples of different religious traditions at national, regional and international levels. Realizing that the practice of dialogue raises many theological and practical issues, the WCC published *Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies* in 1979, which is in its fourth revised edition. It is significant that the document includes the explanation that "the words 'mission' and 'evangelism' are not often used in this statement. This is not because of any desire to escape the Christian responsibility ... but in order to explore other ways of making plain the intentions of Christian witness and service" *(Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies,* 1990: 2).

Likewise, the Catholic Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences' *Dialogue: Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia* quotes the 1990 encyclical of Pope John Paul II called *Redemptoris Missio*. It states that "the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue ... these two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, or as though they were identical" *(Dialogue,* 2001: *19)*. A document commonly referred to as *Dominus Iesus* released in 2000, however, has created considerable consternation among some of those who participate in interreligious encounters. The document affirms in no uncertain terms the distinction between Christianity and belief in other religions, and is very definitive about evangelization. In Malaysia,

the debate which ensued continued for a few months through the *Catholic Asian News,* beginning with an article in the May 2001 issue by Malaysian Jesuit Jojo Fung.

Thus, although institutional interreligious dialogue is a very important aspect of interfaith encounters, it is also beset with the problems of history and evangelization (for Christians) and *da'wa* for Muslims. The dilemma has been that of maintaining faith and interreligious outreach in tension – often made complicated by the convolutions of institutions delineating fidelity while exhorting encounter.

Earlier in this section, I placed the efforts of the state under the rubric of institutional dialogue. In terms of national governments with populations of diverse religions, institutional dialogue has a two-pronged objective: to enable communities to understand one another and live together peacefully; and for governments to be seen to foster such relationships, even as some of these governments themselves uphold one religious tradition as normative, official or privileged (in Southeast Asia, Singapore would be the exception as it is wholly committed to secular governmentality).

Theological dialogue refers to particular elements found in interfaith encounter, as well as to the larger process of reflection among Muslims, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and other religions. It includes structured meetings in which theological and philosophical issues are the primary focus of discussion. Christians and Muslims, for example, may concentrate on their respective understandings of Jesus or the Spirit of God, or the role of prophets and messengers in communicating God's revelation.

Dialogue in community and dialogue of life are inclusive categories that encompass most of the unstructured interaction among people of different traditions. These take place in markets and on street corners, at times of festivals or holy days, in the course of civic or humanitarian projects, and at times of community or family crises. These dialogues take place as people in communities think together about violence, militarism, or economic depression. They happen spontaneously or if organized, concentrate on practical issues of common concern. Unfortunately, these spontaneous dialogues are rarely recognized and celebrated for their value, and organized community dialogues are more often precipitated by a problem or crisis.

Spiritual dialogue is concerned with deepening spiritual life through interfaith encounter. This type of dialogue does not struggle overtly with theological problems or issues between communities of faith. Rather, it is designed as a means of nourishing, expanding and developing spirituality or the spiritual dimension of religious life. The World Conference on Religion and Peace, for example, includes

multireligious services as part of its meetings, conferences and assemblies. A non-structured but pervasive manifestation of spiritual dialogue is evident in the periodic popularity of different groups as well as the more recent New Age movement in the West. A visit to almost any large bookstore with a section on religion makes the point.

Finally, inner dialogue takes place in each of us. It is operative in various dialogical encounters as well as in our process of thought and reflection. It is intimately bound up with growth and change and the development of one's religious perspectives. It takes place in our minds and hearts when we read the scriptures of another religious tradition, or when we hear their call to prayer. We are gripped by insights and questions, as well as emotions – both constructive and negative – that shape and reshape our world views.

Our world views are also impacted by the context in which we live. This context includes the histories of our religious traditions as well as the existential realities of our lives. In Southeast Asia, the context includes the ways in which religion is politicized for political expedience, or racialized, or appropriated for national agendas. These complex configurations have contributed to the way religion is divisive, and reifies or at least reiterates the many and serious ethnic schisms in the region. It is not an exaggeration to claim that in some nations of Southeast Asia, ethnic and religious schisms are not only growing, but are sometimes enhanced for political expedience.

Is interreligious dialogue the only solution? It is the most obvious and powerful forum in the world to enable cohesion among different religions; but I suggest that dialogue has its limitations. Among them and as stated earlier, is the dilemma of having religious institutions enact it, enabling outreach amidst a guarding fidelity that is complicated by evangelization, which is incumbent upon Christianity, Catholicism and Islam.

For example, at the 3rd Congress of Asian Theologians held in Yogyakarta in August 2001, I found myself wanting to say most of all in the paper I presented, that much formal interreligious dialogue is conducted in safe spaces, with safe agendas often agreed to beforehand, in the presence of those already willing to talk and listen to one another. In retrospect, this frustration has been growing in me since 1997 when, after participating in interreligious meetings, I asked myself what has changed significantly. On the one hand, I am heartened by the effort to reach out to the Other. Yet again, I am increasingly convinced that these wonderful efforts are, nevertheless, limited because we speak to the like-minded from spaces and about issues that are suitably abstract and distant from the raging conflicts that rend our world. I do not wish, however, to disparage the wonderful work of organizations at the grassroots level. Two outstanding groups are MADIA

(*Masyarakat Dialog Antar Agama)* and Interfidei in Indonesia, whose work is less formal and more spontaneously reactive to real crises in the areas in which they operate.

As the first non-Muslim Malaysian with an academic specialization in another religious tradition, this epiphany was, perhaps, especially acute. In interfaith meetings, I speak and write almost exclusively from the Christian and/or Catholic premise as my experience in interreligious dialogue has been limited to speaking and representing this position despite my academic specialization in Islam. Perhaps this is logical, but it is also indicative of political correctness; to ensure that no discourtesy or insult arises, one is relegated to one's religiosity and may only speak with authority from it. Such political correctness has become vogue in the past 10 years, and continues to contain the possibilities of genuine solidarity and deep engagement. This kind of political correctness has an appropriate rationale; in the past especially, there were non-Muslims who spoke and wrote disparagingly about other religions, especially Islam. Edward Said called this negative construction of the Other of the West 'orientalism.' Enduring orientalism, however, is both fact that we must combat, and also fiction that is used to preclude the real engagement of empathy.

For example, in Asia, the Vatican convenes biannual meetings entitled "Asian Journey" and the fourth such meeting was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in January 2000. I was delighted and honoured to be part of the interreligious meeting. I was asked to respond and was announced as responding "from the Christian perspective" to the Muslim keynote speaker's address about maintaining the values and ethics of our faith traditions in the face of modernity, secularism and globalization. I ended up talking as much about the *tafsir* of those like Abd ar-Rau'uf of Singkel (d. *1693)* and the exhortations of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi (d. *1934)* as I did on exegesis of the Bible, asking that "we need to look closer to home for the resources which will enable us to indigenize, and thus internalize, interpretation of sacred texts to translate the abstract values of our faiths into the guiding principles for the unique contexts of our individual lives" (Martinez, *2000: 166).* I hope for a day when an interfaith meeting of Christians and Muslims will invite me to speak about Islam and a Muslim is invited to speak about Christianity!

As such, I have become increasingly convinced that what we need in a world riven with ethnic and religious strife are what I call pedagogies of interfaith encounter.

From Interreligious Dialogue to a Pedagogy of Interfaith Encounter

The document *The World's Religions for the World's Children*, convened by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), begins by stating that societies are obliged to confront the broad constellation of human forces and failure that affect children. Among the responsibilities delineated for governments and international organizations is the call for working together so **as**

> to minimize the atmosphere of conflict by which so many children are surrounded and to promote the spirit of love and good neighbourliness in one world which respects justice, peace and the integrity of nature in such a way as to enable them to become transformers of their world *(Declaration of the World Religious Leaders, 1990).*

Perhaps the hope for our world is a new generation of children who are taught to accept the Other. The emphasis here is on the words "taught" and "generation." Instead of a few enlightened individuals or institutions, the hope for the world lies in changing an entire generation of people. Education is the most powerful conduit for meaningful change. Nations have always recognized education as the foremost instrument of creating good citizens and cohesive nations, and education is often the highest priority of the state, but not always for entirely altruistic reasons. Pedagogy is about teaching, therefore, a pedagogy of interfaith encounter would teach children how to think, negotiate and accept those who are different from them. This would happen not because the children are instructed to accept difference, or lectured about other religions, peace and harmony. A pedagogy of interfaith encounter would be the way children are taught so that their cognitive abilities are developed to embrace difference as being integral to understanding and meaning. What this means is that children would get to understand that whatever is different, although not normative, is important to their understanding and the way they learn about everything. In other words, whatever is not normative is not deemed irrelevant or abhorrent, or to be rejected. Such a pedagogy takes teaching beyond the dichotomy of 'right' and 'wrong' thinking that engenders thought processes of negation and rejection, rather than varying degrees of acceptance.

As with many ideas, others, too, came to the same concept about pedagogies of encounter but for different reasons and in different ways. The rest of this chapter describes a pilot project in Indonesia to overcome the cleavages of race and religion. I have been part of this project since its inception **as** a consultant evaluating the project for UNICEF Indonesia, which is supporting and funding it. My role has been defined and has evolved beyond evaluation; I have also given input after each study/evaluation visit in reports that are both summative and formative. As such, what is shared in the rest of this chapter is both descriptive

and prescriptive, with the intention of providing possibilities for such projects in other countries.

The Indonesian Context: The Problems and Possibilities of Pluralism and Diversity

The context within which the project evolves needs to be understood first. Many of us are aware of Christian-Muslim conflicts that have erupted all over the Indonesian archipelago, especially over the last few years in the Malukus and Sulawesi. Many of us are also aware that the reasons for the conflict have as much to do with politics and economics as they do with differences between the adherents of two religions who were sometimes set against each other in Indonesia during the colonial era. These violent incidents have made many people aware of the threat of national disintegration as a result of the enduring political and economic crisis beginning with the Asian meltdown and the fall of Suharto. The conflicts have been bloody, and the methods employed to deal with this unrest "have been far from acceptable, far from respectful of diversity. All this makes it difficult to predict where today's spreading crisis will lead. How far and deep can conflict and unrest spread before Indonesian society reaches breaking point?"(Th. Sumartana, 1999). This is a familiar refrain among Indonesians intensely concerned with the grave ramifications of the burning of houses of worship (both Muslim and Christian), the loss of lives and the escalation of conflicts because of interference and even incitement by those from outside the conflict areas, and even by those given the authority to end the conflict.

Less analyzed and dwelt upon are the possibilities of pluralism and diversity that define Indonesia more so than its interreligious and interethnic conflicts.

In the early modern era (16th to 17th centuries), the Indonesian archipelago was inhabited by more than 300 ethnic groups living on some 6,000 inhabited islands, separated by marked divisions of language and culture. Although the majority of coastal people in the area had come to profess Islam by the early modern period, many of the larger islands' hinterlands maintained locally-oriented ethnic religions. Even coastal Muslim territories were crosscut by regional and ethnic divides. This diversity was the result of encounters with an economically expansive and Muslim-pioneered age of commerce that had endured for almost 1,000 years (Reid, 1993).

The trade that moved through this great commercial zone was multifaceted, but its most lucrative circuits involved the transport of spices, cloth, rice and gold from eastern Indonesia to commercial centres in southern Sulawesi, Java, the Malay Peninsula and Sumatra. From these ports, goods were shipped to China,

India and southern Arabia, creating a trading zone comparable in scale to that of the eastern Mediterranean in the early modern period. As in the Mediterranean world, this archipelagan trade had long influenced regional culture and politics. In the first centuries of the Common Era, commercial exchange between the archipelago and India and China catalyzed the emergence of the area's first states. Shortly thereafter, this same trade facilitated the diffusion of Buddhism and Hinduism from India to royal courts throughout the region. Although the remote islands of eastern Indonesia and the inaccessible interiors of the west were not dramatically transformed by this movement of people, goods and ideas, the region's major states were forever changed.

By the time the Europeans arrived, the Indonesian archipelago had enjoyed more than a thousand years of civilizational efflorescence. In fact, at the time of the European arrival, the archipelago was experiencing a vast renewal of cultural and commercial energies, on a scale that invites comparison with renaissance Europe.

> All this had far reaching effects on society. Rather than stimulating the growth of empire, political power remained dispersed across a host of mercantile city-states and inland agrarian kingdoms. It was the imposition of European rule that began the forced homogenization of the archipelago, and the beginning of a centralized state and its attendant problems (Hefner, 2000: 27).

These problems that Hefner alludes to included cobbling together arbitrary boundaries as regions for the convenience of colonial governance, thus dividing and creating forced communities of people who, on their own, would not have and had not gravitated together.

The strife in Indonesia is in part the legacy of these fantasy borders drawn by colonial administrators. The lines they drew rarely corresponded to any pre-existent historical, tribal, cultural or geographical reality. The nations they invented were arbitrary agglomerations, their borders thrown up around dozens of peaceful or warring local fiefdoms. A nation so fancifully constructed does not easily lend itself to governance. If the European inventors of postcolonial countries believed that generously drawn borders would encourage a commensurate enlargening of national as opposed to local consciousness, the effects have been quite the reverse. In Indonesia, as in many postcolonial nations, the concept of nationality is relatively weak. It would be hard to feel patriotic allegiance to the capricious lines drawn by colonials, rather than an allegiance to a linguistic, cultural and religious heritage of which there are literally thousands in Indonesia. The fact that the archipelago is fractured into islands exacerbates the problems of cohesion. A powerful sense of the civic, as it relates to people's ethnic group or island, is sometimes matched to the national, and no amount of enforced flag-waving and protestations of

fealty to the nation or president changes very much at the grassroots. Herein also, the premise for the demands for autonomy from certain regions.

It is obvious that at the birth of the independent nation of Indonesia, there was the cognition of this pastiche of cultures, ethnicities and religions cobbled together by the colonial empire. This is evident from the symbol or seal (lambang) of Indonesia, which carries the words Bhineka TunggalIka, commonly translated as "unity in diversity." Its literal meaning is even more powerful. In old formal Javanese, "Bhinna *Ika*" means "that which is different" and "Tunggal*Ika*" means "that which is one." Therefore, Bhinna TunggalIka literally means that which is different is also that which is one. Among the first records of the use of the motto was in the 14th century by the writer Mpu Tantular. He used Bhinekka Tunggal Ika in the context of the differences between Hinduism and Buddhism, and how to reconcile them in a community and its people.

If Bhinekka Tunggal Ika was a founding principle of the birth of modern Indonesia, then dialogue and the struggle to embrace difference is not new. Recognizing that there are differences, and that they have to be overcome and accepted so as to constitute one nation is at the core of what it means to be Indonesian. Diversity in this context is a strength and a positive aspect.

Likewise, the use and evolution of the Pancasila in Indonesia. The word Pancasila derives from Sanskrit and literally means "five principles." Indonesia's first President, Sukarno, addressed the Investigating Committee for the Preparation of Indonesian Independence in a now famous speech known as "Lahirnya Pancasila." He set out a common platform on which all competing ideologies could meet and not threaten the unity of the Republic. The five principles were belief in God (ketuhanan yang *maha* esa), humanitarianism (kemanusiaan yang *adil dan beradab*), national unity (*persatuan* Indonesia), consultation and consensus (*musyawarah* dan *muafakat*) and social justice (keadilan *sosial*). Ramage tells us that the Indonesian elite were and continue to be deeply concerned with ideology, and the discourse (contentious as it has been) about Pancasila appeals constructively to most Indonesians. This appeal is as a formulaic representation of the idea of the Indonesian state based on humane values such as ethnic, religious and regional tolerance and social justice (Ramage, 1995: 185). The power of Pancasila is evident when Hefner writes that Suharto's actions that exploited ethno-religious divisions for personal power "betrayed the principle of Pancasila pluralism earlier promoted by his regime – albeit often hypocritically" (Hefner, 2000: 19).

A project to teach children how to overcome the differences of race and religion, therefore, can be perceived as a reiteration of the founding principles of the Indonesian nation, but translated into pedagogy for the imperatives of the conflicts that continue to rend Indonesia into the 21st century.

In the last section of this chapter, I describe the project called the Whole Child Education Project, explain what was involved in training for the project, and share evaluation outcomes after one year of implementation. All these are offered as useful pointers for how such a project can be refined or reformulated for other contexts.

The Whole Child Education Project (WCEP)

Background

The Whole Child Education Project (WCEP) is a pilot project initiated in 2000 by the government of Indonesia together with the Global Dialogue Institute (GDI) of the USA, with the support of UNICEF Indonesia. The objective of the WCEP is to enable Indonesians to understand, accept and live with their ethnic and religious diversity because there have been serious incidents of ethnic and religious strife in the nation's history, including more recently.

The GDI proposed a programme to achieve this objective by teaching children how to dialogue despite differences by using critical thinking skills. This method is referred to as DDICT (Deep Dialogue/Critical Thinking). The pilot project would introduce the DDICT philosophy and teaching-learning processes in Class I to Class VI in selected primary school clusters in two pilot districts in Takalar (Sulawesi) and Malang (Java). These schools in Takalar and Malang are among the over 50 school clusters throughout Indonesia that are supported by the UNICEF. The objective was that through this pilot project, a model of how DD/CT could be taught to teachers and to school children in a culturally appropriate and educationally relevant way would be developed.

The project pre-implementation activities started in October 2000 with the experiential training by the GDI of a technical working group (TWG), whose members were drawn from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and UNICEF Indonesia. A future search conference on the theme "Improving Quality of Basic Education during Decentralization" followed in February 2001, with the aim of gaining common agreement on the education priorities from eight education stakeholder groups. A three-day training programme with select teachers and administrators was conducted in February 2001 to try out and refine some of the training methods to be used in the Training of Trainers (TOT) in July 2001. The TOT was undertaken at the PPPG-IPS (Teachers' Training Centre) in Malang in July 2001, and a major evaluation of its efficacy was undertaken. It is worth sharing this evaluation in some detail.

The concept of DDICT as well as teaching models, essentially, Concept Attainment as well as co-operative learning, were conveyed during the TOT that

was conducted in July 2001. The Concept Attainment model that was taught involved using picture examples or role-playing to enable students to deduce the concept being taught, rather than be told about it by the teacher. Through such an exercise, difference is not negated but enables cognition of the concept. The "no" pictures and examples become vital to being able to understand the "yes" pictures and examples; thus, what is negative emerges as an inherent part of one's world view rather than as being "wrong" and unnecessary to the concept. However, the concept of what Concept Attainment achieves in terms of the WCEP's objective was not shared with those being trained. An American professor in pedagogy gave a superb demonstration of what it was but the connection about why it was relevant was not made by the GDI to trainees. This omission was at the root of why the model of Concept Attainment ultimately implemented in the pilot lacked the most important element – "yes" and "no" deduction (Martinez, 2002).

Activities during the Pilot Year

The one-year pilot project (2001-2) was set up to try out the implementation of DDICT in the two pilot school clusters. The activities in the first year of pilot implementation included:

- orientation and training of key actors and implementers on the philosophy of DD/CT and the appropriate classroom pedagogy through a 10-day training of trainers (TOT) in July 2001;
- work planning for the two pilot clusters;
- cluster-level three-day training for all teachers in the 16 schools who did not participate in the TOT (first batch for grades 1-3 teachers and second batch for grades 4-6 teachers);
- school level lesson plan preparation and tryout (at least one lesson per month per teacher who did not attend the TOT and two lessons per month for teachers who attended the TOT);
- monthly meetings of teachers in the pilot clusters (KKG) for regular exchange of experiences and instructional support;
- baseline case study evaluation of the pilot school clusters to establish profiles prior to pilot implementation;
- mid-year case study follow-up; and
- final evaluation at the end of the school year.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Since the pilot project was intended to develop a classroom-based DDICT teaching-learning model appropriate for Indonesia, close monitoring and

documentation of the implementation processes, as well as the intended and unintended results and lessons learnt, were deemed extremely important.

There was a baseline case study of a core school and satellite school in each of the pilot school clusters, as well as one of a non-pilot school as a control, in Takalar and Malang in August *200*1. Although the mid-year monitoring follow-up was scheduled for December/January *2002* as part of the planned activities of the pilot, the objectives of these evaluations were reformulated because of the unexpected shortfall in the outcome of the TOT in July. Since the GDI model of DDICT taught was neither suitable nor significantly understood by those trained for the pilot, the evaluations of December/January constituted monitoring more than they did as evaluation of progress, since the anticipated trajectory of 'progress' would have been premised on an inadequate TOT.

More on the TOT and what was problematic. At the end of the TOT, participants were to:

a. Have a deep knowledge and understanding of the DDICT process from the Indonesian mindset and for the Indonesian context.
b. Have experienced the DDICT process in the way they are taught in the TOT and in the lessons they will create.
c. Have sufficient ability and confidence to use DDICT processes in their classroom practices.
d. Have sufficient ability (confidence, language) to explain and teach the DD/CT process to other teachers.
e. Have the appreciation and confidence that DDICT gives a unique contribution to the improvement of the teaching-learning process in Indonesia.

Training Content

The training content consisted of three main categories: (i) core content – 69 per cent; (ii) supporting content – 17 per cent; and (iii) additional content – *14* per cent. The total time required to deliver the training contents was *80* hours and *15* minutes. The participants were expected not only to gain knowledge, experience and skills from the *80* hours of training, but were also to get some credit points for promotion in their careers as teachers, lecturers, or instructors within the government.

Training Methods

The training methods used in the TOT were meant to utilize experiential, interactive and inquiry based methods.

Teaching included methods to create an environment for learning that supports the development of DDICT in Indonesian elementary education. The TOT

offered practices and methodology supportive of DDICT that were related to interactive learning; meaningful change within the Indonesian educational experience; creative, appreciative inquiry; and peaceful, dialogic resolution of conflict. The TOT sessions examined commonalities and differences, and other ways of understanding what DDICT Education looks like with examples and practice in civics and science teaching. Trainees were to experience and practise DDICT using cooperative learning, concept development, discussions and discovery learning.

The experiential, inquiry-based, interactive learning methods were to be used so that trainees and participants would engage in significant, purposeful interaction, and opportunities for critical thinking, problem-solving and dialogue that reflects both deep understanding and communication among the participants. Trainees would have opportunities to utilize these practices in their resulting teaching and curriculum design, in this case, lessons in civics (PPKN) leading to Indonesian DDICT practice in the pilot classrooms and, ultimately, in the schools.

Trainees were to experience the stages of DDICT so that they would understand it and be able to communicate it with others – parents, colleagues and community members – and facilitate its learning in the teaching of elementary students. Teachers and trainees were to engage in purposeful dialogue to identify significant moral issues in their communities relevant to Indonesian civics curricular topics. Techniques for teaching would include the use of multiple intelligence, brainstorming and mapping. Examples of this type of teaching in action were shown on video, in photographs and in the jointly devised lesson plans as well as a science plan. Lessons in sustaining innovation would model meaningful change in learning and teaching approaches in the context of Indonesian education.

The teaching would build on what Indonesian trainees bring with them: their knowledge and interests, along with their cultural and linguistic resources. Skills and principles of DDICT were to be taught by linking trainees' current knowledge to new information. Trainers and resource persons were to pay attention to what the trainees gather from what was being taught. This would be through the ways it was reflected by trainees in their dialogue, in the trainees' creation of lessons, and in their ideas for educational change in their Indonesian communities. Mutual reflection, it was hoped, would lead to deeper understanding for all participants.

Review of the TOT

As is likely obvious to the reader, what is listed and described above was the ideal, and extremely ambitious for 12 days of training. The GDI had never implemented such training at any level before, let alone in a context outside the USA. The

immediate outcome of the TOT reflected this 'over-reaching,' and the fact that technology transfer is a lot more complex than just having translators tell Indonesian teachers what the American facilitators were saying, and vice versa.

The DD/CT model of the GDI is described by the GDI as involving the fundamental skills of negotiating interactions across and between diverse world views. The GDI model entails the process of entering another person's perspective and world view, and then returning to one's own world view – transformed by the deepened sense of one's own world view and one's greater understanding of the Other. In order to practise deep dialogue, one needs to have the skills of critical thinking – defined as the ability to raise one's unconscious presuppositions to the conscious level, analyze them, and make an informed judgement. This was transmitted to participants at the pilot training (TOT) in Malang in July 2001. As the description above, lifted from the instruction manual for participants, bears out, DD/CT remained highly abstract and philosophical. The descriptions above beg the questions: How does one enter another's world view? How would this be effected in a classroom?

In evaluation questionnaire responses, less than 50 per cent of participants showed that they had achieved a full or significant enough understanding of DD/CT (Martinez, July 2001).

A major impediment to achieving the desired output – a core of teachers and trainers who would understand and be sufficiently confident to implement the WCEP – was this GDI model of DD/CT itself. Despite three *in situ* workshops in Indonesia over six months, the model remained largely philosophical and uncontextualized for the particular world view/cognition and level of ability of those being trained.

Although participants found the TOT very helpful, less than half of those who were trained understood clearly at the end of the exercise what DD/CT was. Part of the reason, as stated earlier, was that the GDI model remained largely untested before being brought to Indonesia. It also remained philosophical and abstract, besides being uncontextualized for Indonesia. Other reasons include the problems and limitations of translation, and the considerably low level of education of most primary school teachers in Indonesia, making sophisticated and abstract theories and concepts difficult to assimilate.

As the results of the final evaluation exercise show, this inability to understand what DD/CT is has had considerable impact on the way the WCEP has evolved. In interventions during the year of the pilot project by the Ministry of Education, trainers at the PPPG Malang and UNICEF Indonesia were focused also on enabling a better understanding of the project and, especially, DD/CT. Although these efforts were useful, another manual devised at an October 2001 meeting in

Mawang, Sulawesi, did not simplify and Indonesianize the DDICT concept sufficiently either. The section explaining DD/CT was still too abstract and philosophical, and the language used in some sections was too difficult for primary school teachers. Moreover, it appears that most of the teachers in the core school in Takalar, for example, did not have access to this resource guide; the Principal said: "our teachers don't read, so it's no use."

The Final Evaluation – Information-Gathering Devices
Information-gathering for the final evaluation report had a summative and formative premise; summative in that the priority was data collection of the outcomes at the end of the pilot project period of the WCEP in selected schools. Information-gathering was formative because the WCEP is a pilot project, and considerable reformulation is implicit after any pilot if the project is ultimately deemed worthy of implementation on a large scale. In tandem with the Baseline Study I had conducted in August 2001, the same extensive information-gathering devices were used for the Final Evaluation Study during visits to the pilot projects in June 2002. The objective was to gather as much data as possible. The tools used included questionnaires for principals, supervisors and teachers; individual interviews with every principal, supervisor and teacher in both the schools selected for evaluation as well as a "control" outside the WCEP project (to enable comparison); interviews with representatives of parents whose children study in the pilot project schools, and with local officials; input from UNICEF Field Officers who work closely and well with the schools; an observation of an entire civics lesson in each school; and focus group discussions with students, with only the UNICEF Field Officer and myself present. Records of lesson plans as well as KKG meetings (regular meetings among teachers in school clusters to upgrade teaching methods) were also obtained to enable a more comprehensive understanding of the kind of teaching that had been implemented.

The analyses offered in the Final Evaluation Report remain tied to the most fundamental expectations with a focus on the stated objectives of the WCEP by those involved in the project.

The anticipated output of the WCEP for both the Baseline and Final reports was devised from data provided by those being trained at the TOT. In addition, the simplest and most basic norms were used. For example, in order to evaluate whether DDICT had been understood and was being implemented, UNICEF Indonesia and I had to devise a definition beyond "the entering of another's world view, etc." that was described earlier and that the GDI had provided. The measurement that we came up with ultimately was that students should be able to listen to and accept opinions or answers that were different from theirs in a

classroom, and that teachers should enable this interaction and a successful negotiation of differences. The anticipated outcomes were:

- Students: self-understanding; able to listen to another; understanding of another's point of view; respect of differences with others; acceptance of differences and of those who are different. What this would entail is
  a) an understanding that differences exist, are not problematic, and are part of one's world and its meaning;
  b) an acceptance of differences (not merely toleration), so that each person who is different is welcomed as a full and equal human being;
  c) an improved school/classroom climate of respect and accommodation of differences.
- Teachers: understanding of new role as facilitator; respect differences among students; respect students and their opinions, including not meting out corporal punishment; able to prepare lesson plans to teach models that enable DD/CT paradigmatically.
- Teaching-learning process: interactive, cooperative learning, and other suitable pedagogy models such as Concept Attainment; encourage dialogue and idea exchange so that students achieve the ability to dialogue, whether within the GDI model or an Indonesianized version if one is developed, because there is the potential of those who did understand the TOT training in Malang but who had synthesized it for their own context; lessons supported by instructional aids; creative and active engagement of all pupils in the learning process.
- Classroom environment: learning corners available; display of students' work; flexible classroom organization.
- School management: democratic and consultative management involving teachers and including parents and the community; open to criticism and suggestions; able to accept different views and differences among teachers, parents and community; responsive to innovations and change.

Final Evaluation Profile

The outcome of the Final Evaluation, as to whether the WCEP has fulfilled this need, was both positive and negative. It was positive because despite considerable shortcomings in the training and the significant difficulties that reality presented, those implementing the WCEP made an enormous effort to employ it. These implementers included officials at the Ministry of Education and UNICEF Indonesia. Most of all, the shortfalls and problems did not come about because there was a lack of will from principals, supervisors and teachers; they coped as best they could. Their efforts and optimism (and expressed desire for the WCEP to continue) that engendered the programme are vital elements for the possibilities

of future success. The outcome of the Final Evaluation was also positive because significant progress had been made in getting principals, supervisors and teachers to understand that children should be encouraged to express themselves (although the element of negotiating differences among themselves had been largely neglected), that their learning should be joyful, and that the relationship among principals, supervisors and teachers is consultative. Teachers and students obviously respected one another, and there was much positive interaction between teachers and students. All this, however, cannot be credited entirely to the WCEP because the CBSA or Active Student Learning Process was one of the most successful teaching models implemented in Indonesian schools in the 1990s, and respondents often referred to it. Nevertheless, the WCEP does indeed tap into and enhance existing pedagogy, and this is a strong point about the WCEP's potential in Indonesia. The shortfalls in the anticipated outcome were considerable, and the implementation of the WCEP has been considerably flawed.

A summary of the shortcomings in the implementation of the WCEP include:

- That all the principals, and a significant number of teachers in the pilot project, did not understand what DDICT is, nor did a substantial number know the objective (significance) of the WCEP in Indonesia. Therefore, the element of children interacting enough *with one another* to enable them to learn how to negotiate differences is largely missing.
- Due to the lack of understanding of what DDICT is and its relevance for Indonesia's problems, the implementation of the WCEP was geared towards following, as narrowly as possible, the teaching technologies transmitted at the TOT.
- Perhaps, due to insufficient understanding, including among those who have been monitoring and enabling the implementation of the WCEP, the Concept Attainment model that was being taught was without its "yes" and "no" components. These components are what enable deductive skills in a child to show that even what is negative contributes positively to one's ability to understand. This, in turn, facilitates the acceptance of what or whoever is not normative and deemed "Other," or even "negative." I had pointed this out during the final visit, and perhaps some remedial action has since been taken.
- Severe financial constraints and time constraints also meant that because the Concept Attainment model is dependent on pictures and examples, the use of such teaching materials were themselves limited. In some schools, the understanding of useful teaching aids appears to be focused more on making mobiles and handicraft, activities that were perhaps given too much attention at the TOT.

- The implementation effected largely came from following teaching models, and not through sourcing for anything new because of a lack of understanding of what DDICT is and what the WCEP hopes to achieve. Thus, teachers' complaints that there were insufficient DDICT teaching models are significant. Teachers asked for more training, more funding and more varieties of teaching models, especially those that constitute "cooperative learning." This could not be implemented because learning clusters (of desks) are virtually impossible in the crowded classrooms of most Indonesian primary schools (with over 40 students per class).

Recommendations

The recommendations suggested include:
- There is an urgent need for a programme that will not just teach, but will inform upcoming generations of Indonesians on ways to engage positively with the ethnic and religious diversity that is their heritage. In other words, the programme should not just tell; it should exemplify in every way, the objectives of dealing constructively and positively with difference.
- The WCEP, as it was originally conceived, has not been implemented fully – not even conceptually in terms of its core, DDICT. What have been implemented are those aspects of pedagogy and teaching methodology that were understood at the TOT. Therefore, not even the model used to convey DDICT – Concept Attainment – had been taught in ways that enable fulfilment of the WCEP's objective, which is to show children that difference is not problematic as it contributes constructively to cognition.
- If this programme continues, the most urgent priority is to develop an Indonesianized, that is, a contextualized concept of DDICT, and to convey it not in philosophical abstractions, but in language and with real-life examples that can be easily understood by primary school teachers.
- Concurrently, it is equally imperative to develop a process that allows those being trained to deduce for themselves why such a project is important for Indonesia. In other words, there has not been sufficient emphasis on helping those implementing the project to understand the important ramifications of raising a generation of Indonesians who do not find difference – and ultimately, ethnic and religious differences – a problem. If the implementers do not have this vision, they cannot achieve the objective. But the envisioning has to come from them voluntarily, and not because someone in authority told them so.

- If the project is to continue, the narrow conceptualization of what constitutes adequate training has to be enlarged to include motivation- and confidence-building components for teachers implementing the project, as well as skills enhancement.
- An adapted version of Concept Attainment that will not stress the meagre resources of funds and time has to be developed, and more importantly, a variety of more suitable teaching models that achieve the objective of enabling children to express themselves and deal with the differences that will ensue when children are thus empowered.
- The curriculum should be reviewed to accommodate the needs of teaching the WCEP, because the WCEP cannot be contained merely through the transmission and assimilation of material for children to be tested on in an examination-oriented system.
- What constitutes adequate, but not demeaning or violent, punishment should also be devised. From the bottom up, that is, from the perspective of the children, this factor figures prominently in their ability to become the Whole Child that the WCEP envisages (Martinez, 2002).

An Indonesianized Version of DD/CT

The basic premise of what should have been conveyed at the TOT is not only that the WCEP is a highly innovative pilot project that is among the first of its kind in the world, but that its *immediate* objective is to create changes in teaching-learning processes in the classroom, based on the philosophy and practice of deep dialogue through the use of critical thinking skills. What should have been the core of the training was unpacking, *together with* Indonesians, what "deep dialogue" and "critical thinking" are in their context. Since the problems of religion and ethnicity are premised on the inability or unwillingness to understand and accept someone who is different, the *ultimate* objective of the WCEP is that through their education system, Indonesians will overcome the way religion and ethnicity divide the nation. Key to this would have been Indonesians being enabled to figure out for themselves why they need DD/CT and what it could look like in the context of their schools and communities.

An Indonesianized version of DD/CT would take the process beyond the GDI model of dialogue. I suggest that a DD/CT model for Indonesia, that has been transformed as practice-in-context for the WCEP, should entail:

a. Recognizing that there is a need to overcome the cleavages of ethnicity and religion that divide Indonesians because of those in a community or society who are differentiated as "Other" or outside one's world view or norm.

b. Recognizing that teachers and trainers can and will play an important role in overcoming this problem of being unwilling or unable to understand and accept those who are different.
c. Learning how to listen to another.
d. Thinking about and understanding the world view of the Other.
e. Being introspective about one's reactions, prejudices and new knowledge.
f. Becoming open to the Other because of this new self-awareness.
g. Recognizing and accepting that differences among people are integral to the meaning and reality of one's existence.
h. Accepting the person who is different – of a different religion, race, colour or gender – *as an equal, a human being who is apart of one's community or society* and, thereby, renders the person who is different no longer as "Other" (Martinez, July 2001).

The GDI model was premised on the particularities of North American society, which is individualistic. Hence, their model included understanding the Other and returning to one's location. In a nation with over 200 million people, almost half of whom are crowded into a single island, the imperatives are different; it is not enough to understand and return to one's location, the model has to be pushed farther and should include *acceptance* as a vital factor. One has to both understand and live in close proximity to the Other in Indonesia, accepting him or her as part of one's community and nation.

As described earlier in this chapter, the foundational premise of the need and ability to dialogue as described above is embedded in the history and evolution of Indonesia; thus, the process proposed is not something that is radical or problematic. This is evident in the national emblem and motto of the nation upon which it was built – *Bhineka Tunggal Ika,* loosely translated as unity in diversity (and more accurately translated as diversity being also unity).

Integrating the WCEP

Among proposals that are fundamental for implementing the WCEP successfully in a reformulation of the training (this is really about *integrating* the WCEP), there is the need to:

1. Brainstorm how and where the WCEP fits into Indonesian education and existing teacher training, and formalize WCEP components and programmes within this structure.
2. Brainstorm and strategize where the WCEP fits into *new developments* in Indonesian education, to ensure that the WCEP helps to shape these; if not, there will always be a disjuncture, a lack of "fit" when the teachers implement it.

3. Thus, in the next TOT, there have to be formal sessions about the curriculum, where teachers and administrators give input that will be used in devising the new curriculum in their provinces.
4. Brainstorm and strategize to give input to textbooks. These are formative sources, yet many of the messages in them are not wholesome – whether consumerist, sexist, or subtly intolerant (Martinez, July 2001).

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the WCEP is a pilot project. What this means is that as the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Religious Affairs and UNICEF officials deliberate the final evaluation, there is every possibility that the project may be scrapped or amended drastically.

The WCEP is a brave new venture, started during the administration of former president Abdurrahman Wahid, and continuing in the presidency of Megawati Sukarnoputri. There are more problems and issues to be clarified and settled than was ever envisaged by the dedicated and experienced core team of Indonesian government officials and UNICEF Indonesia officers. Yet, there is a sense of urgency and commitment, and this has emerged from those on the ground as well – the teachers and administrators who are to implement this project. In my visit to the schools for the baseline case study in August, I was urged to convey to Jakarta at one meeting that this project was important and viable. Indonesians at the grassroots – the ones who live out both the problems and possibilities of the diversity of their heritage – recognize the need to raise future generations that can negotiate coexistence. Perhaps, this will include a pedagogy of encounter that will translate interreligious dialogue as a praxis in a generation of Indonesians.

From my own experiences of interreligious dialogue in Indonesia, and a close monitoring of the ethnoreligious situation in Indonesia, it is absolutely vital and urgent to have education that enables social cohesion, peace and stability, despite the rich diversity of ethnicity and religion. Therefore, the need for the WCEP or a project with similar objectives remains paramount, despite the problems and shortcomings encountered.

References

Books/Reports
Eck, Diana L. (1986). "What Do We Mean by 'Dialogue'?" *Current Dialogue*, 11, December.

Fung, Jojo M. (2001). "Religiosity and Spirituality: Thin/Clear Line," *Catholic Asian News.* Kuala Lurnpur: Catholic Research Centre, May.

Hefner, Robert W. (2000). *Civil Islam.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kimball, Charles (1991). *Striving Together: A Way Forward in Christian-Muslim Relations.* New York: Orbis Books.

Martinez, Patricia A. (2001). "Response to Dialogue and Nation-Building in Asia: Issues of Modernization – A Christian Perspective," *Christian-Muslim Dialogue and Nation-Building in Asia: Issues of Modernization.* Kuala Lurnpur: Fourth Asian Journey, May.

——————— (2001). *WCEP-TOT Evaluation Report for UNICEF Indonesia.* July.

——————— (2001). *WCEP-Baseline Study Report for UNICEF Indonesia.* August.

——————— (2002). *WCEP-Final Evaluation Report for UNICEF Indonesia.* June.

Ramage, Douglas E. (1995). *Politics in Indonesia: Democracy, Islam and the Ideology of Tolerance.* London: Routledge.

Reid, Anthony (1993). *Southeast Asia in an Age of Commerce, 1450-1680,* Vol. 2, *Expansion and Crisis.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Documents

Declaration of the World Religious Leaders: "The World's Religions for the Worlds Children". New Jersey, USA: 1990.

Dialogue: Resource Manual for Catholics in Asia. Thailand: Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences – Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, 2001.

Guidelines on Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1990.

On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ in the Church – Dominus Iesus. Rome: 2000.

12

Certain Dimensions of Hinduism and their Values in Interreligious Education
A.N. Rao

Introduction

nterfaith dialogue – identifying, discussing and recording the interrelationships
I between religions practised – is a very interesting and broad topic. Educational
methods would not only help to broaden the visions of religions, but would also
help to identify and utilize commonalities to formulate a good working programme
to achieve better cohesion and harmonious living. Such values are particularly
important in the multicultural, polyethnic and multireligious societies in many
Southeast Asian countries, including Singapore. Certain dimensions of Hinduism
and the benefits they offer in achieving the objectives identified at this workshop
are briefly discussed in this chapter.

Hinduism in Southeast Asian Countries

There are Hindus in all the countries of Southeast Asia. The population
percentage of Hindus in each country varies, perhaps not more than one to five
per cent, perhaps even less when compared to some total populations. The
countries that host the most number of Hindus are, in decreasing order,
Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and the
Philippines.

Historically, the influence of education, if any, on development in the
aforementioned countries should be examined and its details recorded. Such data
may help us understand the present situation. In the remote past, Hindus came
to Southeast Asian countries first, followed by Buddhists, Christians and Muslims.
The conversion of people from one religion to another was common, and the
dominating religion varied from country to country. Even though people converted
to other religions, traditional methods and customs are still regularly practised till
today, especially during important occasions and festivals. Examples thrive in
many different countries.

Hinduism is the oldest religion that spread to Southeast Asia, followed by
Buddhism and Islam. Larger proportions of populations now practise these two

latter religions than Hinduism. Due to its long historical origins as well as the geographical distances it has travelled, Hinduism as practised in different countries varies when compared with the practice in India, both in content and methods. The basic details followed, however, remain unchanged. No study has been made nor data recorded in a systematic way to document the history of Hinduism in Southeast Asian countries, and the reasons why it was succeeded by other religions. The few details found in school history books are very sketchy. There may be scholarly works, but these have not reached most people. There has been no impartial or dispassionate study of the subject. In most cases, writings are slanted towards a particular objective of the individual author's point of view. Many of the writings are biased, and comparisons are made to elevate the status of one religion over others.

Even today, the closer a country is, geographically, to India, the stronger is the Hindu influence on its faith, beliefs and practices. As a case study, the methods followed by Hindus in India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam or Fiji can be compared. Over the centuries, the religious knowledge and practices of Hindus in these countries have changed considerably, and alternative methods have been established and followed. For example, the practice of worshipping Shiva in India can be compared to that in Bali or in Hawaii.

Wisdom in Philosophy

As lovers of wisdom, philosophers can hardly make any claim of the knowledge they possess. Since ancient times, there have been such glorious philosophers as Socrates, various Indian saints and sages, and others. They have all left their noble ideas and thoughts behind without any claim of ownership on them. Many volumes have been published that compare philosophy in the East and West. Bibliographic studies on different aspects of Asian philosophies are also available. Unfortunately, these stand gloriously on library shelves, and their comparative value to society are not emphasized for the benefit of most people.

For philosophers, the process is more important than the product; the travelling is better and more interesting than the destination. Philosophical teachings are alive, and they are not remote to life problems. A philosophical approach to life has helped people tide over many difficult situations. Infinite pathos of life and sorrow are healed by the passing of time. Nothing is permanent and no one can change the course of events that one has to face in life. Results of various actions are not obtained according to one's programme or plans. In the past, the majority of people lived a simple and more harmonious life than we do now, because the objective of life then was to follow truth and honesty, as well as follow others who

had set certain exemplary ways of life; whether they were rich or poor, or with or without authority.

Spiritual Truths for Mankind

The highest aspects of teaching in every religion are more or less the same. They are meant for the benefit of the whole of humankind. These truths explain the relationships that should exist between one human being and another.

The basic points are: the universal spirit is equal to truth which is equal to God. This existed before any religion was propounded or created; it is called perennial wisdom, or wisdom uncreate. It is the same now as it ever was and will remain the same in the future. New ideas and interpretations, however, need to be developed to reorganize thoughts, and to enlighten people on the spiritual truth through more modern methods. Suitable philosophic forms and terms need to be coined and used to make the explanations more explicit. The different religions started with one person teaching another, and no religion denies the process by which the universe was created and all beings, including humans, evolved. Most religions also accept the existence of God or the Creator, though called by different names.

Organic life in this world started around 1,200 million years ago. Humans appeared on earth only about half a million years ago. Civilization started about 12,000 years ago. So whatever we know about man (*Purusha*) and nature (*Prakriti*) is, comparatively, very recent. Many more years will pass, perhaps with more changes to come, for understanding God, nature and truth.

Reformulations of religious principles are necessary to keep up with the norms of changing society and to eliminate contradictory opinions. All dogmatic themes and unessential teachings and practices should be avoided or reorganized to match with the times. For this, it is necessary to engage the help of scholars with deep knowledge of religions, and who are also facing the problems of modern life. Further, scholars of different religions should get together to exchange ideas and come up with suitable formulae to strengthen interfaith beliefs. Inspirations from the past should be reconfirmed, but the peripheral outdated parts of each religion should be discarded. Such a process will further strengthen the beliefs of people in their own religions as well as in those practised by others. In this way, both spiritual and social cohesion will be achieved in any given society. Old dogmatic beliefs should be cast out, and more generous, broad beliefs should be adapted with full faith and practice. This does not mean that the religious methods of any religion should be discarded; it means that common core values should be strengthened.

The Supreme Power or Ultimate Reality

The supreme power or ultimate reality is beyond any definition, attribute or quality that we can think or speak of. It is the cause of creation and the force that sustains life till death ensues. Particular names were given to understand and explain these processes, but the real spirit is not the sum of these processes. It is above and beyond all these processes. From the ineffable unity, such distinctions are made. Certain questions were posed and attempts were made to understand the ultimate reality. These are well discussed in the spiritual literature of many religions.

What is the world rooted in? Who am I? What is it that helps us perceive the world around us? God cannot be known or experienced unless he is working in us. Who is he, or she? Or what is it? In Hindu religious texts, the supreme power is called *Brahman*. The world is not self-caused, self-dependent or self-maintaining. What is the reality of being? The supreme power is that from which beings are born, that in which they live and that into which they enter at their death. That supreme power is the reality of the real. The world is not an automatic development without any intelligent cause or objective.

Matter, life, mind and intelligence are different forms of existence with specific characters and modes of action. Each interacts with another, but all beings are equal in the created world. Life emerges when material conditions are appropriately suitable; it is not produced by inert or lifeless particles. Life actions or activities are promoted by incentives and instincts, but no living being, except humans, has power of speech or expression. The habits and life processes or actions of other beings are not understood completely by man, and perhaps never will be. At present, however, all beings in nature are equal in showing or displaying different comparable activities like hunger, thirst, sleep, reproductive instincts and so on.

Nature is, thus, working or functioning according to the fundamental laws established by that supreme power which is called " God by some. The dimensions of religious understanding include this supreme power, and the immanent role it plays in the functioning of the universe. Saints and sages have declared from a long time ago that life and living beings cannot be properly understood unless they understand the role of divinity in the universe.

The Concept of Soul

Each living being is characterized by life activities, starting from birth and ending with death. These physical activities of individuals are different from the supreme single life factor that energizes and activates all beings from birth to death, called soul or *Atma*.

The soul is independent of living beings but is an integral part of all living beings. Only when soul exists will life activities be in operation. Soul exists and operates independently of the human body, life, mind and intellect. The body is the temple of the soul; how or when it enters or exits from the body is unknown. Birth and death are the two cardinal points that indicate the operational brackets of the soul. Just as living beings are supported by the soul, the entire universe is supported by the supreme soul. Soul and supreme soul are not confined by either time or space.

The Concept of God

One of the common names given for the soul or supreme soul is God, and one and the same God is called by different names. Negating God is not a rational choice because the whole of creation, including us, are part of God. Truth is one but the wise men call it or interpret it by different names. God or the spiritual truth can be realized only through the inward path. For those who cannot follow the inward path, other methods of worship, like meditation, are prescribed. Each method has its relative merits and advantages, and helps people with different mental make-ups and abilities to realize divinity.

Some contemplate on one name and some on another. Which of these is the best? They are all eminent clues to the transcendent, immortal, unembodied supreme soul or *Brahman*. These names are to be used, lauded and at least, denied. For by repeating these names, one rises higher and higher in this world; where all comes to its end, there, one merges with the unity, or the supreme Person.

One of the most illustrious ways of practising religion in recent times was demonstrated by Mahatma Gandhi. To him, the inspiration of life was religion, not conformed to ritual, subscription to dogma, or practice without understanding. Understanding was the real education to him. Ghandi emphasized abiding faith and practice in the absolute values of truth, love and justice, and a persistence in education to realize them in life. He declared: "Truth is God, nothing so completely describes my God as Truth." We might be familiar with a denial of God, but we cannot know a denial of truth. Gandhi's life was an experiment with truth, *Satya Samshodbane*. Supreme factor or God is described as truth, knowledge and eternity (*Satyam*, *Gnyanam* and *Anantam*). Sanctity and service of man are inseparable. Gandhi declared: "Wipe out every tear from every eye. Politics divorced from religion is a corpse fit only to be burned." One cannot practise religion without society. Living, experiencing and practising religion in society are part of a real education. In this way, proper comprehension of religious values plays an important role in the life of all individuals who live in civilized societies.

Teaching and Practising Religion

Each religion should function independently for the common good of all, but we need to establish unity in this diversity. Diversity does not mean differences, but variations of the same. Fusion, conversion, or uniformity constitutes a mediocre way of thinking, and curtails vast noble thoughts into tailor-made or streamlined processes. On the other hand, people should be exposed to different points of view but should not get confused, or sway over to the other side by neglecting their own traditional knowledge. This is what is happening among less informed groups in any society, thus, creating social problems. The *Bhagavat* Geetha says that God accepts everyone, and in whatever form he or she prays to him.

Also, it is loudly proclaimed that noble thoughts, like a pleasant breeze, should come through all the windows in the house for circulation of fresh and free air; but let not the wild wind topple the contents of the house.

Traditions are many and different, and they are all well employed in understanding reality, which is one. Truth is one, but the wise call it different names, as in the well-known Upanishadic saying, Ekam Sat *Vipra* Bahuda *Vadanti*. How can anyone who is really interested in promoting interreligious teachings ignore the following?

- Spiritual radiance of Hinduism
- Faithful obedience of Judaism
- Noble compassion of Buddhism
- Vision of divine love of Christianity
- Spirit of resignation to the sovereign Lord, of Islam

They all emphasize the different aspects of inward spiritual life. Each one of these teachings needs to be cultivated irrespective of which religion one is born to or belongs to.

Perhaps, in the past, the basic aspects of Hinduism were taught in a systematic way to emphasize the values of Dharma (righteousness), *Sathya* (truth), *Shanthi* (peace), *Prema* (love) and Ahimsa (non-violence). These are the main building blocks of Hinduism, over which the superstructure is built. This foundation stands quite firm in the present as it has in the past, and has been put into practice in daily life. By and large, however, there has been no organised or systematic method of teaching Hinduism in any country. Most of these axioms were sincerely followed and guided the majority of people to lead a peaceful life. Early teachings were transmitted orally; they were heard (*Shruthi*), remembered (*Smrithi*) and practised. Furthermore, the medium of instruction was in scholarly language, mostly Sanskrit rather than the popular local languages that developed in different parts of India.

In Southeast Asian countries, the same method – or its variations – also existed. Hindu temples and shrines that are 100 to 500 years old or more stand firm in the different countries of Southeast Asia. Some are used for regular worship, even till today. Others stand as monuments or architectural curiosities. The structures in Bali, Surabaya and Angkor Wat are the main examples. Temples were the main centres used to spread religious knowledge to the people. Besides philosophy of the religion, performing different duties was the main focus of worship. When the religion spread overseas, that particular aspect of learning or that particular deity was enshrined in different places. The variations that we see today are the relics of old methods that were adopted in new locations or places.

Past and Recent Experiences in Singapore

About 15 years ago, serious and successful efforts were made in Singapore to teach different religions to secondary school students almost up to 'O' level, or as subjects for junior Cambridge examinations. Specially prescribed syllabuses were prepared by a group of experts, and these syllabuses were approved by the Ministry of Education. Teacher training courses were organised for teachers who were specially selected to teach the subjects. The syllabuses were all-encompassing, including the various aspects of religion, philosophy, sociology, ethics and other subjects. The life histories of certain eminent people were included in the teaching programme to illustrate examples of virtuous lives and the principles they followed. Their devotion in life to truth and duty were absolute. Teaching materials and handbooks were published. The teaching of religions went ahead for a few years and was then discontinued. The present practice is to teach the major points of each religion in an ethics class at the primary school level. Besides discussing the major festivals of each ethnic group, Thaipusam, Ponggal and Deepavali are also discussed with reference to Hinduism.

At the university level, especially in the Department of Philosophy at the then University of Singapore, certain aspects of Hinduism and other religions are taught at the undergraduate level, and I believe the same trend continues even today to enlighten students on interreligious subjects and their socioeconomic implications. Different publications like newsletters, magazines and proceedings of seminars or symposia are put out by various organisations to enlighten members of particular societies or groups, and also the general public, about Hinduism.

Religion is, no doubt, very important as it enforces many ethical and moral values on children from an early age, thus, shaping their good conduct, character and behaviour. For the majority of people, respect for law, order and good behaviour grows even without any academic efforts. Spiritual values develop in

the family and through institutions like temples and a few religious organizations that are functioning well in Singapore to help the Hindu community. Among Hindu children, fear of sin is inculcated and nurtured, along with respect and adherence to truth from a young age. Faith in God is practised through family prayers and temple worship, while participation in customs and rituals help to improve knowledge of the faith. The depth of faith and degree of practice vary among different sections of Hindu society.

Secularism has not undermined moral development. As in any other country or situation, it is the promiscuity of new changes brought about by western influences that cause some young people to become addicted to undesirable habits and practices, thus, causing damage to individual health, and creating serious social problems. Examples abound to illustrate the point, and every day, newspapers report cases of the erosion of social values. Although the problems are dealt with to contain them in a general way, more studies are required to pick out the details and find better remedies. Both public and private efforts are needed. As has been mentioned, Singapore society is multiracial, multicultural and interreligious. There is peace and harmony in the society despite the many differences among the various ethnic groups as law and order are well enforced by the government and living conditions are satisfactory. Both peace and harmony are cultivated irrespective of the different religions that people belong to. It is noteworthy that people are compassionate and kind, and quickly respond to help whenever there are calls for help, whether within the country or for unfortunate happenings or disasters that occur in neighbouring countries or in the rest of the world. Religious affiliations make no difference and the public is, in general, generous in rendering help to the poor, the needy and the distressed.

In undergoing compulsory national service, males are encouraged to become well-rounded personalities who understand their fellow servicemen better, irrespective of their ethnic origins or religious beliefs. Multicultural values play an important role here. National service gives additional opportunities to develop the more cohesive values required for living in a multiracial society.

There are no critical problems, either religious or sociological, in Singapore that need to be solved immediately. Yet, people should be better informed to face the various problems that may arise either in the country or in the surrounding region. Prevention is better than cure. The present level of sociopolitical understanding needs to be improved so that even if socioeconomic conditions in the region deteriorate, people will be in a better position and be more tolerant in facing and overcoming them. Mental preparation and better knowledge would help them in many ways. The Hindu teachings widely practised in Singapore today emphasize the values of truth (*Sathya*), righteousness (*Dharma*), peace

(*Shanthi*) and non-violence *(Ahimsa).*These values are also practised by people of other religions, and even irreligious people follow them.

Educational or pedagogical methods are minimal. Religious classes are conducted, usually once a week and mostly for the benefit of children. Special lectures delivered periodically by visiting saints and sages help Hindus reimbibe the precious values that they should adhere to for the betterment of self, society and country. More lectures by eminent men should, be organised to spread the message of interreligious harmony. The Interreligious Organization of Singapore has been functioning well for many years; they should launch many more programmes to highlight the importance of practising values in different religions. More attempts need to be made to achieve the goals of religious tolerance and to establish social cohesion. More work also needs to be done at the individual, societal, national and regional levels.

Many international bodies function at the global level, but the results of their actions and programmes do not reach the common people. There are no obstacles to establish or perpetuate such dialogues, but more innovations are required to develop well-designed working programmes.

Interreligious Understanding and Cooperation

Interreligious understanding and cooperation among people who practise different faiths or religions in any one country are very vital today. Almost all countries have a mixture of people of different faiths, and the majority of people in any given country may follow one particular religion. Yet, their fellow citizens, though a minority, may follow different religions. Most Southeast Asian countries recognize and support different faiths in coexisting and functioning harmoniously, even though some countries declare one religion or the other a national religion. Occasionally, interreligious or interracial disturbances are not uncommon since people are either unenlightened or intolerant of another religion. There is a great need to understand the major religions in a better way and help their adherents improve their methods of interacting with others. At the same time, the basic values of religions should be made well-known to the other citizens in a country who follow different religions. Religious tolerance as well as mutual help would help to promote peace in society. As one famous statement goes: "If you are born as a Hindu, try to be a better Hindu; a Christian, better Christian; a Muslim, better Muslim; a Buddhist, better Buddhist, etc."

The different methods adopted so far to convert people from one religion to another should be stopped immediately. The ill effects of conversion are well-known all over the world. Instead of conversion. methods should be identified to

help people of different faiths rediscover the virtues of their own religion and practise them. All religions are similar ultimately in their noble ideas and religious values. There is no need to compare and claim that one religion is better than or superior to another; there is no superior or inferior religion in the world. This point has been repeatedly made by all the saints and sages over centuries. When values of different religions in any given country become uneven, conflict and hatred will exist among different groups. Peace and harmony in a society will be disturbed and social unrest becomes a common affair. Further, there are many instances in different countries to show the ill effects of conversion, and a germination of hatred between one group and another, or even within the members of the same family. Rifts and separations within families are common.

In conclusion, more intelligent, rational programmes are urgently needed and should be practised to establish both peaceful and harmonious societies and nations in the world. Let us hope that the outcome of certain international meetings like this one will show the way for people to become more enlightened in practising better values and faith in their lives.

References

McDermott, R.A., ed. (1972). *Basic Writings of S. Radha Krishna*. Bangalore: Jaico Publishing.

Radha Krishna, S. (1970). *The Present Crisis of Faith*. Bombay: Orient Paperbooks.

Ranganathananda, S. (1968). *The Message of the Upanishads*. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Tagore, Rabindranath (1922). *Creative Unity*. London: Macmillan.

and judgemental component. Even if the term has fallen into disrepute and many of its assumptions have been questioned and its logic critiqued, I suggest that in an altered form, the rationale and insights of "comparative religion" continue to inform contemporary efforts to theorize religions from a comparative perspective.

World Religion

By the end of the 19th century, the term "world religions" had also been coined. Writing in 1915, Max Weber supplies us with this definition:

> By world religions we understand the five religions or religiously determined systems of life regulation which have known how to gather multitudes of confessors around them. The Confucian, Hinduist, Buddhist, Christian and Islamist religious ethics all belong to the category of world religion. A sixth religion, Judaism, will also be dealt with. It is included because it contains historical preconditions decisive for understanding Christianity and Islam.

Weber is possibly among the first comparative sociologists of religion because of his interest in comparing the religions of the "Occident" and the "Orient," and he uses the differences in these religions to account for larger civilizational differences. Weber developed a schematic frame for comparison, using specific features. Some examples include the idea of "economic ethic" of a religion, asceticism versus mysticism as polar types, and this-worldly asceticism versus other-worldly asceticism. Since those early days, the field of world religions has found many supporters and it continues to thrive today (Smart, 1960: 1991).

To me, the fields of "comparative religion" and "world religion" are crucial because they initiate a language, a terminology, and a framework[4] and logic for talking about religions in *the plural*. Although much has changed in the hundred or more years since these fields came into existence, continuities prevail nonetheless. I want to emphasize only two components of this received tradition that continue to pervade even contemporary accounts of religions:

(1) Identification of named, labelled religious traditions
The process of identifying, naming and labelling religious traditions is a direct contribution from the field of "world religions." No doubt, names and labels as markers of self-identity and self-differentiation are a feature of community life everywhere, often as acts of self-description. Here, however, I am referring to the assigning of specific, often alien, labels to the cultural practices of "others." What is problematic here is not just the choice of labels and names, but also the conferring of particular traits and features to these named religions and specific identities to its members. This was a selective process that relied on arbitrary criteria and was clearly neither inclusive nor comprehensive. Its effect was to place some religious

traditions legitimately on a landscape of religious possibilities, and exclude others from due consideration.

What is significant is that in such naming and listing, it was the analysts (often in conjunction with religious elites) who were bestowing particular identities to named religious traditions by denoting their unique, distinct character, while at the same time according a certain coherence and unity to their practices that may have been alien to the practitioners themselves. Most crucially, a select set of named, labelled religious traditions became discrete units of analysis indispensable to discussions of multireligiosity. This process of naming and labelling is highly problematic, at least, in that it produces homogeneous, monolithic and essentialist accounts of religion.[5] Collectively, such characterization produces totalistic, singular, uniform and fixed, unvarying, unchanging accounts of the religions in question by according sameness within the boundaries of a label. More importantly, such a portrayal culminates in common sense understanding that view not just a named, labelled religious tradition – say, "Hinduism" – in a set and specific way, but also accords a particular identity ("Hindu") to all its members.

(2) Identification of "Sameness" and "Difference"

The traditions of "comparative religion" and "world religion" can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century, when discussions on similarities and differences among religious traditions centred on questions of the origin and development of religion, within an evolutionary framework.[6] Even if the latter is rejected, it is difficult to deny that the major contribution of the field of "comparative religion" lay in bringing into conscious focus the themes of "sameness" and "difference" among named, labelled religious traditions. According to Turner,

> … the language of comparison is the language of difference (1991: 18).

> To know something is, in principle, to be able to speak about it and language necessarily involves contrasts and comparisons between sameness and difference (1991: 19).

These two traditions are not concerns of the past either, they continue to be relevant today (Smart, 1995; Tiwari, 1983; Turner, 1991). In making sense of religious pluralism in the contemporary world, we are still grappling with the question of common ground amongst religions, or its absence, often in highly politicized and polemical terms.

The focus on "sameness" and "difference" has structured analyses of religions in interaction, particularly, in asking what shape such encounters will take. Several options are offered as possibilities, ranging from religious tolerance to religious harmony; to religious conflict and religious syncretism. Most critically, the noted

points of commonality and divergence are used to account for a presence or absence of conflict or harmony, as the case may be.

The language of named, labelled religious traditions, and the similarities and differences among them have provided students of religion today with a way of talking about multireligiosity and religious encounters. It is not without significance that in the original discourse of "comparative religion" and "world religions," similarities and differences among religions were recognized on the basis of textual, theoretical and often elite conceptualizations and understandings of religion. Also, comparisons proceeded on the basis of a selected model or vantage point, deemed to be the norm, against which other cases were judged. Given the specific sociopolitical and historical configurations of imperial and colonial enterprises, this norm was represented by Protestant theology and practices, and sometimes in the spirit of inclusion, the monotheistic Judeo-Christian tradition.[7]

Most ethnographic contexts in the present are religiously plural, with religious communities in close contact and interactions within specific boundaries. It is fair to say that contemporary analyses of religion are dominated by the notion of religious diversity (Smart, 1995; Waardenburg, 1998; Warner, 1998). In the second part of this chapter, using relevant material from Singapore society, I demonstrate the complexities of this multireligious context, where religion is only one factor amongst many others such as race, ethnicity and language; the relations amongst them all need to be attended to before the question of interfaith dialogue and its value can be addressed. In addition, the Singapore case allows me to make the argument that the language used by analysts of religion also pervades non-academic discussions of multireligiosity.

The Complexities of a "Multireligious" Context: The Situation in Singapore

In the context of teaching the module at present, clearly, the issues of multireligiosity, and religious encounters and their specific forms are completely relevant both in the everyday life experiences of students in Singapore, as well as in making sense of religious phenomena elsewhere.

(1) The "Obviousness" of Religious Pluralism in Singapore

Multireligiosity is a familiar and taken-for-granted reality in Singapore, which is recognized at all levels as a religiously plural society. Singaporeans can readily produce common sense religious descriptions of Singapore society by naming and listing the various "religions" in this officially secular state. Despite this familiarity and obviousness of religious pluralism, or perhaps because of it, discussions about religious communities and religions as well as interactions amongst them are characterized by a certain density and ambiguity.

If multilingualism and multiethnicity are two core features of Singaporean social life, then multireligiosity is its third crucial component. Singapore, a modern nation-state, contains within its boundaries several religious communities and groups. Historically, the ethnically diverse nature of its migrant population, through the input of colonial authorities, has produced a religiously heterogeneous population. Multireligiosity is not a novel feature of social life in Singapore. Religious diversity has characterized Singapore society from its earliest days as a colony. Soon after its separation from Malaysia, Singapore's ruling elite inherited both the republic's multireligiosity as well as the responsibility of careful consideration and management of it. Since independence, religion has been viewed as a sensitive subject and a source of potential social conflict; nonetheless, it is considered "legitimate" and necessary for individual spirituality.

Singapore is, by definition, a "multireligious" society. How does this translate into practice, and with what consequences? A multireligious context indicates that different religious communities[8] with varied spiritual orientations, opinions and viewpoints exist in, and occupy, the same space. These religions are theologically varied and some even see these differences as contradictory, incompatible and, hence, irreconcilable. We find the major religions of India, China and the Malay World represented on the island. In addition, the importation of religions to Singapore is not a thing of the past either; it continues to occur today, in the shape of a variety of "reform" movements, and what have more recently been popularly labelled New Age movements.

Yet, although these religious differences are seen to be potentially problematic, they have not yet prompted the state to wish for a religiously uniform Singapore. Religion is seen as an inevitable, but sensitive, feature of Singapore's identity. In fact, government ministers see the idea of Singapore society being "religiously homogeneous" as impossible and absurd. That Singapore is, and must continue to be, defined by diversity and plurality in its ethnic, linguistic and religious make-up, is entrenched in all public discussions of social life on the island.

(2) Conflation of Religion with Other Identity Markers

It is obvious that talk about religious identity in Singapore is conjoined with talk of other identities – racial, ethnic, linguistic and "cultural." Hence, references to "multireligiosity" are seldom, if ever, confined to discussions of religions in isolation from other factors. In this context, I find Puru Shotam's (1998) idea of "racing" languages completely applicable to the religious domain as well. In the local context, clear, specific and tight equations are made among particular identities and one can extend Puru Shotam's ideas to speak of "racing religion" in Singapore. As such, particular racial and ethnic identities are associated with specific religious identities, which lead to a collapsing of ethnic and religious communities. For

example, at a discursive level and in everyday consciousness, Malay-ness and Muslim-ness always go together; Indian-ness and Hindu-ness are conflated; Chinese-ness has several affiliating identities – Taoist, Buddhist and Christian, and so on. In practice, however, it is clear that not all Muslims are Malays, that there are Indians who are non-Hindus, etc.

A related issue is that the rhetoric of equality pervades multicultural discourse in Singapore, particularly in official, public domains. At an everyday life level, however, one does hear the language of majority-minority group dynamics, the presence of racial prejudice and discriminatory acts, and the sense that specific groups are culturally, ideologically, politically and economically dominant. This is evident in discussions amongst religious communities involved in debates about the Religious Harmony Act. Thus, the classification of individuals into specific categories is not simply descriptive, it also connotes that there is a certain hierarchy at work.

What this means is that talk of multireligiosity is, simultaneously, talk about multiracialism, multiethnicity and multilingualism. Such discussions occur at all levels of Singapore society, including the level of government leadership. It is clear that interethnic relations always carry statements about religious harmony, making it impossible to disentangle discussions of religions and religious communities from deliberations about race or ethnicity. Thus, making sense of multireligiosity in Singapore means addressing the complex relations between its other two defining strands – multiracialism and multilingualism. Religion is not the only variable to be addressed in making sense of religious pluralism here.

(3) Situating "Difference" in the Discourse on Multireligiosity

The discourse on multireligiosity in Singapore is defined by a heightened sense of different kinds of "differences," including those among religious traditions, expressed at all levels of Singapore society. At the same time, emphasis is placed on building a common space and identity for Singaporeans of different cultural backgrounds. This is by no means a new phenomenon, but let me quote some recent examples to illustrate. After the general elections in 1997, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong made these observations in a speech:

> This election has again shown that the deep fault lines in our society over race, language, culture and religion will not go away … Singapore is a multiracial, multilingual and multireligious society. It requires a fine balance of interests to keep every community at ease. Every community has an equal place in Singapore … Our approach is fair to all: of an open, level playing field for all Singaporeans with English as the common language, plus separate playing fields for each community. Every community plays on two playing fields. All compete equally in the open playing field. At the same time each community can retain and develop its own language

and culture in its own separate playing field. This practical approach has given us multiracial harmony and our place in Asean *(The Straits Times,* 7 January 1997).

Speaking in a different context days after the events of September 11, 2001, in New York and Washington, D.C., Deputy Prime Minister Brigadier-General(BG) Lee Hsien Loong makes a similar point with different imagery:

> We must also consolidate the progress made in national integration and continue to draw the different communities closer together. We want the different communities to interact more and be more comfortable with one another, and to participate fully in the mainstream of Singapore life. We do not seek to assimilate the minorities to the culture of the majority Chinese community, and to give up their own culture and traditions.

> Singapore 21 envisions a multiracial society comprising overlapping circles. Each community would retain its cultural space and distinct identity. But, over time, the areas of overlap should gradually widen and our common Singapore identity should strengthen *(The Straits Times,* 25 September 2001).

Despite the perceived need for building a common ground, there is a stream of thinking that these sociocultural and religious differences are ultimately irreconcilable. With regard to religion, this is clear. According to BG Lee Hsien Loong:

> We have to find some way to compromise practically what is *impossible to reconcile theologically (The Straits Times,* 31 January 1990; emphasis added).

It is not the case that this perception of difference is confined to government leaders. Self-descriptions by ethnic and religious communities also reveal the same trend, as do descriptions of "other" communities.

A recognition and statement of differences among religious traditions, or any other differences, is not necessarily a problem (King, 1976). The anthropological argument would be that diversity and pluralism (in all societal domains) define the condition of being human. As such, the presence of a multiplicity of ways of conceptualizing and approaching the supernatural realm, and the diverse organization of religious communities is "normal." Some scholars have also made the powerful and persuasive argument which argues that religious diversity is both necessary and inevitable (Jones, 1999).

Although the discourse on multireligiosity in Singapore society allows for similarities and points of divergence to be articulated, the differences among named and labelled religious traditions appear as a dominant strand. This focus on distinctions is crucial. Limited and contextual space is devoted to identifying commonalities and overlaps among the various religious traditions, but they are often too generalized, obvious, facile and even banal in the face of asserted

differences. Furthermore, the emphasis on similarities (or the need for identifying them) does not pervade discussions of multireligiosity under conditions of normality, but emerges more during specific occasions – either to present an official, public face of solidarity or, at what I would call "crisis" points, to manage and smooth over potential tensions in view of religious (differences. The various responses in Singapore to the events of September 11 in the USA are a testimony to this. The selective attention to differences among sectors of the population on grounds of race, religion, language and culture is "normal," and it overshadows any real or abstracted similarities that could be recognizable. Furthermore, the nature of "differences" among sectors of the population is often not clearly articulated and remains rather fuzzy. Differences are assumed, asserted and deemed to be naturally present. What is clear, however, is that in the discourse on multireligiosity, it is not only the theologically given differences among religious traditions that are at issue. These religious differences are compounded with other points of distinction on the basis of race, language and culture.

(4) Management of "Multireligiosity": Dealing with Differences
Related to the theme of religious diversity is the issue of religious encounters. In talking about "religious encounters," I am referring to interaction, exchanges and contact among "different" religious traditions. The multireligious context[9] of Singapore means that individuals of different religious orientations are brought into close proximity, with opportunities for regular interaction.

The mention of multireligiosity in the Singapore context often accompanies talk of religious harmony and religious conflict. In the Singapore state's discourse on multireligiosity, religious tolerance and sensitivity are defined as being absolutely necessary for the prevention of religious polarization and sectarian strife. Ideally, religious diversity is socially desirable if there is no accompanying friction and conflict. From the state's point of view, these following elements are undesirable, for obvious reasons: excessive religious fervour, missionary zeal, and religious assertiveness. In an interview, Deputy Prime Minister BG Lee Hsien Loong noted:

> The trend towards stronger religious consciousness is not just amongst Muslims. Christians are also undergoing an evangelical revival. Many Singaporeans take their Christian faith very seriously. The number of Buddhists has also gone up. There is an emerging interest in Buddhism amongst professionals. Buddhists are now conducting *dharma* classes in English. Overall, Singaporeans have become more religiously conscious over the past 10 or 15 years. It's a trend we have to warch. It's sensitive to even highlight this trend. But it's a fact and you can see ir. The government's concern is that while people feel more strongly about their faiths, this must not affect interethnic relations and racial harmony *(The Straits Times, 23 September 2001)*.

There is a further assumption that differences among communities can be problematic from the point of view of achieving a harmonious coexistence. In the same interview, BG Lee continues:

> Because they will prefer to be together with people from the same religion, who share the same habits and rules of behaviour. The risk will be less interaction with Singaporeans from other faiths, and so less identification with them. This would weaken our society. We worry about this *(The Straits Times, 23* September 2001).

The idea that "sameness" is preferred over "differences" here is quite interesting as is the reasoning that differences (including religious differences) result in a distancing from others. This provides a "natural" incentive to "manage" potentially problematic differences identified amongst the citizenry.

A situation of religious harmony is a matter of "national pride," not to mention a good selling point in presenting Singapore as a haven of harmonious unity in the midst of religious and ethnic differences. Again, the ties between political stability and religious tolerance and moderation are emphasized. The state has an obvious and pragmatic interest in ensuring that religious differences amongst the citizenry do not lead to conflict – something the state sees as being counter-productive to socioeconomic and political security of the nation. In these discussions, one notes both an interesting conceptualization of "multireligiosity" and a fairly serious and potentially problematic admission – religious diversity cannot by itself ensure religious harmony. If anything, it is the reverse. The state's leaders acknowledge that religious diversity and religious differences will necessarily generate religious tensions and disharmony; but this potentiality must be prevented at all costs, through a rational, practical, common sense and tolerant approach. According to Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong:

> I consider the racial and religious harmony as the most important bedrock of our society. If there is no harmony, there will be no peaceful, prosperous Singapore – as simple as that *(The Straits Times, 24* February 1990).

One mode that the state has employed in managing religious differences is the introduction of specific legislation. I detail briefly the articulated need for legislative measures accompanying the passing of the Religious Harmony Act in 1990.

Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act
I use my analyses[10] of discussions relating to the passing of the *Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act* (1990) to illustrate the kinds of complexities that surface in managing different concerns across religious communities within a multireligious context.

The government's rationale for introducing additional legislation[11] to manage multireligiosity in Singapore and deal with possible religious disharmony was grounded in evidence drawn from several arenas.[12] First, conditions internal to Singapore were cited. The government noted a shift in religious sentiment from "tolerant coexistence" to "fervently held beliefs." It was argued that these shifts in religious trends carry long-term social and political implications. One trend that was highlighted was the "disproportionately" large number of converts to Christianity. There seemed to be a suggestion that this large Christian population could potentially "unsettle" the religious harmony of the nation. The increase in the Christian population signalled a parallel decrease in the size of "other" religious communities, such as Buddhists, Taoists and Muslims. Although it was never articulated as such, there does appear to be a given numerical religious make-up that is acceptable and deemed to be workable in the Singapore context. Similar arguments have been made about the need to maintain the ethnic percentages in Singapore. This fear that the "imbalance of numbers" vis-à-vis size of religious communities may lead to a shift of traditionally accepted religious boundaries that could be a source of interreligious tension, is clearly articulated by government and religious leaders. The message seems to be that the political stability of Singapore is premised on a particular formulaic configuration of religious communities; it has to be just right – nothing more, nothing less.

Second, government leaders referred to contemporary examples of "other" societies that had been plagued by communal-ethnic and religious tensions and violence. There was a clear outward orientation and government ministers, from S. Jayakumar to Ong Teng Cheong, mentioned India, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Lebanon, northern Ireland, the Philippines, Iran, Iraq, Armenia and Azerbaijan as examples of societies where religious sensitivities and the mixing of religion and politics culminated in communal clashes with devastating consequences. Finally, the logic of the Religious Harmony Act was rooted in a language that alluded to the dangers, negative potentialities and anticipation of a religiously disharmonious situation.

A most striking admission that can be abstracted from these discussions is the idea that religious harmony exists in Singapore but cannot be taken for granted, and is to be seen as an ongoing achievement. Government leaders argue that religious harmony must be accomplished through work and effort at various levels: self, community, state. In the midst of a dominant discourse in Singapore about a religiously harmonious environment, it is clear that interreligious tensions prevail. The state's position is that before the situation deteriorates any further, intervention is crucial, hence, their legislative solution.

In addition, the argument goes, although it is a reality, religious harmony needs to be guarded. A statement by S. Jayakumar states this position in no uncertain terms: religious harmony needs "careful handling and it is a folly to assume it will always be there" *(The Straits Times, 23* February 1990). Also, since the multireligious balance is precarious, conscious effort and work (on the part of individuals and the state) is needed to continuously maintain it. Finally, despite the veneer of religious harmony, there is, in fact, evidence of interreligious and intrareligious tension in Singapore. It is further argued that religious harmony in Singapore is "a delicate and fragile balance" because of the "ethnic and religious coincidence" here.

While many religious and community leaders welcomed greater efforts to maintain religious harmony, there was clearly no consensus over the exact formulation and interpretation of the proposed set of laws.[13] According to public statements, Roman Catholic, Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, Taoist and Sikh religious leaders agreed that action was necessary to foster interreligious harmony. Most supported the principles grounding the Bill. Yet, there was an interesting and varied response from the different religious communities.

These mixed reactions produced an array of diverse voices and positions. For the most part, in the state's dealing with religious communities, "religion" is reified. Also, religion is accorded an abstract generalized singularity devoid of any particular content. Despite the presence of religious diversity in Singapore, a certain sameness and homogeneity has often been conferred on all religions, even in an explicitly religiously diverse context. While the strongest support for the Bill came from the Hindus and Buddhists, sections of the Muslim and Christian communities were wary and wanted both more clarification and more safeguards put into place vis-à-vis this legislation.

There was a heightened consciousness of religious differences, particularly in terms of the practical implications of enforcement. On the question of religious differences, let me abstract some statements about the various religions articulated in the context of debates over the passing of the Religious Harmony Act in 1990. Certain very explicit perceptions of the different religions appeared in these discussions. Comparative references were constantly made to "other" religions; without being named, these were explicitly "known" and recognizable to all concerned parties. "Christianity" was typified by an aggressive proselytizing trait and seen to be a "dominant," successful, resourceful and organized religion, given its ability to attract followers. Interestingly, "Buddhism," "Taoism" and "Hinduism" self-defined themselves as "minority" religions, numerically weak and theologically unable to withstand the onslaught of evangelical forces, particularly from the Christian quarter. It seems rather ironic that discussions inspired by a law that is

intended to foster greater interreligious interaction culminated, instead, in a discourse that heightened religious differences rather than emphasized the commonalities. A perception of differential experiences among the various religious communities exemplified the array of responses.

First, there was the position of the Protestant churches and organizations. At a forum organized by the Evangelical Fellowship of Singapore, Protestants expressed reservations about the Bill. Several issues were raised: why was new legislation needed if other laws already existed to address religious strife? Would the Bill not accentuate religious sensitivities? Did the Bill grant absolute power to the Home Affairs Minister? Was there no ambiguity in interpreting specific phrases and clauses in the Bill? As a good example of the latter, parts of Section 8 of the Bill were cited: "causing feelings of enmity, hatred, ill will or hostility." The Graduates Christian Fellowship (GCF) representative argued that this clause was open to subjective reading and requested that the word "deliberately" be added to indicate "intention" of the wrongdoer. The President of the Singapore Council of Churches suggested that the word "feelings" be changed or dropped because it was "highly subjective." The President of the GCF, Prof. Ernest Chew, made the point that the Bill would "curb and hamper some of the discussions going on in our seminars" and generate the fear that they might be reported to the authorities by "over-sensitive" people. BG Lee Hsien Loong, a member of the Select Committee, asked if the GCF was concerned that the Bill might "curb missionary work." Indeed, Christians for whom evangelizing and missionary work are central to their religious lives were concerned about the line between legitimate and genuine "evangelizing" and "harassment," and about who would decide when the line had been crossed.

A diametrically opposed reaction typified the Hindu camp, which seemed to welcome legislation with open arms. This response was duly noted by members of the Select Committee, as BG Lee pointed out to the President of the GCF that the Hindus had expressed an "opposite joy" at the possibility of legislation to restrain over-zealous proselytization, given that it was a "minority" faith in the Singapore context. The representatives of the Hindu community were certainly categorical in their support of legislative intervention. Hindu religious leaders welcomed the Bill as a tool that would protect their small community from "aggressive conversion tactics of the other religions." The Hindu Advisory Board (HAB) and the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB) representatives argued that Hinduism was a "passive" religion, lacking in the "dogmatic religious militancy" of other religions. At the same time, it lacked resources compared to the "bigger, better organized and more aggressive religious groups." The former President of the HAB, Mr Sat Pal Khattar, spoke thus before the Select Committee:

> As a minority community and as one whose underlying religious beliefs are liberal and broad-based, we are of the view that the dangers of strong proselytization are real. The actual conversion of Hindus to other religions is of concern to us. The process and manner in which they have attempted to do so is of graver concern (The Straits *Times*, 21 September 1990).

In this series of statements, Hinduism is portrayed as a unique, theologically different and minority religion without "aggressive marketing tactics," hence, threatened by over-zealous evangelizing. A comparative, critical reference to "other," unnamed religions produced a heightened sense of religious differences.

The Mufti, the religious leader of the Muslim community,[14] welcomed the law saying that "the new laws might help to avoid clashes between Christians and Muslims over the issue of conversions" (*The Straits Times, 11* January 1990). Other Muslim organizations sought clarification about how the proposed laws would be enforced and with what consequences. For example, the Secretary of the Islamic Fellowship Association asked: "how far a group's missionary activity can go under the law ... We are not sure whether activities such as distributing leaflets door-to-door are allowed," reiterating some of the Christian community's concerns with the question of what constitutes legitimate missionary activity.

While there was general agreement that some action needed to be taken, there was less certainty about who should take a lead in this: the individual citizen, leaders of religious communities, or the state? Although the state in Singapore has quite self-consciously defined itself as "secular," it is at the same time neither "atheistic" not "anti-religion." It is a secular government that sees itself as being responsible for curbing potential religious conflict and as the final arbiter in religious disputes. Two statements by key politicians underscore this point:

> The government cannot avoid the responsibility to act or not to act against leaders or members of religious groups whose actions might threaten the peace, after taking advice from the Presidential Council (BG Lee Hsien Loong, The Straits Times, 31 January 1990)

> Singapore is a multireligious society and it would be foolish of any group to think that it can harass and unseat the government without expecting the government to strike back using the counter-religious force if necessary (Goh Chok Tong, The *Straits Times*, 24 February 1990).

In July 1993, three years after the Act came into existence, Member of Parliament Wong Kan Seng stated the obvious: "law alone cannot ensure religious harmony. It is also up to the people to be practical and tolerant towards other religions" (*The Straits Times,* 12 July 1993). Clearly, religious harmony was not seen to be firmly secured simply because of the Act; interreligious and intrareligious tensions had not suddenly disappeared. At most, it could be reasonably said that the Act served as a "reminder" to Singaporeans, and perhaps as a deterrent.

The discussions relating to the passing of the Religious Harmony Act supply a language that enables talk about religious conflict in a discursive context that celebrates religious pluralism, almost to the total denial of tensions.[15] I thought the following rather dramatic statement by Goh Chok Tong captured the essence of this rather unconventional portrayal of Singapore's religious scene.

> In *a* sense, this Bill is recognition of a retrogression, a potential deterioration in religious harmony. The government takes no joy in introducing it. I take no joy in speaking on this subject. It is not something which we are proud of. We introduce it more with sorrow or more in sorrow than with joy. It is to prevent us from sliding backward. It is an act aimed at preserving common sense and harmony *(The Straits Times, 24* February *1990)*.

This statement is premised in an interesting assumption about Singapore – a past of harmonious coexistence of different religious traditions in the absence of overt, public displays of religious intolerance (for example, riots, killings, looting, violent behaviour). One notes a certain reminiscing of the "good old days"; the glorious, amicable past of a multireligious era. According to this stated logic, Singapore has moved to a problematic present: a multireligious context strewn with seeds of religious tension and disharmony; hence, the need for regulation and intervention.

The multireligiosity of Singapore is not unique, although the absence of *overt* religious disharmony is. As my discussion of the Religious Harmony Act discourse shows, various interested parties are very conscious of existing interreligious and intrareligious tensions, but this is not to suggest that religious strife is rampant here.[16]

Formulating a Response: Emphasizing Commonalities and Connections?

Given such a rendering of the multireligious scene in Singapore and the nature of religious encounters therein, what sort of response is possible and feasible in the spirit of promoting interfaith dialogue? Indeed, to what extent does the enabling of interfaith dialogue across communities serve a pedagogical function? It is clear that in discussions of pluralism locally, multireligiosity is not just a descriptive term; it signifies a number of definitive statements about the nature of religious traditions, of religious communities, of their inherent irreconcilable differences (which can be potentially problematic); hence, the need to "manage" these differences. As is evident from the foregoing discussion on the religious scene in Singapore, religious pluralism and religious harmony are not two sides of the same coin – something the state, too, acknowledges. Multireligiosity (understood simply in terms of the presence of "different" religious communities in the same space) does not by any means automatically lead to religious harmony (understood

as genuine, non-judgemental acceptance of other religions, despite incompatible theological differences). I argue that an un-problematized notion of multiplicity, a monolithic and totalistic understanding of named, labelled religious traditions and a mode of recognizing differences and similarities among religious traditions that derives from textual, theological and elite sources – something that unites both academic and non-academic discourses – are limiting as they do not allow us to make meticulous sense of social contexts that are plural in religious, ethnic and linguistic dimensions.

My own response is to engage with the issues of religious pluralism at the discursive level, where specific and problematic statements are made. I think it is crucial to focus on the discourse because utterances about religions and the inherent differences within are powerful, deriving legitimacy from the authority of speakers (for example, religious leaderships and elites, journalists, social and political commentators and government leaders, etc.). In my attempt to problematize the discourse on multireligiosity and religious encounters, I consider it important to highlight inconsistencies and contradictions within, as well as demonstrate gaps between the discourse and the practice. In my view, it is more crucial to re-position the discourse on multireligiosity by demonstrating that the recognition and assertion of "differences" (of any kind) *do not exclude* the possibility of harmonious interaction. I briefly discuss the following strategies that I have used in the course of my teaching in an effort to problematize the discourse on multireligiosity and religious encounters so as to produce a more nuanced understanding of the religious scene here; perhaps some general pedagogical principles could be abstracted from these.

(1) I identify and highlight specific empirical and ethnographic spaces/sites in different societies where one sees two or more different religious traditions come together and interact without tension. I assign this as fieldwork for my students in the context of Singapore, where such "mixing-up" in the field of religion is the norm rather than an aberration. These may occur at several levels:
(a) Institutional/Communal Level
For example, this might be in the close, physical proximity of two places of worship of different religious traditions and there is a sharing of resources.
(b) Individual Level
Examples include the attendance at Novena Church by Catholics and non-Catholics alike, or in Chinese Buddhists celebrating and participating in the "Hindu" festivals Tai Pucam and Timiti. These are individuals who constantly and without any trauma mix up carefully differentiated religious domains. (Please refer to footnote 16 for more examples).

Students are encouraged to visit these sites and observe the aspects of these "different" religious traditions and religious identities that are in interaction. Such examples serve to demonstrate that theologically given differences do not shut up people, either at the level of practice or thinking, into prescribed boundaries. The possibilities for crossing over and making connections do exist in practice.[17] As we have seen, the discourse is dominated by talk of differences and necessary separation amongst communities on cultural grounds; at the everyday life level, in the domain of practice, we see a rather different picture, where connections are made across boundaries. Also, in the local context, interfaith dialogue unfortunately cannot confine itself to addressing the issue of religious commonalities and distinctions in theory, in the abstract and in isolation, but really does need to approach the race question as well, and the complex relations between the two.

(2) Another response is to emphasize sameness, but not necessarily across religions, and not in a rhetorical fashion that appears obviously doctored, manoeuvred and fashioned to express a politically correct and uncontroversial position. Rather, one might aim to normalize talk about sameness rather than difference in discussions of religious pluralism that might pervade everyday life consciousness, awareness and practices under normal conditions, and not just at crisis points. There is clear evidence that the rhetorical assertion of "sameness" in religious world views does not eliminate stereotypes and prejudices about "other" religions nor foster genuine religious harmony. Noticing these similarities could occur at several levels:

(a) One, by emphasizing "sameness" among and across religious traditions that are normally defined and viewed to be different. When differences are asserted and identified, one can insist in being specific about wherein lies the difference, the nature of this difference, and how consequential it is or is not for everyday life interactions and encounters. In this context, I find Tiwari's reasoning quite sound:

> As a matter of fact, religions of the world agree and differ together in many important points. But over-enthusiastic persons exhibit maniac tendencies in either bringing together useless and far-fetched points of similarity or in exposing unnecessary, unimportant and artificial points of difference among religions. In making honest and objective comparisons, both these extremist tendencies are to be avoided (Tiwari, 1983: 3).

Indeed, social scientists can make a contribution here in providing alternative terminologies that facilitate recognition of sameness across apparently diverse traditions. While such terms as monotheism, polytheism, monism and dualism have served to categorize the range of religious traditions, other conceptualizations could allow us to see connections and overlaps instead. In this context, I have found it instructive to use anthropologist Geoffrey Benjamin's concept of "modes

of orientation" "in demonstrating that specific elements of Hinduism and Taoism, as practised in the Singapore context, are similar rather than different. While it is true that these two religious traditions would be viewed as "polytheistic," diffused, folk religions even in conventional renderings, the idea of approaching them with the understanding that they are defined by an "immanent mode of orientation" is crucial, particularly given the "racing" of religion in Singapore. Here, Taoism is seen as a "Chinese" religion and Hinduism as an "Indian" one and these ethnic categories are racialized and naturalized as different. To say that there are similarities between Hinduism and Taoism in Singapore is a departure from the norm and clearly makes students sit up and take notice. Some do resist and challenge this re-categorization but most do not.

(b) Another mode of emphasizing sameness across distinct religious boundaries is to insist on a deeper and broad-based historical perspective. The analyses of religion in the social sciences as well as in religious discourses emanating from within specific religious communities adopt a rather presentist framework, which does not allow an exploration of common historical experiences within these communities. One good example is that of Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious traditions, which are viewed as different and incompatible, both by their members and others.

I stress to my students the need to refresh our historical memories so that we can see the interconnectedness and continuities at a theological level amongst religious traditions that are defined as distinct. There are areas of overlap and agreement over fundamental issues despite significant differences, and these could be emphasized and more widely disseminated. Again, this is highly relevant in the local context, where religions do get talked about in highly racialized and ethnicized terms, such as the conjoining of Christianity and Buddhism as "Chinese" religions, Islam as a "Malay" one and Hinduism as an "Indian" one. Despite empirical and ethnographic evidence of the intermingling of race and religion in practice, here one sees the power of conjoining race and religion at a discursive level.

(3) Emphasizing commonalities in our given identities outside/beyond our assumed or assigned socially constructed identities. Clearly, identities are constructed vis-a-vis invocation of criteria – such as race, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, political ideology – as is membership to a community. These affiliations and attachments are not in themselves problematic. It is pertinent to ask though: when does one's privileging and prioritizing of specific identities occur, and with what consequences? Under what conditions and with what motivations can invocation of, say, religious identities serve to be divisive, "in that it makes it possible for us to view others as "different" and, hence, prevent us from seeing the

common humanity we all share? What consequences then follow? These questions are raised for discussion, but quick and simplistic answers are not offered, given that this is neither possible nor desirable.

As I see it, the present need for interfaith dialogue is embedded in the anticipation of an end result that eliminates, if not diminishes the possibilities of religious conflict and tension (Smart, 1991). The idea of achieving a situation of religious harmony[20] – an outcome of religious encounters – is deemed highly desirable.

The year 2001 has been designated by the United Nations as a year for promoting dialogue among civilizations. In a refreshing piece, Afrasiabi critiques Huntington's thesis of the "clash of civilizations[1]" by arguing in a diametrically opposite mode, and proposes an "alternative perspective identified as 'civilizational parallelism'" (1999: 114) which perceives cultural and religious differences as non-threatening to various civilizations (1999: 114-115). Differences – religious and others – can and have been politicized. Afrasiabi imagines the possibility of retaining parallel differences in a mode of equality. His position is quite different from that of Todorov (1982), who wonders if difference and equality are at all compatible or feasible, arguing instead that difference seems more easily aligned with hierarchy, inequality and hegemony, at least since the 1500s, in the context of global historical encounters.

Concluding Thoughts

Where do these thoughts take discussions of religious pluralism and religious harmony? In an ideal configuration, religious differences could be retained, and even celebrated and valourized, without the felt need for consensus and total agreement on all or even fundamental issues, but with equality and legitimacy accorded to all positions, and without being hegemonic and divisive. At an individual, personal level, this does happen, and we could all furnish anecdotal evidence to claim this as a reality already. The challenge, however, is to enable this at a structural and communal level.

My argument has been that both the overwhelming emphasis on differences amongst communities and individuals on the basis of religious identities, and the fact that "religions" exist in a wider societal and global context that is defined by hegemonic relations of different kinds, means that an authentic, non-divisive, non-judgemental stance towards "others" does remain an ideal. In that sense, interfaith dialogue for me is not about providing more or different kinds of information about religions to the "ignorant"; knowledge per se is not the solution. Instead, an honest exchange among religious communities that addresses the field

of hierarchies and inequalities within which religions are also embedded, and one that generates and sustains chauvinisms, stereotypes and prejudices, would be a step in the right direction.

Notes
1. A copy of the course syllabus is appended.
2. Distinctions between religious diversity and religious pluralism have been made by some. For example, Wiggins favours the use of "religious diversity" over "religious pluralism" for the following reason:

    ... the word diversity emphasizes differences from which some learning can occur, whereas pluralism conveys residual confidence in some deep underlying commonality that one too often minimizes differences or dismisses them as unimportant (Wiggins, 1996: ix).

    While I find this position thought-provoking, I will not engage the issues here. But I do take the point that terminologies are not simply descriptors but do carry an evaluative dimension.
3. A name that is immediately associated with this field is that of Max Mueller, who is viewed as a pioneering figure in initiating comparative, cross-cultural work in languages and religions (Sharpe, 1983).
4. Here are some concepts and dichotomies that have structured the categorization of different religions: the notion of theism (with its variants – monotheism, polytheism, henotheism), and the dichotomy of monism and dualism. Using these frames, religious traditions have been placed into pre-existing categories. This scholarly exercise has by now, I would argue, even pervaded common sense understandings of specific religions. Thus, it is common knowledge that Christianity is a monotheistic religion and Hinduism is polytheistic.
5. In the course of teaching, I demonstrate the problematic effects of naming and labelling with respect to a detailed historical account of the label "Hinduism."
6. Sharpe (1983) notes the definitive role of Charles Darwin's publication of *Origin of Species*, and, hence, of the idea of 'evolution' in formulating the logic of the field of "comparative religion."
7. That the nature of Western scholarship, particularly in theorizing "other" cultures, has been shaped by the presumption that Western/European realities are the norm is abundantly clear by now (Said, 1976; Turner, 1991), in the face of orientalist and postcolonial critiques. In fact, the currency of the phrase "Judeo-Christian" rather than "Judeo-Christian-Islamic" religious traditions again becomes a way of asserting differences, and has the effect of exclusion and non-recognition of similarities. It is clear that these three religious traditions share important historical links as well as theological overlaps (Turner, 1991).
8. By "different" religious communities, I refer not only to conventionally defined named and labelled religious traditions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism (World Religions), etc., but more importantly, to the varieties, strands and interpretations of these broadly identified faiths. We have strong evidence from Singapore that these internal varieties do exist and find adherents in Singapore. (For some examples of intrareligious diversity in Singapore, please see Mariam Mohd Ali, 1989; Vineeta Sinha, 1987; Vivienne Wee, 1978).
9. In the case of Singapore (which is by no means unique), multireligiosity in the sense of having adherents of different faiths is a reality not just at the level of groups and communities, but also at the level of households. There is plenty of evidence that it is quite common for Singaporean households, which normally house families and kin groups, to include individuals who belong to different religions. For example, in a household that has, say, three generations living under the same roof, all three generations might have different religious identities. So,

households here are by no means religiously homogeneous. Even within a nuclear family setup, the adult parents and siblings might adhere to different religions. These ethnographic data are supported by recent studies of religious conversions and religious switching in Singapore on a larger scale (Tamney and Hassan, 1987).

10. I deal more fully with the details leading up to the passing of the *Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act* in another paper "Making Sense of Religious Pluralism and Religious Harmony: The Evidence from Singapore," *Italian Review,* 2001.

11. It is significant that there are already several pieces of legislation that can potentially be invoked ro handle instances of religious discord. These are rhe Internal Security Act, Sedition Act and the Penal Code. Proponents of new legislation argued, however, that this existing legislation was too disproportionate and severe, thus, the need for a more appropriate law to deal more effectively with those who incited feelings of religious animosity, etc.

12. The government's reading of the internal religious scene in Singapore was supported by various reports by the Internal Security Department and the Ministry of Community Development, which involved input from academics who are social scientists.

13. The government's Feedback Unit initiated and held a discussion among 20 representatives of major religious, clan and cultural organizations in Singapore on 17 May 1989. Participants at the session agreed that religious harmony must be preserved and interreligious interaction regulated, but were not in agreement that the proposed legislation was the way to ensure this (*The Straits Times,* 18 May 1989).

14. It is interesting that the proposed Bill elicited responses not just from within Singapore but also across the Causeway, from Malaysia. *The Straits Times* in Singapore carried an article that reported the reactions of opposition Parti Islam (PAS) to the Bill. PAS had "expressed reservations over the proposed set of laws" and urged "the government to enforce the proposed laws with cautions that religious freedom and legitimate missionary work would not be affected" (*The Straits Times, 9* January 1990, p. 3).

15. This has certainly been my own personal experience via the contact I have with undergraduates while teaching a 3rd year module "Religion in Society and Culture." In the assigned tutorials on the subject of religious pluralism and religious tensions, I notice that the vocabulary that is most easily available to my students in describing the religious scene in Singapore is one that emphasizes its positive, tolerant and harmonious facets. Most of these undergraduates do not seem to be able to talk freely, and without awkwardness, about religious tensions, let alone admit any prejudices or complaints they may have about "other" religions. After some prodding and encouragement though, the floodgates open and we have lively, if heated, discussions about how people "really" feel about "other" religions.

16. It would be "easier," in fact, to write a piece on religious harmony in Singapore. The evidence is everywhere. Here, I provide a select listing: In 1994, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) planned to launch several programmes to promote religious harmony. These included monthly talks on comparative religion to facilitate better understanding among religious communities. In 1993, a series of "Know Our Community Heritage Tours" as part of "Community Day" saw the participation of 1,700 Singaporeans of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Some examples of the programme included visits to temples, mosques and churches. Various community centres located in different parts of the island have their own strategies to promote interreligious harmony, for example, visits to different places of worship or even to homes within the constituency. Other examples include the close proximity of places of worship of different faiths. By now, names like Waterloo and Bencoolen Streets (where one finds that a synagogue, a Catholic church, a Hindu temple, a Muslim mosque and

a Chinese temple are neighbours), Commonwealth Drive (where a Hindu temple and a Catholic Church are neighbours) and the Hock Huat Keng Temple (where Taoists and Hindus worship together within the same compound) are well-known and cited as evidence of interreligious harmony. The latter is probably the only temple on the island where one finds deities of both the Chinese and Hindu pantheons under the same roof, and worshipped by the same devotees. The management staff and religious leaders of the temple note with pride this harmonious coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups (*The* Straits Times, 20 April 1998).

17. I also provided examples from other places where these connections occur. The case of Lebanon is instructive, where Muslims and Christians negotiate their religious differences and where "religion is not the locus of contrasted difference, but of negotiated difference, thanks to the multiple participation in transreligious celebrations" (Kanafani-Zahar, 2000: 146).

18. I find Benjamin's (1987) formulation and elaboration of the modes of orientation very relevant and insightful for theorizing religious traditions. The four ideal types he notes are transcendental, immanent, dialectical and Zen. These signify relations between the self and the other, and patterns of social interaction amongst them, and allow me to talk across communities that are conventionally defined as "different."

19. As with Seligman (1999), I raise the question: is there evidence for "concern that religious identities will serve as obstacles to tolerance, understanding and respectful coexistence"? (p. 50)

20. Religious encounters can culminare in a variety of eventualities: religious tolerance, religious syncretism, religious harmony or religious conflict. Neither tolerance, syncretism nor conflict are desirable options. On the question of religious tolerance, I agree with King (1976: 9) that "There is something intolerable about the concept of tolerance." He continues,

> ... to tolerate, generally means to endure, suffer or put up with a person, activity, idea or organization of which or whom one does not really approve. One can 'put up with' an item both when we can and cannot do anything about it ... an agent will be said to be 'tolerant' of an item where the item is objected to – whether disliked or disapproved – and is yet voluntarily endured (p. 22).

The idea of syncretism, as Peter van der Veer notes, refers to the "borrowing, affirmation, or integration of concepts, symbols or practices of one religious tradition into another by a process of selection and reconciliation" (Berlin, 1980: 9, quoted in van der Veer, 1994: 196). But the term itself is neither "transparent" nor simply "descriptive" (Ibid.: 196). The notion of "supposedly equal theological viewpoints" (Ibid.: 196) being put together is, further, not tenable. In my view, syncretism is ultimately a political act that does not facilitate an equal acceptance of world views but is rather the domination by some, and marginalization and incorporation of other weaker positions. Is genuine religious harmony possible in view of questions of universal and singular truths, and the claims of different religions to these?

References

Afrasiabi, Kaveh L. (1999). "From the 'Clash of Civilizations' to 'Civilizational Parallelism'," *Telos,* 115, Spring, pp. 109-116.

Benjamin, Geoffrey (1987). "Notes on the Deep Sociology of Religion," Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, Working Paper Series, No. 85.

Constitution of the Republic of Singapore. Republic of Singapore.

Jones, Charles B. (1999). "The Necessity of Religious Diversity," *Studies in Religion,* 28, 4, pp. 403-417.

Jurgensmeyer, Mark, ed. (1991). *Teaching the Introductory Course in Religious Studies.* Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Kanafani-Zahar, Aida (2000). "Relational Pluralism between Christians and Muslims in Lebanon: The Emergence of a Space of 'Relative Laicization'," *Archives-de-sciences-sociales-des-religions,* 45, 109, January-March, pp. 118-147.

King, Preston (1976). *Toleration.* London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.

Kuo, Eddie C.Y. and Quah, Jon S.T. (1988). *Religion in Singapore: Report of a National Survey.* Report prepared for the Ministry of Community Development, Singapore.

Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. Republic of Singapore, 1990.

Mariam Mohd Ali (1989). "Uniformity and Diversity among Muslims in Singapore," M. Soc. Sci. dissertation, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

Puru Shotam, Nirmala (1998). *Negotiating Language, Constructing Race: Disciplining Difference in Singapore.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Quah, Jon S.T. (1987). *Religion and Religious Conversion in Singapore: A Review of the Literature.* Report prepared for the Ministry of Community Development, Singapore.

Seligman, Adam B. (1999). "Toleration and Religious Tradition," *Society,* 36, 5 (241), July-August, pp. 47-53.

Sharpe, Eric (1983). *Comparative Religion: A History.* 2nd Ed., Illinois: Open Court.

Sinha, Vineeta (1987). 'Hinduism in Singapore: A Sociological and Ethnographic Perspective," M. Soc. Sci. dissertation, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

_____ (2001). "Making Sense of Religious Pluralism and Religious Harmony: The Evidence from Singapore," *Italian Review.*

Smart, Ninian (1960). *World Religions: A Dialogue.* Hammondsport: Penguin Books.

_____ (1991). "Teaching 'Religion' and 'Religions': The 'World Religions' Course," in Mark Jurgensmeyer, ed. *Teaching the Introductoy Course in Religiow Studies.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, pp. 7-14.

_____ (1995). "The Scientific Study of Religion in its Plurality," in Frank Whaling, ed. *Theory and Method in Religious Studies: Contemporary pproaches to the Study of Religion.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 177-190.

Stewart, Charles and Shaw, Rosalind, eds. (1994). *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis.* London and New York: Routledge.

Tamney, Joseph and Hassan, Riaz (1987). *Religious Switching in Singapore: A Study of Religious Mobility.* Singapore: Select Books.

The Straits Times. Singapore.

Tiwari, Kedar Nath (1983). *Comparative Religion.* Delhi: Motilal Banarasidass.

Todorov, Tzvetan (1982). *The Conquest of America.* New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Tong Chee Kiong (1988). *Trends in Traditional Chinese Religion in Singapore.* Report prepared for the Ministry of Community Development, Singapore.

————— (1989). *Religious Conversion and Revivalism: A Study of Christianity in Singapore.* Report prepared for Ministry of Community Development, Singapore.

Turner, Bryan (1991). *Religion and Social Theory.* 2nd Ed., New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 15-37.

Waardenburg, Jacques (1998). "Religious Pluralism and Citizenship," *Encounters,* 4, 2, September, pp. 123-135.

Warner, Stephen R. (1998). "Approaching Religious Diversity: Barriers, Byways and Beginnings," *Sociology of Religion,* 59, 3, Fall, pp. 193-215.

Weber, Max (1969 [1915]). "Major Features of World Religions," in Roland Robertson, ed. *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 19-41.

Wee, Vivienne (1978). "Religion and Ritual among the Chinese of Singapore: An Ethnographic Study," M. Soc. Sci. dissertation, Department of Sociology, University of Singapore.

Whaling, Frank, ed. (1995). *Theory and Method in Religious Studies: Contempora y Approaches to the Study of Religion.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

White Paper on Maintenance of Religious Harmony Bill, presented to Parliament by Command of The President of the Republic of Singapore, 1989.

Wiggins, James B. (1996). *In Praise of Religious Diversity.* New York and London: Routledge.

Van der Veer, Peter (1994). "Syncretism, Multiculturalism and the Discourse of Tolerance," in Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw, eds. *Syncretism/Anti-syncretism: The Politics of Religious Synthesis.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 196-211.

Appendix

SC 3208: RELIGION IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Session 2001-2002: Semester I

This module on religion in society and culture has historical, theoretical and substantive dimensions. It begins by problematizing the taken-for-grantedness of the category "religion" and traces its emergence historically as an analytical domain, vis-à-vis other categories such as "science" and "magic." The material is organized to introduce the multiple, complex and sometimes opposing strands in the huge literature on sociological approaches to the study of religion. Apart from a brief and select survey of this field, there is an emphasis on critiquing some elements of these received traditions to identify problematics (e.g. universalism, orientalism, androcentrism, etc.) within and to seek ways of moving beyond them.

A second, major component of the module addresses issues arising from empirical and ethnographic accounts of religion. Our aim is to understand religion as a social institution while paying equal attention to the realm of individual experience and practice. To this end, the logic of the module encourages students to actively and freely draw upon their own lived experiences of "religiosity" and/ or lack of it in order to dialogue with and challenge the theoretical and empirical material offered. To make sense of "living religions" in varied sociocultural and political contexts, a number of substantive themes have been chosen: multireligiosity and pluralism; encounters between and within religious orientations; religion, state and politics; religion, modernity and secularization; the emergence of new religious movements; invention of religious traditions; religion, technology and cyberspace.

Lecture 1 (30 July 2001)
Housekeeping matters
Overall introduction to the module

Part I: Issues in Studying "Religion"'

Lecture 2 (6 August 2001)
Problematizing the category "religion"
Isolating "magic" from "science" from "religion"
Europeanizing "religiosity"

Readings:

Malinowski, Bronislaw (1925). *Magic, Science and Religion and Other Essays.* Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, pp. 1-71.

Tambiah, Stanley (1984). *Magic, Science, Religion and Rationality.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-32.

Lecture 3 (6 August 2001)

Making "religion" an object of intellectual investigation: Theorizing "religion"

Etymology of the term "religion"

Emergence of "religion" as a category of analysis

Readings:

Asad, Talal (1993). *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam.* Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, pp. 27-54.

Worsley, Peter (1969 [1966]). "Religion as a Category," in Roland Robertson, ed. *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 221-236.

Surveying the Field

Lecture 4 (13 August 2001)

Demarcating and bounding the "religious" domain

a) Problems of definition

b) Methodological issues

Readings:

Berger, Peter and Luckmann, Thomas (1969 [1963]). "Sociology of Religion and Sociology of Knowledge," in Roland Robertson, ed. *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 61-74.

Geertz, Clifford (1968). "Religion as a Cultural System," in Michael Banton, ed. *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion.* London: Tavistock Publications, pp. 1-45.

Lecture 5 (13 August 2001)

Sociologizing Religion: "Sociology of Religion" as a domain of inquiry

Religion, culture, society: intersections

Empirical, scientific accounts of religion

Readings:

Wach, Joachim (1944). *Sociology of Religion*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-17.

Robertson, Roland (1970). *The Sociological Interpretation of Religion*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 7-33.

Critiquing Received Traditions

Lecture 6 (20 August 2001)
World Religions and the Comparative Sociology of Religions: Survey of the Field
World religions/"other" religions
Comparative religion

Readings:

Weber, Max (1969 [1915]). "Major Features of World Religions," in Roland Robertson, ed. *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 19-41.

Sharpe, Eric (1983). *Comparative Religion:* A *History.* 2nd Ed., Illinois: Open Court, pp. 27-46.

Lecture 7 (20 August 2001)
World Religions and the Comparative Sociology of Religions: Problematics
Methodological and Substantive Limitations
a) Universalist notion of religion
b) Orientalist critique
c) Androcentric critique

Readings:

Carroll, Michael P. (1996). "Stark Realities and Eurocentric/Androcentric Bias in the Sociology of Religion," *Sociology of Religion*, 57, 3, pp. 225-239.

Almond, Philip C. (1996). "The Heathen in His Blindness?" *Cultural Dynamics,* 8, 2, pp. 137-145.

Turner, Bryan (1991). *Religion and Social Theory.* 2nd Ed., New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp. 15-37.

Lecture 8 (27 August 2001)
Extending the Androcentric Critique
Religion as gendered

Readings:

King, Ursula (1995). "Introduction," in Ursula King, ed. *Religion and Gender.* Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 1-38.

Wallace, Ruth A. (1997). "The Mosaic of Research on Religion: Where are the Women?1995 Presidential Address," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 36, 1, pp. 1-12.

Lecture 9 (27 August 2001)
Religion *and* Patriarchy: **An** Assessment
Contributions from feminist theorizing
Patriarchal elements of religions in practice

Readings:

Wallace, Ruth A. (1996). "Feminist Theory in North America: New Insights for the Sociology of Religion," *Social Compass,* 43, *4,* pp. 467-479.

Young, Katherine K. (1987). "Introduction," in Arvind Sharma, ed. *Women in World Religions.* New York: State University of New York Press, pp. 1-35.

Part **II:** Shifting Frames – Where do we go from here?

The Realm of Practice and Experience

Lecture 10 (10 September 2001)
(a) Phenomenological Perspectives
The realm of individual religious experience
The place of the non-rational in religion

Readings:

James, William (1941 [1901-02]). *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature.* London: Longmans, Green & Co., pp. 53-77, 485-519.

Otto, Rudolfo (1923). *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational.* London: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-25, 112-117, 175-178.

Movie: Watch *The Sixth Sense*

Lecture 11 (10 September 2001)
(b) Religion, symbols and communication
Religiosity and meaning
The human foundation of religiosity

Readings:
Van Baal, J. (1971). *Symbols for Communication: An Introduction to the Anthropological Study of Religion.* Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp., pp. 214-241.
Polanyi, Michael (1975). "Personal Knowledge" and "Acceptance of Religion" in his *Meaning.* Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 22-45, 149-160.

Lecture 12 (17 September 2001)
(c) Religious orientations not "religions"
Core of a religious orientation
Modes of coherence

Readings:
Benjamin, Geoffrey (1990). "Notes on the Deep Sociology of Religion," unpublished manuscript.

Unity and Diversity in *Religious* Orientations

Lecture 13 (17 September 2001)
(a) Conceptualising Religious Diversity and Pluralism
Frameworks, typologies and dichotomies

Readings:
Ludwig, Theodore M. (1987). "Monotheism," in Mircea Eliade, ed. *Encyclopaedia of Religion.* Vol. 10, New York: Macmillan, pp. 68-76.
Bellah, Robert (1965). "Religious Evolution," in William Lessa and Evon Vogt, eds. *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach.* 2nd Ed., London: Harper & Row Publishers, pp. 73-87.

Lecture 14 (24 September 2001)
(b) Named "religions": Sameness and Difference
Text, interpretations and practices
Deconstructing "religions"

Readings:

Sharma, Arvind (1986). "'What is Hinduism!' A Sociological Approach," *Social Compass*, 33, 2-3, pp. 177-183.

Sinha, Vineeta (1997). "Unpacking the Labels 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' in Singapore," *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 25, 2, pp. 139-160.

Lecture 15 *(24 September 2001)*
Encounters between and within religious orientations
Theorising "religious pluralism"/multi-religiosity
"Internal" religious diversity

Readings:

Mariam Mohd Ali (1990). "Uniformity and Diversity among Muslims in Singapore,"M. Soc. Sci. thesis, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore.

Mullan, David George (1998). *Religious Pluralism in the West.* Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 317-345.

Religions in Transformation: What are the Possibilities?

Lecture 16 (I *October 2001)*
Religion and Politics: Separate and Mutually Exclusive Domains?
Church-state separation
Religion and secularism
Sovereignty, territoriality and legitimacy of the nation-state

Readings:

Basu, Amrita (1998). "Appropriating Gender," in PatriciaJeffrey and Amrita Basu, eds. *Appropriating Gender.* New York: Routledge, pp. 3-14.

Riis, Ole (1998). "Religion Re-emerging: The Role of Religion in Legitimating Integration and Power in Modern Societies," *International Sociology,* 13, 2, pp. 249-272.

Wuthnow, Robert (1991). "Understanding Religion and Politics," *Daedalus*, 120, 3, pp. 1-20.

Lecture 17 *(1 October* 2001)
Religion and Modernity: The End of Religion?
The "disgodding" of Nature
The Re-enchantment of the World

Readings:

Berman, Morris (1981). *The Re-enchantment of the World.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp. 25-65.

Lee, Raymond (1992). "The Structuration of Disenchantment: Secular Agency and the Reproduction of Religion,"*Journal of Theory of Social Behaviour,* 22, 4, pp. 381-402.

Lecture 18 (8 October 2001)
Religion in a Secular World
The secularization thesis
Religiosity = Church-based religion?

Readings:

Tschannen, Olivier (1991). "The Secularization Paradigm: A Systematization," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 30, 4, pp. 395-415.

Wilson, Bryan (1969). "Religion in Secular Society," in Roland Robertson, ed. *Sociology of Religion: Selected Readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp. 152-162.

Lecture 19 (8 October 2001)
Revisiting the Secularization Thesis
(a) Religion and the "private sphere"
(b) "Civil" religion

Readings:

Luckmann, Thomas (1967). *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society.* London: Collier-Macmillan, pp. 69-76, 107-114.

Greely, Andrew (1972). *Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion.* New York: Delta, pp. 17-54.

Bellah, Robert (1967). "Civil Religion in America," in his *Beyond Belief Essays on Religion in a Post-traditional World.* New York: Harper & Row.

Lecture 20 (15 October 2001)
Repackaging of Traditional Religions
Invention of Tradition
Revitalization Movements

Readings:

Giri, Ananta (1994). "Religious Resurgence in Contemporary United States: A View from India," *Sociological Bulletin,* 43, 2, pp. 177-192.

Wittberg, Patricia *(1997)*. "Deep Structures in Community Cultures: The Revival of Religious Orders in Roman Catholicism," *Sociology of Religion, 58, 3,* pp. *239-259.*

Waxman, Chaim I. (1992). "Are America's Jews Experiencing a Religious Revival?" *Qualitative Sociology, 15, 2,* pp. *203-211.*

Lecture 21 (15 October 2001)
New Religious Movements
Globalization and religiosity
Religious conversions and switching

Readings:
Beyer, Peter *(1994). Religion and Globalization.* London: Sage, pp. *70-108.*
Melton, Gordon *(1995).* "The Changing Scene of New Religious Movements: Observations from a Generation of Research," *Social Compass, 42, 2,* pp. *265-276.*
Robbins, Thomas *(1999).* "'Quo Vadis' the Scientific Study of New Religious Movements?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* pp. *515-522.*

Lecture 22 (22 October 2001)
Religion *and* **"Technology"**
Much ado about nothing?
Recasting religiosity through technology?

Readings:
Cobb, Jennifer J. *(1998). Cybergrace: The Search of God in the Digital World.* New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., pp. 34-45, 73-85, *121*-125, 234-239.

Lecture 23 (22 October 2001)
Responding to *and* **Appropriating Technology**
What is the evidence?
Religion and Cyberspace

Readings:
Zaleski, Jeff *(1997). The Soul of Cyberspace.* San Francisco: HarperEdge.
Waters, Sarah *(1997).* "Ghosting the Interface: Cyberspace and Spiritualism," *Science as Culture, 6, 3,* pp. *414-443.*

Lecture 24 (29 October 2001)
Review Lecture

14
The Role of the Human Sciences in the
Dialogue among Civilizations*
Syed Farid Alatas

Islam, the West and September 11

Despite the fact that the attack of September 11 was not an attack by Islam against the West, it is often portrayed as such. Within hours of the attack, people were likening the attack to Pearl Harbor, as if to equate Muslims with those Japanese. Days later, Bush spoke of getting Osama bin Laden dead or alive, even though there was no definite proof that Osama bin Laden was the culprit. In line with pushing the imagery further back into the past, President Bush referred to the war against terrorism as a crusade. Although some claim that the President did not have in mind a holy war and that he was using the term in a general sense as used in everyday language, the term "crusade" is as much misunderstood in the Muslim world as *jihad* is in the West. For the record, he regretted the use of the term "crusade" and went on to clarify that Islam is a religion of peace not to be associated with terrorism.

Nevertheless, Muslims before and after September 11 are also convinced that the West is against them to the extent that media reports of Muslims and Arabs, Hollywood's trafficking of Arab and Muslim stereotypes, and the writings of Orientalist-type journalists – that is, the demonization of Islam – influence public opinion in the United States and elsewhere in the world. The Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi did not help matters when he said in Berlin that "we should be conscious of the superiority of our civilization,"' or when Alex Standish, editor of *Janes' Intelligence* Digest, said on BBC's Hardtalk that Islam is a military religion.[2]

We also have to consider the element of historical consciousness. Islam has been in conflict with the West since the 8th century. First, there was the conquest of Spain and Sicily. The Arabs were in Spain for 700 years and in Sicily for 500 years. Then, there were about 200 years of the so-called Crusades. Some centuries later, the Ottomans threatened to overrun Europe, making their way to Vienna.

---

* This chapter draws heavily from my previous papers. See Alatas, 2002; 2003.

Even after the ascendancy of Europe and then America, Muslim civilization continued to constitute a threat and a problem in the form of anti-colonial and other types of movements following political independence. Therefore, the feeling of animosity and threat is deep-seated both in the West and among Muslims.[3] These feelings have been exacerbated by the war against Iraq.

In the midst of all of this, there is a discourse of misrepresentation. Let me give two examples, which have to do with the trap of dichotomies. One is the moderate versus the extremist Muslim. The dichotomy is a creation in the minds of politicians and journalists and does not have an empirical referent. Yet, this dichotomy functions to "educate" the public that moderate and by extension, less strict Muslims, are the good Muslims while extremist and, therefore, stricter Muslims are the ones prone to evil. Nothing can be further from the truth. There is actually no correlation between strictness of religious belief and the propensity for terrorist activity. For example, in the handwritten document that the FBI says it found in the luggage of Mohamed Atta, the suspected suicide bomber from Egypt, was written "… in the name of God, of myself, and of my family" – something no Muslim, however irreligious, would ever write. I believe that a study of the biography of terrorists of different religious backgrounds will reveal different levels of religiosity even though the acts of terrorism may have been committed in the name of religion.

Another problematic dichotomy is that of modern Muslims who regard the United States as a benign power versus anti-modern Muslims who regard the United States as a malevolent power, as if to say a Muslim could not be both modern and highly critical of United States' foreign policy at the same time. In a recent report in Singapore's *The Sunday Times,* the same faulty misconception is applied, this time not in reference to Islam. The story is of an Indian national who murdered his Singaporean wife of Indian origin. The story revolved around the man as being traditional and religious while the woman was cosmopolitan and liberal. Within a year of their marriage, he stabbed her to death and was sentenced to 10 years jail and 15 strokes of the cane *(The Sunday Times, 17* March 2002).

The need for dialogue is, therefore, clear. What can we do to prepare for and engage in dialogue? The human sciences have a role to play in both public discourse as well as in formal education. There is a need for more balanced media reports that cover, for example, all suffering around the world; anti-war protests in the United States and Europe; sane voices from within the Muslim world; cooperation, respect and love between Muslims and non-Muslims, and so on. Americans need to know that most Muslims are not scruffy-looking Kalashnikov-wielding warmongers, and Muslims need to know that most Americans are not "tough guy," redneck, cowboy types.

The Problem of Eurocentrism

The human sciences must go beyond merely correcting the fallacies and distortions in public discourse. It must attack the root of the problem, that is, the problem of Eurocentrism (as well as other types of ethnocentrism) in social science education, which ultimately informs public discourse. In this chapter, I will focus on Eurocentrism.

I would like to illustrate the problem of Eurocentrism with recourse to the example of the concept of religion, for which I draw from the work of Joachim Matthes (2000). This concerns the translation of cultural terms, such as religion, into scientific concepts. Social scientific concepts originate from cultural terms used in everyday language. As such, they present problems when brought into scientific discourse and used to talk about areas and periods outside of their original contexts. The result is a distortion of the phenomena that they are applied to.

The Latin *religio,* from which the English term "religion" is derived, was a collective term that referred to diverse practices and cults in and around Rome prior to the emergence of Christianity. When Rome became Christian, Christianity became the dominant belief and all other beliefs were absorbed or eliminated. But *religio* was not applied to Christianity as there was no need to – it was the only legitimate belief, so it was simply known as the Church. With Luther and the Protestant Reformation, *religio* referred to Christian beliefs and a way of life separate from the institution of the Catholic Church. It was in opposition to the clergy, that is, it was the layman's religion. In 1593, the French philosopher Jean Bodin published his *Colloquium Heptaplomeres (Colloquium of the Seven about the Secrets of the Sublime).* In this text, there was a generalized understanding of religion that included non-Christian faiths. By the 18th century, "religion" came to be used as a scientific concept, referring to belief systems other than Christianity.

While "religion" meant all beliefs, European scholars who wrore about religion critically had in mind Protestantism (as in Marx's reference to religion as the opiate of the intellectuals) or the institutional religion (Catholicism), as opposed to the religion of the believers (Protestants).

When "religion" is applied to beliefs other than Christianity for example. Islam or Hinduism, there is an implicit or explicit comparison with Christianity which results in an omission of reality. According to Matthes, the logic o comparison is such that the two things to be compared are subsumed under third unit that is at a higher unit of abstraction. For example, apples and peal arc subsumed under fruit. "Fruit" becomes the *tertium comparationi* Similarly, Christianity and Islam are subsumed under religion. The proble with this is that the characteristics of religion are, to begin with, derived fro

dominance that North American academics themselves exercise over academics elsewhere (Saberwal, 1968: 10).

Despite an awareness of the state of the human sciences in India over all these decades, J.P. Singh Uberoi's indictment of foreign aid is as relevant today as it was in 1968:

> The existing system of foreign aid in science, to which the internationalist notion of collaboration lends credence, in truth upholds the system of foreign dominance in all matters of scientific and professional life and organization. It is nothing but the satellite system, with an added subsidy. It subordinates the national science of the poor to the narional and international science of the rich. It confirms our dependence and helplessness and will not end them (Singh Uberoi, 1968: 120).

According to Sabenval (1968: 13), the "dependence on North American sponsors is pathetic; its consequences for problem selection, research design, and modes of publication are disastrous." The need, therefore, for alternative discourses in India was keenly felt and did result in a critical tradition of scholarship in the social sciences and historical studies. One has only to mention the early example of Subaltern Studies to realize this.

Another interesting example to bring up comes from Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World* (1919). Tagore challenged commonplace notions and attempted to transcend ideas founded on an East-West dichotomy. An example of his undermining, or calling into question, this dichotomy can be seen in *The Home and the World*. While this is a work of fiction, it serves to also function as a theoretical reflection on history. Standard Marxist accounts would tend to view the aristocrat as oppressive and seeking to advance the interests of the old order, while the patriot and nationalist may be portrayed in a more positive and progressive light. It is partly for this reason that, as Ashis Nandy (1994: 15-16) points out, Ceorg Lukacs' review of *The Home and the World* (1983) was highly unfavourable, being based on a Eurocentric Marxist reading of Tagore.

Teaching in the Spirit of Alternative Discourses: Preparation for Dialogue among Civilizations

It is in the spirit of the critical tradition of alternative discourses – a traditior that is conscious of the problems of Eurocentrism – that a colleague and I, botl lecturers at the National University of Singapore, have tried to introduce it int our teaching. I am not suggesting that no other colleagues in Singapore draw froi

teaching of sociological theory at the university.

What do the ideas of Marx, Weber and Durkheim from almost two centuries ago, and a different cultural milieu have to do with the non-European regions of the world today? The critique of the social sciences that emanated from academic institutions in Asia, Africa and Latin America tended to remain at an abstract and reflexive level. There had been several thoughtful pieces on the state of the various disciplines, raising the issue of the lack of connectedness between social science and the societies in which it is taught. The calls to decolonize the social sciences were generally not manifested at the level of teaching in the social sciences.

Given this scenario, my colleague, Vineeta Sinha, and I have attempted to deal with the issue of teaching sociological theory by way of a more universalistic approach to the study of sociological theory. This includes raising the question of whether sociological theorizing had been employed outside of the bounds of European modernity. This would imply changes in sociology theory curricula. We have been experimenting with various approaches entailing changes in the way sociological theory is taught. Some interesting results came out of such changes, which we had reported in the journal *Teaching Sociology* (Alatas and Sinha, 2001).

These changes involved, among other things, introducing Asian thinkers who, like nineteenth-century European scholars, were grappling with similar problems of social change and emerging modernity. For example, the works of Ibn Khaldun, Rammohun Roy, Jose Rizal and Benoy Kumar Sarkar were taught in addition to those of Marx, Weber and Durkheim. We are also planning to introduce the ideas of East Asian thinkers such as the Japanese, Ogyu Sorai (1666-1728) (see Najita, 1998).

I followed a similar logic in another course I taught, "Development and Social Change." The aim of this course was to understand the different reasons for peoples' lives in so many parts of the world being affected in one way or another by poverty, income inequality, low levels of education, corruption, political oppression, and other features of underdevelopment. The complexity of the development process can be grasped from the multitude of explanations that have emerged since the nineteenth century and include those from India such as from D. Naoroji, who wrote at the turn of the last century (1962 [1901]) and the Indian Marxist M.N. Roy (1971 [1922]).

The purpose behind such changes to courses or curricula lies in the need to educate people about the multicultural origins of modern civilization, about the contributions of the Muslims, Indians and Chinese to modern Europe, about the positive aspects of all these civilizations, and about the common values and problems that humanity shares. A course on world religions should be introduced to schools. Children should not be learning only about their own religions but

about all religions. Apart from having such a subject, the theme of interreligious experience can be reflected in other subjects such as social studies, literature, geography and history. All this would require a serious reassessment of the curricula in schools and universities.

The relative autonomy that university professors enjoy puts us in a position to make such changes in the courses that we teach, even if the entire curricula cannot be revamped along these lines. In addition to the two courses mentioned above, I have attempted to put into practice some themes that I believe should inform the dialogue among civilizations, in a course entitled "Islam and Contemporary Muslim Civilizations."

This is an introductory course to Muslim civilization. Emphasis is on the historical, cultural and social context of the emergence and development of Islam, and the great diversity that exists in the Muslim world, from Morocco in the west to Indonesia in the east. The course is divided into five sections. The first, consisting of two lectures, provides an introduction to the study of civilizations in general, defines Islam as belief and practice, creed and civilization, and briefly discusses the origins of Islam. The next set of lectures discusses the spread of Islam and the encounter between Islam and the West in the past. This part of the course introduces the major cultural areas within Muslim civilization, that is, the Arab, Persian, Ottoman, Moghul, and Malay cultures, and covers topics such as the Muslim conquest of Spain and Sicily, the Crusades, and the Islamization of Southeast Asia. The third part of the course examines the cultural dimension of Muslim civilization, with particular emphasis on the religious and rational sciences that developed among the Arabs and Persians, their contact with Greek heritage, and the impact that Islam had on medieval European philosophy and science. Also discussed in this part of the course are the literary and artistic dimensions of Muslim civilization. The fourth part of the course focuses on current issues in the contemporary period (post-World War II). Particular emphasis is given to the emergence of Orientalism in Europe and the Islamic response to it. This section also provides an overview of the political economy of the Muslim world, setting the stage for discussions on a number of contemporary problems and issues such as gender, underdevelopment, Islamic revivalism and imperialism.

All this seems a lot to cover in one course. It would be if the objective of the course was to impart knowledge of the facts and events concerning Islam as a civilization, but this is not the dominant aim of the course. The main objective is to bring students to an understanding of what I understand as the three central themes of the study of civilizations:

I. *Intercivilizational encounters*. The study of Islam is one case of encounter

between civilizations. As Islam was the only civilization to have conquered the West and to be in continuous conflict with West, it is important that people be introduced to the idea that such civilizational encounters are not always negative. The Crusades, for example, resulted in many scientific and cultural exchanges between the Muslims and the Europeans.

2. *Multicultural origins of modernity.* Modern civilization is usually defined in Western terms, but many aspects of modern civilization – including the sciences, the arts, cuisine, commercial techniques, and so on – come from Islam and other civilizations. The university is a fine example. The notion of the university as a degree-granting institution of learning was developed and put into practice by the Muslims by the tenth century, and adopted by the Europeans in the thirteenth century. This includes the idea of the hierarchy of teachers and scholars, the idea of a chair (professorship), and the idea of the degree (Makdisi, 1980). When we add to this the examination system developed by the Chinese, we have the modern university.

3. *The variety of points of view.* The study of Islann provides us with an opportunity to experience a multiplicity of perspectives, from which any one fact or event can be viewed. For example, most works on the Crusades provide accounts from the point of view of the European crusaders. The perspective of Muslims who fought the crusaders and then lived amongst them when European soldiers settled in and around the Holy Land between Crusades, is instructive as it helps complete the picture of an otherwise fragmented reality. Another example of this concerns the *hijab* or head covering worn by many Muslim women. While in some settings it coexists with the oppression of women, in others it is a symbol of liberation. It is important, for example, to expose students to the experiences of Muslim women who took to the *hijab* in order to escape the critical gaze of the fashion and beauty industry.

Conclusion

It can be said, therefore, that the role of the human sciences in the dialogue among civilizations covers a number of areas:

1. The participation in and monitoring of public discourse, with the objective of breaking down stereotypes and unsettling commonly held notions that, typically, translate into prejudiced views.

2. The formal education of the public at all levels, that is, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, in such a way that the three themes mentioned above – intercivilizational encounters, the multicultural origins of modernity and the variety of points of view – inform the development of curricula. In order for

this to be done on the basis of a sound intellectual basis, there must be serious efforts to develop adequate *tertium comparationis.*

3. Greater interaction among social scientists in the Asian and African regions, and more support to journals and other scientific publications produced in these regions.

In order for dialogue among civilizations, particularly between the West and other civilizations, to be facilitated, it goes without saying that serious inroads must be made in the trafficking of stereotypes by the media. It is, however, not enough to stop there as the media and public discourse themselves are influenced directly or indirectly by knowledge that is produced in the universities, research institutes and think tanks. The problem, therefore, has to be dealt with at the level of knowledge production in these institutions, that is, teaching and research. This, in turn, would mean a greater need for interaction among scholarly communities in the various civilizations.

Notes:
1. 26 September 2001.
2. 17 September 2001.
3. For useful introductions to Islam, see Ali, 1922; Landau, 1958 and Armstrong, 2000.
4. Kim, personal communication, 21 June 1996. See also Kim, 1996.

References

Alatas, Syed Farid (2002). "Eurocentrism and the Role of the Human Sciences in the Dialogue among Civilizations," *The European Legacy,* 7, 6.

_____ (2003). "India and the Future of the Human Sciences in Asia," in N.N. Vohra, ed. *Emerging Asia: Challenges for India and Singapore.* Delhi: Manohar, pp. 157-167.

Alatas, Syed Farid and Sinha, Vineeta (2001). "Teaching Classical Sociological Theory in Singapore: The Context of Eurocentrism," *Teaching Sociology,* 29, 3, pp. 316-331.

Alatas, Syed Hussein (1972). "India and the Intellectual Awakening of Southeast Asia," in his *Modernization and Social Change: Studies in Social Change in Southeast Asia.* Sydney, Angus & Robertson, pp. 151-163 [Reproduced from "India and the Intellectual Awakening of Asia," in B. Sarkar, ed. (1968). *India and Southeast Asia.* New Delhi: Indian Council for Cultural Relations].

Ali, Syed Arneer (1922). *The Spirit of Islam: A History of the Evolution and Ideals of Islâm – With a Life of the Prophet.* London: Christophers.

Armstrong, Karen (2000). *Islam: A Short History.* London: Phoenix Press.

Kantowsky, Detlef (1969). "A Critical Note on the Sociology of Developing

Societies," *Contributions to Indian Sociology,* 3 (ns), pp. 128-131.

Kim Kyong-Dong (1996). "Toward Culturally 'Independent' Social Science: The Issue of Indigenization in East Asia," in Lee Su-Hoon, ed. *Sociology in East Asia and its Struggle for Creativity.* Proceedings of the ISA Regional Conference for Eastern Asia, Seoul, Korea: 22-23 November, pp. 63-72.

Landau, Rom (1958). *Islam and the Arabs.* London: George Allen & Unwin.

Lukacs, Georg (1983). "Tagore's Gandhi Novel: Review of Rabindranath Tagore, 'The Home and the World," in *Reviews and Articles.* Translated by Peter Palmer. London: Merlin, pp. 8-11.

Makdisi, George (1980). "On the Origin and Development of the College in Islam and the West," in Khalil I Semaan, ed. *Islam and the West: Aspects of Intercultural Relations.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Matthes, Joachim (2000). "Religion in the Social Sciences: A Socio-Epistemological Critique," *Akademika,* 56, pp. 85-105.

Najita, Tetsuo (1998). *Tokugawa Political Writings.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nandy, Ashis (1994). *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism.* Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Naoroji, D. (1962 [1901]). *Poverty and Un-Buitish Rule in India.* Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India.

Roy, M.N. (1971 [1922]). *India in Transition and What do We Want.* Bombay: Nachiketa.

Roy, Rammohun (1906). *The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy.* Allahabad: The Panini Office.

Saberwal, Satish (1968). "The Problem," *Seminar,* Special Issue on Academic Colonialism. New Delhi, 112, pp. 10-13.

Sarkar, Benoy Kumar (1937/1985). *The Positive Background of Hindu Sociology.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass [First edition published in 1937 in Allahabad and reprinted in Delhi in 1985].

Singh Uberoi, J.P. (1968). "Science and Swaraj," *Contributions to Indian Sociology,* 2, pp. 119-123.

Tagore, Rabindranath (1919). *The Home and the World,* London: Macmillan.

Epilogue

Lim Teck Ghee & Kazuhide Kuroda

When the interfaith dialogue meeting was initially planned, the goal was to bring together a small group of scholars, religious leaders and officials actively engaged in the development process to examine some key issues related to the interaction of religion and development in Southeast Asia. The intention was not only to initiate a scholarly discourse around the discussion papers that participants from various faiths would bring; it was also hoped that the meeting would generate an interfaith dialogue that would carry on after the event and benefit a larger audience. The collection and publication of papers in this volume represent a small but important step in this process of opening a window of opportunity for wider and, hopefully, more balanced and judicious public discussion on an important set of issues. If allowed to fester within the confines of private contemplation, these issues have the potential to generate more heat and discord than light and agreement.

An important factor for the success of the meeting was the selection of participants. Although the meeting was supported by the World Bank, the participants were not the usual development practitioners who typically dominate the Bank's programme of work in the Asian region. Rather, they were drawn from disciplines and backgrounds that some observers may regard as unconventional, if not marginal to the circuit of development assistance. This attempt to bring in new blood and fresh ideas to debate the relationship among what can be broadly construed as ethics and social and economic development, has been relatively slow in coming to this part of the world. Yet, the paradigm shift that recognizes the centrality of ethical values in development thinking and the need to incorporate key ethical values and dimensions in the design of public policy – a shift that has been ongoing in other parts of the world – also has its strong adherents in Southeast Asia. Hence, the meeting underlined a recognition of the importance of lending support to "other voices" in the development world; it was a response to the urgent need to listen to the fledgling community of home-grown scholars and activists who are asking about the final objectives of development, the priorities and acceptable means to reach these goals, and other similarly difficult questions.

The meeting was also consciously designed to bring together participants from various religions and faiths. Southeast Asia has long been a crossroads of many civilizations, cultures and religions: Muslims in Indonesia, Malaysia and the southern Philippines; Mahayana Buddhists in Vietnam; Theravada Buddhists

in Thailand, Burma, Laos and Cambodia; Buddhist-Confucianists in Singapore; and Christians in the Philippines, together with smaller groups of Hindus in Singapore and Bali; significant groups of animists in many areas; and many other minor sects and faith practices throughout the region. While the event did not bring together members from the full range of religions and faiths across all countries in the region (it should be emphasized that participants came in their individual capacities and presented their personal viewpoints rather than as representatives or spokespersons of particular religions or faiths), those who participated provided an excellent cross-section of the region's diversity of religions and faiths. This heterogeneity of faiths and religions represented at the meeting was important in ensuring richness and complexity in the discussions; it also provided acute points of departure in some of the debates – rising from different religious traditions and philosophies – and introduced subtle elements of creative tension into the interactions. Although it is not possible to reproduce the contents of the debate within and outside the meeting hall, participants were provided an opportunity to reflect on and learn from the meeting through the presentation of their individual papers as well as from the other presentations. We are confident that the revised papers in this volume have taken into account and benefited from the contending, and often contentious, views expressed.

The timing of the meeting was quite fortuitous, and in a tragic sense, could not have been better arranged. In the early stages of planning, the initial decision had been to hold the meeting in late 2000 or early 2001. This schedule turned out to be inconvenient for a number of key participants, so it was decided that the meeting be held in October 2001 instead. As it turned out, this date was a month and a half after the horrific attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. The two attacks, which raised the spectre of a clash of civilizations and religions in some quarters, provided a sense of urgency and relevance to the discussions. It should be admitted that, during consultations on the meeting immediately following September 11, some of the organizers and participants felt that the meeting should be put on hold until a date further removed from the traumatic events of September 11. The global atmosphere of uncertainty at that time prompted some fears that the meeting's intention and subject matter may be misunderstood or misrepresented by the media and other circles, and could result in unintended publicity or consequences. There was also concern that holding the meeting so soon after September 11 might serve to constrict discussions or impose political bias. When the meeting eventually took place, however, the consensus amongst participants was that the timing was appropriate and the meeting should not have been delayed. Indeed, as discussions unfolded during the meeting, it became clear that participants found

it important to link its initial modest scope to events such as those that had recently taken place in New York and Washington, which had global and transboundary implications. Clearly, the repercussions of the events of September 11 and the ensuing debate are going to stay with the global community for a long time. For the organizers and participants, the scheduling of the meeting – so soon after September 11 – lent an urgency and immediacy to the views heard around the conference table and in the informal meeting places; the tragic events also served as a powerful reminder to all who took part in the meeting that this new phase in globalization is accelerating the interconnectedness of events occurring in seemingly disparate parts of the world.

The same forces of globalization make it imperative that Southeast Asians and people from other parts of the world – not just those immediately or directly affected by the events of September 11 – should contribute to the assessment and analysis of incidents and developments that are reported and beamed to us all almost instantaneously as a result of global media outreach. It is also inadequate to wait or react at a leisurely pace to events unfolding in other parts of the world if the region's thinkers want to avoid being left behind or becoming mere spectators as the history of the world unfolds and is interpreted. It is important and necessary for regional actors to also be fully engaged in and provide input to the global market of news, ideas and dialogue, even if this marketplace may appear skewed and unfair. By the same token, the region's thinkers (and policy makers) need to realize that events taking place in Southeast Asia – especially those related to human rights, rule of law, rights of minorities, rights of religious groups and faiths, and freedom of expression and assembly – are being widely reported to a worldwide audience. The region, like all other regions of the world, must now expect to be placed under the scrutiny and judgement of other people and countries for what may have once been viewed as localized events and moments of repression, terror or violence, including those that appear minor and isolated. In this respect, the meeting served to remind participants of the need for regional policy makers and the intelligentsia to be more open, and to engage in a transparent process of dialogue on the many complex and sensitive issues of religious and racial concerns that dominate the local and national politics of Southeast Asia.

One of the most pressing questions raised during the meeting was whether the events of September 11 made up a unique occurrence, or whether a similar act of terror by misguided religious zealots and extremists might not take place in Southeast Asia. Although many of the participants in the meeting did not subscribe to Huntington's hypothesis that the clash of civilizations will dominate global politics, or that the fault lines between civilizations (and religions) will be the battlefield of the future, the events and impact of September 11 provided much

of the backdrop for the discussions and views expressed during the meeting. Will conflicts along ethnic, cultural and religious lines grow in importance and surpass ideological or other forms of conflict? Will the interaction of groups from diverse religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds degenerate into more frequent and uncontrollable spasms of intolerance, conflict and violence? How can Southeast Asian states – with their heterogeneous religious, cultural and ethnic populations – avoid polarization along particularistic and divisive lines, and crises in national unity and solidarity that will likely follow?

Several of the participants expressed concern that the acts of terror in the United States would unleash a chain reaction amongst Muslims and non-Muslims, subsequently causing ripple effects in Southeast Asian countries that have Muslim and non-Muslim populations living next to each other. Unfortunately, some of these fears have proven to be true. In October 2002, just over a year later, an equally horrific act of terror occurred in Bali, resulting in the loss of many innocent lives. The bombings in Bali illustrate that the September 11 attack and its aftermath are not distant and remote issues connected to a Muslim-Western/Christian divide in the West or in the Middle East only, but are events with consequences and impacts that are relevant to Southeast Asia. The subsequent military actions of the United States and its allies on Afghanistan and Iraq, together with the US-led war on global terrorism, have especially brought into sharp focus the relationship between Islam – a faith to which many Southeast Asians belong – and the West. These recent developments also raise questions about the relationship between Islam and the non-Christian religions and faiths that are practised in much of the non-Western world, especially in Southeast Asia.

As a result of the post-September II military events, many Muslims in the region are fearful and concerned that Islam and Islamic countries are now the target of Western designs. There is also concern that the United States and the West, in general, are using these events as an opportunity to subjugate the Muslim world, including Southeast Asia. These fears and concerns – linked also to what is happening in Israel and the Middle East – need to be examined and addressed in view of their possible impact and repercussions on racial and religious relationships in Southeast Asia. It is not only Muslims who feel fearful and unsettled in the swirl of the changing agendas of the great powers, and of the ways in which their religion is being represented or misrepresented in the media and other corridors of global power. Non-Muslims, namely Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and adherents of other faiths, often find their religious values and beliefs coming under scrutiny. They have, on occasion, felt their religious identities threatened or left insecure by events that they have no control over.

Whilst Muslim groups have expressed misgivings that public perceptions of Islam are being manipulated by the unfair correlations drawn between Muslim religiosity and fanaticism, some non-Muslim groups in the region have fears about the status of their religions, which also need to be considered. In some countries in the region, where the state maintains strong control over civil liberty and individual freedom – including religious freedom – there have been long-standing reports of official harassment of certain religions. These include abuse such as the destruction of informal religious buildings, arrest of religious leaders, confiscation of tribal land, and so forth. In other countries, non-Muslim groups have expressed concern over what they perceive to be the rise of (and lax, if not permissive, official policies towards) a home-grown Islamic militancy complete with its own domestic agenda that includes intolerance towards other faith groups or even domination of these groups and a restriction of their rights. In Indonesia, for example, non-Muslims have watched with growing apprehension the growth of Islamic extremist groups such as the Islam Defenders Front. These groups have engaged in violent demonstrations, smashed up nightclubs, bars and restaurants, and attacked other religious groups. The recent growth of the MMI led by the Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir, who has been identified by official quarters in Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines as the spiritual leader of the Jemaah Islamiyah radical group that is working towards the creation of a pan-Islamic state in parts of Southeast Asia, is of special concern. Bashir is also allegedly connected to the al-Qaeda and is currently facing trial for being directly involved in the Bali bombings and in the burning of churches in various parts of Indonesia. Hence, the region faces a major issue: on the one hand, Muslims in the region are fearful that the US-led war on terrorism is a prelude to an assault on Islam and the Muslim world; on the other hand, non-Muslims have fears and insecurities about the rise of Muslim intolerance, fanaticism and hegemony in their part of the world.

What did the meeting accomplish in the context of this backdrop of dramatic international and regional developments, and the growing fault lines and stresses in the dynamics of social cohesion in the region? Firstly, a consensus was reached in the acknowledgment that many acts of religious conflict are rooted not so much in the differences between religions, faiths and their interactions but rather, in the machinations of politically vested interests that make use of religion for opportunistic ends. Often, these political interests do not operate by themselves but work hand in glove with extremist elements of the religious clergy for the purpose of inciting religious and related communal feelings and hatred. Given the growing political and social instability in some parts of the region, such acts of politically-inspired, religious extremism could very well become more frequent

and lead to further destabilization of the state and society, bringing about a downward spiral of instability, extremism and violence. In such situations, it is important for leaders of religious groups as well as leading members of secular organizations to defuse this potential time bomb by paying greater attention to the development of mutual tolerance and respect. The promotion of religious tolerance and understanding can take place in many ways. These include greater attention and work on the part of religious leaders within each faith to educate their followers in rejecting extremist or exclusivist religious ideologies. Such a goal would be part of the more difficult but equally necessary work of outreach to other faith groups, in a bid to build partnerships and foster mutual respect and goodwill. Many practical ideas on how to construct positive religious values, and tolerance and respect for other religions, starting with children and at the grassroots level, were put forward during the meeting. The meeting's focus on the roles of religion, education and the development of society provided insights into the shared objectives and values of social and moral capital building, together with the need to bring these to a convergence. It is hoped that the participants, and readers of this volume who are persuaded of the urgency to build bridges across various religious and faith groups, will follow these ideas and suggestions with concrete action.

Such work is necessary for all the different faith groups in the region that live side by side, particularly for the large number of Muslims and non-Muslims who live in close proximity in heterogeneous areas or in neighbouring towns and villages. The aim of bridging the Muslim-non-Muslim divide is the most important and urgent of all religious interactions. Even before September 11 and the Bali bombings, the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in the region has, generally, been difficult and contentious, and has required special attention. Given the historical record of animosity and conflict between Islam and various faiths, especially during the colonial period of the region's history, the ability of the post-colonial states in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines in preserving religious peace and bringing about at least passive tolerance between Muslims and non-Muslims should be viewed as remarkable. Muslim and non-Muslim coexistence, however, should not be taken for granted. In fact, there is an urgent need for ties to be strengthened and made more sustainable in light of recent developments in geopolitics at the national, regional and global levels. As pointed out in the foreword and introduction of this volume, it is not enough to merely talk about the common values among religions in terms of justice, truth and equality, or of the common body of ethical values that bind together most civilizations and peoples. The more pertinent issue is the course of action that is being pursued in fostering a Muslim-non-Muslim

understanding and solidarity, and the results and impact of this course of action, or lack of action.

Can the leaders of the region successfully foster the interaction of different religions so as to bring about peace among their adherents instead of conflict, tolerance instead of bigotry, and respect instead of disdain or disregard?How can these leaders meet the challenge of bringing the agenda of religion, and economic and social development into alignment, if not convergence?These questions are especially pertinent to those in positions of moral and civil authority, who make the decisions or initiate the actions or activities that can make a difference to the issues laid out in this volume. They are also as relevant to those who work in development institutions, whether at the higher levels of policy-making and management or at the grassroots level in the preparation of projects at the country level. The foreword to this volume, provided by Katherine Marshall, Director and Counselor to the President on the World Bank Development Dialogue on Values and Ethics, emphasizes the importance of work aimed at achieving a broad partnership, including with stakeholders such as faith institutions and religious communities. The foreword especially mentions the efforts of the President of the World Bank and religious leaders in initiating a dialogue for a common purpose among world faith institutions and leaders of development institutions in global development work, and to address shortcomings through comprehensive, holistic approaches that take into account the concerns and sensitivities of each religion.

For the World Bank's staff, the issue of the interface of religion and development in their work is neither hypothetical nor theoretical. In a region historically preoccupied with internecine religious and racial tension and strife, understanding these dynamics and attempting to defuse them or prevent them from disrupting specific project activities are necessary components of the preparatory processes of a project. Increasingly, too, the Bank's project staff stationed in conflict areas have begun to put in place proactive structures and systems aimed at minimizing religious strife, or have initiated measures aimed at encouraging and building multireligious solidarity and partnerships so as to have positive impact on project operations, be they in health, education, poverty reduction, or environmental management.' The difficulties of undertaking development work in conflict-affected communities should not be underestimated. As an example, the Bank's recent Mindanao Social Fund II project had the objectives of providing social and economic facilities and services to the poor, and promoting intra- and inter-community partnerships among Muslim and non-Muslim stakeholders who have been on opposing sides of the armed conflict in the Mindanao region. The Bank's staff involved in this project have had to grapple with a host of complex design and operational issues that go well beyond

the normal range of conventional performance and safeguard issues covered in Bank projects. One of the significant findings from the early project preparations was the recognition that work aimed at promoting peace and development among rival religious groups needs to be firmly grounded in strategies and operational principles based on community participation if it is to have any chance of success. Also, the use of community block grants, subject to careful screening, can provide an important incentive to galvanize local participation and responsibility. This, in turn, has raised a new set of questions and dilemmas. What if, for example, the community decides on investment in religious schools as its preferred choice of social facility? Given the important role that *madrasah* have played in the education of Muslim students in Mindanao and throughout the region as a whole, this choice is not as unlikely as it may initially appear to be. In fact, such a request is likely to be the preferred choice in areas where the local community is influenced by religious teachers, or where the local leadership is motivated by a strong sense of religious purpose. In the case of the Bank's project in Mindanao, this dilemma was addressed by the establishment of a "semi-open" menu of subprojects which excluded all types of religious schools and facilities from funding as a policy principle.

Should and can the Bank play a bigger role in the region in targeting potential or existing conflict areas and groups through, for example, the establishment of rapid response mechanisms to mediate conflicts before they become violent, or promote reconciliation in the wake of violent conflicts? How much attention and what priority should the Bank give to activities that promote interfaith dialogue (identified by the participants in the meeting and listed in the Introduction to this volume), including investments in curricula revision and other activities in the educational sphere that can foster social cohesion? The papers presented in this volume provide a useful starting point for further research, discussion and analysis of these difficult issues for staff of the World Bank and other international development agencies.

Notes

1. Readers may be interested to learn that the World Bank recently adopted an operational policy on development cooperation and conflict to address issues related to violent conflict. It calls for, among other things, integration of conflict-sensitivity in Bank assistance through conflict analysis. The conflict analysis framework developed can be used to support country and regional efforts to analyze and address conflicts in the context of country assistance, poverty reduction and other development strategies. See "The Conflict Analysis Framework," Dissemination Note No. 5, Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, The World Bank, October 2002.

Appendices

Glossary

Abidhamma (Budd.)	"Higher" Dhamma/doctrine; the analytic doctrine of the Buddhist canon; ultimate realities.
Abidhammasuksa (Budd.)	Study of higher Dhamma/doctrine/ultimate realities.
Ahankara (Budd)	"I" or "me" instinct; ego.
Ahimsa (Hin.)	Non-violence.
Akusala (Budd.)	Unhealthy; evil.
Akusalamula *(Budd.)*	The three unwholesome roots of moral evil, i.e. greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*) and delusion (moha).
Al-amr *(Isl.)*	Command.
Al-taqlid al-'am *(Isl.)*	Abiding by religious law without enquiry.
Al-wahy *(Isl.)*	Revelation.
Anakarika/anagarika (Budd.)	Wandering persons; the homeless; those who enter the homeless life without formally entering the *sangha*.
Anantam (Hin.)	Eternity; no ending.
Anatta (Budd.)	Non-self; self-less.
Anicca (Budd.)	Impermanent.
Atma (Hin.)	Soul.
Babaylan *(Tag.)*	Indigenous priest/priestess (usually women).
Bedug (In.)	A drum with an elongated body used in mosques to announce prayer times.
Bhikkhu *(Budd.)*	Male Buddhist monks.
Bhikkhuni (Budd.)	Female Buddhist monks.
Bhineka Tunggal Ika (In.)	"Unity in diversity" (state motto/founding principle of modern Indonesia).
Bodhisattva (Budd.)	A being who aspires to be the Buddha in the future through self-perfections (Theravada); an enlightened being who does not enter nirvana, devoting himself or herself to help sentient beings overcome suffering (Mahayana).
Brahman (Hin.)	Supreme soul or power.
Brahma Vihara (Budd.)	The four sublime states of mind, i.e. loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*).

Bundaran (In.)	Roundabout.
Dana (Budd.)	Generosity.
Dasa Sil Mata (Budd.)	Order of Junior Nuns in Sri Lanka taking the ten precepts.
Da'wa *(Isl.)*	Call; preaching.
Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta *(Budd.)*	The name of the first sermon preached by the Buddha.
Dhamma (Pali) (Budd.)	The teachings of the Buddha.
Dhammasuksa (Budd.)	Study of Dhamma.
Dhamma Vinaya (Budd.)	The law of nature (dhamma) and the application of the law of nature in human affairs (*vinaya*).
Dharma (Hin.)	Righteousness; correct conduct.
Dharma (Skr.) (Budd.)	Object; idea; phenomenon; righteousness; nature and the law of nature.
Dosa *(Budd.)*	Hatred.
Dukkha *(Budd.)*	Suffering; dissatisfaction.
Ekam Sat Vipra Bahuda Vadanti (Hin.)	"Truth is one but the wise men explain differently."
Fatwa *(Isl.)*	Religious decree.
Gantha-dhura (Budd.)	Textual or doctrinal study of Buddhism without practice.
Gnyanam (Hin.)	Knowledge.
Hiri-ottappa (Budd.)	Self-esteem; sense of moral shame and fear of wrong-doing.
Idul Fitri *(Isl.)*	Celebrations at the end of the Muslim fasting month.
Ilustrados *(Sp./Phil.)*	Wealthy and more educated Filipinos; Filipino elite during the Spanish colonial period.
Imam (Isl.)	A leader of prayers.
Iqra *(Isl.)*	Read; recite; rehearse or proclaim aloud.
Isra Mi'raj *(Isl.)*	The night journey of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) from Mecca to Jerusalem on 27th Rajab, the seventh month of the Muslim calendar, where he ascended to the heavens.
Jilbab *(Isl.)*	Veil worn by Muslim women.
Kalyanamitta (Budd.)	Good or spiritual friends.
Kalyanaputhujana *(Budd.)*	Laypersons who practise the Dhamma.
Kamabhogi *(Budd.)*	Laypersons; those who indulge in sensual pleasures.
Karma (Skr.)/kamma (Pali) *(Budd.)*	The law of action; the causal law of moral action and its result.

Karuna *(Budd.)*	Compassion.
Kusala *(Budd.)*	Healthy; good.
Lambang *(In.)*	Symbol; seal.
Lobha *(Budd.)*	Greed.
Madrasah *(Isl.)*	School.
Mae chee *(Bud.)*	Thai white-robed Buddhist nuns with shaven heads taking the eight precepts.
Maf'uul bihi *(Isl.)*	Object.
Mamankara *(Budd.)*	"Mine" instinct.
Mantra *(Budd./Hin.)*	Formula; sacred words repeated in religious and ceremonial rituals.
Masjid *(Isl.)*	Mosque.
Maulid Nabi *(Isl.)*	The birthday of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.), celebrated on 12th Rabi al-Awwal, the third month of the Muslim calendar.
Metta *(Budd.)*	Loving kindness.
Moha *(Budd.)*	Delusion; mental dullness.
Mudita *(Budd.)*	Sympathetic joy.
Mujer indigena *(Sp./Phil.)*	Native or indigenous women.
Nirvana (Skr.)/nibbana (Pali) *(Bud.)*	The ultimate aim of human life in Buddhism; a spiritual state where human beings are free from all defilements and suffering.
Nuzulul Qur'an *(Isl.)*	The time when the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.) received the first revelation of the Quran, on 17th Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar and also the fasting month.
Orde Baru *(In.)*	New Order (government in Indonesia under President Suharto between 1966 and 1998).
Palang *(In.)*	Cross.
Palisuksa *(Budd.)*	Study of (Buddhist) Pali language.
Panjassa *(Budd.)*	Pattern; order.
Panna/pannya *(Budd.)*	Wisdom; insight.
Papamitra *(Bud.)*	False friends; foes in the guise of friends.
Parami *(Budd.)*	Perfection; positive qualities.
Paratokosa/paratoghosa *(Budd.)*	External influence.
Paticca samuppada *(Budd.)*	The doctrine of "dependent arising or "dependent origination."

Peace be upon him (p.b.u.h.) *(Isl.)*	Words of respect used by Muslims when speaking about the Prophet Muhammad; the Arabic version is "salla Allahu 'alaihi wa-salaam" (may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), often denoted by the letters "s.a.w."
Pembangunan (In.)	Development.
Pondok (In.)	Islamic religious boarding school.
Prakriti (Hin.)	Nature.
Prema *(Hin.)*	Love; affection.
Purusartha *(Hin.)*	The four stages of life or basic human pursuits: ethics or righteousness (*dharma*), security or material prosperity (*artha*), desires (kama), and spiritual liberation (moksa).
Purusha (Hin.)	Man; prime person.
Ramadan *(Isl.)*	The Muslim fasting month.
Rechtsstaat *(Ger.)*	Law-governed state; constitutional state.
Sakshin *(Hin.)*	Witness consciousness.
Samadhi (Budd.)	Concentration/one-pointedness of mind.
Samanasak *(Budd.)*	A title conferred by the Thai King on Buddhist monks with specific religious qualities.
Samaneri *(Budd.)*	Novice female Buddhist monks.
Samathi *(Budd.)*	Peacefulness; bliss; meditation. (A Thai word for samadbi.)
Sangha (Budd.)	Community of Buddhist monks and nuns.
Santosa (Budd.)	Contentment; satisfaction.
Satya Samshodhane (Hin.)	"Experiment on Truth."
Satyam/sathya *(Hin.)*	Truth.
Shanti *(Hin.)*	Peace.
Shruthi (Hin.)	Heard.
Sikkha (Budd.)	Training; education.
Sila (Budd.)	Morality/moral conduct; a precept/rule of morality.
Smrithi (Hin.)	Remembered.
Surah *(Isl.)*	A chapter of the *Qur'an*.
Sutra (Skr.)/sutta (Pali) *(Budd.)*	The Buddha's teachings given in the form of dialogue.

Swadeshi (Hin.)	Self-reliance; a movement in India which started on 7 August 1905 to protest against the political division of Bengal, through the boycott of foreign goods to break British political-economic dominance.
Takbir *(Isl.)*	The recitation of the phrase "Allahu Akbar" or "Allah is Great."
Tafsir *(Isl.)*	Commentary on the *Qur'an*.
Tai chi (Ch.)	A form of Chinese martial arts.
Tanha *(Budd.)*	Craving; unrestrained desires.
Theravada (Budd.)	The earliest or original school of Buddhism practised in countries such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand (as opposed to Mahayana, a reformist school which emerged later).
Tripitaka (Budd.)	The Three Baskets or the three parts of the Buddhist scripture (Pali canon), i.e. Discipline (*Vinaya Pitaka*), Discourses (*Sutta Pitaka*) and Higher Teachings (Abhidhamma *Pitaka*).
Tudong (Budd.)	Austere practices; constituents of ascetic practice to remove defilements.
Upasaka *(Budd.)*	Laymen.
Upasika (Budd.)	Laywomen.
Vipassana (Budd.)	Insight meditation.
Vipassana-dhura (Budd.)	The practice of insight meditation.
Vinaya (Budd.)	Monastic rules.
Weltanschauung (Ger.)	World view; philosophy of life.
Yonisomanasikara (Budd.)	Critical self-awareness.

Key:
Budd.: Buddhist
Ch.: Chinese
Ger.: German
Hin.: Hindu
In.: Indonesian/Bahasa Indonesia
Isl.: Islam
Phil.: Philippines
Skr.: Sanskrit
Sp.: Spanish
Tag.: Tagalog

Notes on Contributors

Syed Farid ALATAS is an Associate Professor at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore where he has been since 1992. A Malaysian national, he had his schooling in Singapore and obtained his Ph.D. in Sociology from the Johns Hopkins University in 1991. He lectured at the University of Malaya in the Department of Southeast Asian Studies prior to his appointment at Singapore. He has contributed articles to a number of scholarly journals and his book, *Democracy and Authoritarianism: The Rise of the Post-Colonial State in Indonesia and Malaysia*, is published by Macmillan (1997). He is currently working on a book in the area of the philosophy and sociology of social science. *Address:* Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260. *[E-mail:*socsfa@nus.edu.sg]

Syed Hussein ALATAS is Professor at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, National University of Malaysia, Bangi. His fields of interest are the sociology of corruption, modernization in Southeast Asia, the sociology of Islam, and the sociology of intellectuals in developing societies. One of his current research projects is "Islam and the Development of Science." He has published numerous books, chapters in books and articles in professional and non-professional journals on a vast array of topics and issues. This includes *The Myth of the Lazy Native: A Study of the Image of the Malays, Filipinos and Javanese from the 16th to the 20th Century and its Function in the Ideology of Colonial Capitalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1977). He has also participated in numerous local and international congresses, conferences and meetings. He has given lectures abroad and has received grants, awards, fellowships and invitations from educational and government agencies overseas. *Address:* Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.

Pracha HUTANUWATR currently holds several positions as Programme Director of Grassroots Leadership Training, a member of the Board of Directors of Spirit in Education Movement, Director of Wongsanit Ashram, and Deputy Director of Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute. His current interests broadly include applying Buddhist principles for social reconstruction, holistic rural development, Asian spirituality, deep ecology, social justice, meditation and social action. He has also developed research interest in the areas of alternative politics for Asia and holistic social analysis. He has written books and articles in both Thai and English on

Buddhism, spirituality, globalization, social justice and rural reconstruction. *Address:* Wongsanit Ashram, P.O. Box 1 Ongkharak, Nakon Nayok 26120, Thailand. *[E-mail:*hutanuwatr@pracha.vispa.com]

Kazuhide KURODA is a Senior Knowledge Management Officer in the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Unit, Social Development Department, at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., USA. Among others, he has worked to promote conflict-sensitive development to Bank operational staff and has contributed in strengthening the partnership between the United Nations and the Bank for post-conflict countries. Prior to the Bank, he worked in the humanitarian field at the United Nations in New York and Geneva undertaking field assignments to countries in a complex emergency situation and countries struck by natural disaster such as Afghanistan, Armenia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Jordan, Mozambique and Rwanda. In 1994, he was a member of the team which organized the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in Yokohama, Japan. *Address:*The World Bank, 1818 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20433, USA. *[E-mail:*kkuroda@worldbank.org]

LIM Teck Ghee is Senior Social Sector Specialist in the World Bank in Washington, D.C., USA. In that capacity, he advises the Bank's East Asia Region and country teams on social development issues. He received his Ph.D. in history from the Australian National University and has published extensively on a wide range of developmental issues, and received many academic fellowships and awards during his university career. He has also previously worked with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific as a Regional Adviser in Poverty Alleviation and Social Integration. *Address:* Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Avenue, Bangkok 10200, Thailand/The World Bank, 1818 H Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20433, USA. *[E-mail:* limt@un.org/ tlim@worldbank.org]

Hasan MADMARN is the Director of the College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University (Pattani Campus), Thailand. He obtained his Ph.D. in Middle East Studies (Arabic) from the University of Utah, USA. Among his academic works are on the issues of Islamic education, traditional Islamic institutions such as the *madrasah* and *pondok,* Malays/Muslims in Pattani and the development and usage of the Malay language in Pattani. Some of his major academic titles include *Traditional Muslim Institutions in Southern Thailand: A Critical Study of Islamic Education in Pattani* (1990) and *The Pondok and Madrasah in Pattani*

(1999). *Address:* College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus, Pattani 94000, Thailand. *[E-mail:* mhasan@bunga.pn.psu.ac.th]

Father Franz MAGNIS-SUSENO, SJ, a Jesuit priest, is professor for social philosophy at Driyarkara School of Philosophy in Jakarta and director of its graduate department. He also teaches at Universitas Indonesia. Born in 1936 in Germany, he has lived in Indonesia since 1961 and has long since become an Indonesian citizen. He has studied philosophy, theology and political science in Pullach, Yogyakarta and München and obtained a doctorate in philosophy from the University of München in 1973. He has written 25 books and more than 350 articles, mainly in the field of ethics, political philosophy and Javanism. Among them is *Javanese Ethics and World View: The Javanese Idea of the Good Life,* Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1997. *Address:* STF Driyarkara, Kotak Pos 1397, Jakarta 10013, Indonesia. *[E-mail:* magnis@dnet.net.id]

Sr. Mary John MANANZAN, OSB, was the President (for six years) and Dean of Graduate School of the St. Scholastica's College, Manila, Philippines until 30 April 2002. She spearheaded the social and women's orientation in St. Scholastica's College, and founded the Institute of Women's Studies, Lifelong Learning and Wellness Center, Women and Ecology Wholeness Farm. She also established the Benedictine Volunteer Program and initiated the founding of the Consortium of Women's Colleges. Sr. Mary has co-founded various organizations like the Institute of Women's Studies, Women's Crisis Center, Center for Women's Resources and the Institute of Religion and Culture. She has shared her expertise as facilitator and lecturer at workshops and seminars in about 40 countries, on topics that included: The Woman Question, Woman and Religion, Feminist Theology, Education and Transformation, Consumer Protection, Asian Religion and Spirituality, and Globalization and Ecofeminism. For her contribution, Sr. Mary John was given the Woman of Distinction Award by the Soroptimists International on 9 March 2001. She received the API (Asian Public Intellectual) Fellowship Award of the Nippon Foundation for the school year 2002-2003. *Address:* 2560 Leon Guinto Street, P.O. Box 3153, Manila, Philippines. *[E-mail:* maryjohn@ssc.edu.ph]

Lies MARCOES-NATSIR is a Programme Officer on Islam and Civil Society at The Asia Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia. She has a M.A. on Medical Anthropology from the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Before joining the Foundation, she was working with P3M, an Islamic NGO for community development, particularly for advocacy of women's reproductive rights. Since 2000,

she has been involved in interfaith organizations – the Indonesian Conference on Religion and Peace (ICRP) and MADIA (*Masyarakat Dialog Antar* Iman) or Society for Interfaith Dialogue. She is active in the area of gender and development and has conducted numerous seminars, workshops and discussions, and written extensively in this area. She has also researched on Islamic women's organizations and movements in Indonesia. Address: The Asia Foundation, Jl. Adityawarman No. 40, Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta 12160, Indonesia. [E-mail: liesp3m@yahoo.com/ liesmarcoes@tafindo.org]

Patricia A. MARTINEZ is the first non-Muslim Malaysian with a Ph.D. in Islam. She also has an M.A. in the Comparative Study of Religions, and an M.A. in Christian Theology, as well as a postgraduate diploma in Women's Studies. She is currently a Senior Research Fellow at the Asia-Europe Institute of the University of Malaya, and heads the section on Intercultural Studies. Dr Martinez is a Consultant to the United Nations for a pilot education project to overcome the problems of ethnicity and religion in Indonesia. She has been awarded a Fellowship in Islamic Studies at the East-West Center in Hawaii in 2003, and a Fulbright in Islamic Studies for 200314 at Stanford and Ohio Universities. Her presentations and publications are on Islam in Malaysia and Southeast Asia, Muslim-Christian Relations and Women in Islam. Address: Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. [E-mail: pmartinez@um.edu.my]

Somparn PROMTA obtained a Ph.D. in philosophy with a special emphasis on Buddhist philosophy from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand in 1991. Since then, he has served as a full-time lecturer at the university's philosophy department. In addition, he has served as the deputy director of the university's Center for Buddhist Studies and the editor of the *Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*. He teaches Buddhist philosophy and writes a number of books on philosophy, Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy. Some of his major works include (all are published by Chulalongkorn University Press): Buddhism and Science (1997), *Mahayana* Buddhism (1997), Zen Buddhism (1998), Social and Political *Philosophy* (1995), Buddhism and *Ethical Problems:* A Buddhist *View* on Prostitution, Abortion and Mercy Killing (1998), Buddhist Philosophy (1999), Suffering in Buddhism: A Darwinian Perspective (2000), and The State of Buddhist Studies in the World *1972-1997* (co-edited with D.K. Swearer, 2000). Address: Chulalongkorn University, 254 Phyathai Road Patumwan, Bangkok, Thailand 10330. [E-mail: Somparn.P@Chula.ac.th]

A.N. RAO is formerly Professor of Botany at the National University of Singapore. He is a founder-member and former president of the Hindu Centre, Singapore. He is also a member of several committees of Hindu organizations in Singapore. He currently works as a consultant in the areas of biodiversity and conservation of nature. He is the Chief Editor of the *Journal of Tropical Medicinal Plants* as well as a member of the Editorial Board of three international journals of plant sciences. *Address: 139* Cavenagh Road, #12-01, Singapore *229621.*

Vineeta SINHA is Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore. She has a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the Johns Hopkins University. Her current research interests are in the field of comparative sociology and anthropology of religion, critique of concepts and categories in the social sciences, teaching classical theory and theorizing health and healing. Recently, she has been exploring the merger of folk elements in "Taoism" and "Hinduism" through a focus on a "Taoist-Hindu" temple in Singapore, looking at the phenomenon of religious syncretism and overlap at the individual and institutional levels as well as exploring the sociological consequences of such intermingling for emerging styles of religiosity. Currently, she is based at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, and writing out her present research on Hinduism, in particular the veneration of the male folk deity, Muneesewaran, in the diasporic setting of urban Singapore. *Address:* Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore, *10* Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore *119260. [E-mail:*socvs@nus.edu.sg]

Parichart SUWANBUBBHA lectures in the Comparative Religion and Ethics Graduate Programmes in Mahidol University, Salaya, Thailand. Her main areas of interest are Thai Engaged Buddhism, Buddhist-Christian Dialogue, Buddhist-Christian Ethics, Buddhist Meditation, Comparative Religions, Religion and Society, and Women's Studies. Her most recent publication is *Thai Nuns (Mae Chees) and their Educational Responsibility in Thailand (2002).* She has also published a chapter on "The Right to Family Planning, Contraception and Abortion according to Thai Buddhism" in Daniel C. Maguire, ed. (2003), *Sacred Rights: The Case for Contraception and Abortion in World Religions,* New York: Oxford University Press. She is also researching on "The Roled Achievements of Thai Nuns *(Mae Chees):*A Case Study of *Satheindhammasathan*" and has conducted extensive presentations in Thailand, USA, Singapore, Germany, Iran and Nepal on Buddhism and Thai Buddhist feminism and taken part in many interreligious dialogues. *Address:* Mahidol University, Salaya Campus, Puthamontol 4, Salaya Nakhonpathom, Thailand *73170. [E-mail:*shpsw@mucc.mahidol.ac.th]

Saranindranath TAGORE is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the National University of Singapore. He holds a Ph.D. from Purdue University. His research and teaching areas cover Indian and European philosophical and cultural traditions. His most recent publication is (with Professor Wendy Barker) (2001), *Rabindranath Tagore: Final Poems,* New York: George Braziller. *Address:* Department of Philosophy, National University of Singapore, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260. *[E-mail*.phisnt@nus.edu.sg]

C.L. TEN is Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Philosophy Department, National University of Singapore. He was previously Professor of Philosophy and Acting Head of the School of Philosophy, Linguistics, and Bioethics in Monash University, Australia. He is the author of *Mill on Liberty* and *Crime, Guilt, and Punishment,* and editor of a few collections of papers. He has published mainly in the areas of philosophy of law and political philosophy. He was elected a Fellow of The Australian Academy of the Humanities in 1989, and a Fellow of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia in 2000. *Address:* Department of Philosophy, National University of Singapore, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260. *[E-mail*.phitencl@nus.edu.sg]

ASIAN INTERFAITH DIALOGUE: PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL COHESION

27 – 28 October 2001
Singapore

Conference Agenda

DAY ONE: Saturday, 27 October 2001

<u>Opening Ceremony</u> (9:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.)

8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.	Registration of Guests
9:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.	Guests to be seated
9:15 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.	Arrival of Guest-of-Honour, Mr Chiang Chie Foo, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
9:20 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.	Welcome Addresses by Mr Darke M. Sani, Chairman, RIMA
9:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.	Welcome Addresses by Dr Lim Teck Ghee, Senior Social Sector Specialist, Environment & Social Development Sector Unit, East Asia & the Pacific Region, The World Bank, and Mr Kazuhide Kuroda, Senior Knowledge Management Officer, Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction Unit, Social Development Department, The World Bank
9:40 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.	Keynote Address by Guest-of-Honour

<u>Lecture One</u>: Religion, Science and Education (10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.)

Chairperson:	Ms Betsie Smith (Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of the Republic of South Africa in Singapore)
Speaker:	Prof. Syed Hussein Alatas (Department of Anthropology & Sociology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia)

<u>Session One</u>: Theology and the **Study** of Society (11:30 **a.m. – 1:30** p.m.)

Chairperson:	Ms Jamilah A. Lajam
	(United World College of Southeast Asia, Singapore)
Speakers:	1. Dr Somparn Promta
	(Department of Philosophy & Centre for
	Buddhist Studies, Chulalongkorn University,
	Thailand)
	2. Dr Jalaluddin Rakhmat
	(Yayasan Tazkiya Sejati, Indonesia)
	3. Dr Patricia A. Martinez
	(Asia-Europe Institute, Universiti Malaya, Malaysia)
Discussant:	Rev. Dr Yap Kim Hao
	(Former Bishop of the Methodist Church in
	Malaysia and Singapore and General Secretary of the
	Christian Conference of Asia, Singapore)

<u>Session Two</u>: Secular Education, Values and Development
(2:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

Chairperson:	Dr Srilata Ravi
	(Department of English Language & Literature,
	National University of Singapore, Singapore)
Speakers:	1. Prof. A.N. Rao
	(Retired Professor of Botany, National University
	of Singapore, Singapore)
	2. Mr Pracha Hutanuwatr
	(Santi Pracha Dhamma Institute, Thailand)
	3. Dr Hassan Madmarn
	(College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla
	University, Thailand)
Discussant:	Mr Idris Rashid
	(Singapore Press Holdings, Singapore)

DAY TWO: Sunday, 28 October 2001

Lecture Two: Religious Toleration and Beyond (9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.)
Chairperson: Prof. Koh Tai Ann
                            (Dean, Academic, National Institute of Education,
                            Singapore)
Speaker: Prof. C.L. Ten
                            (Department of Philosophy, National University of
                            Singapore, Singapore)

Session Three: Religious Education and Gender Issues (10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.)
Chairperson: Dr Habibul Khondker
                            (Department of Sociology, National University of
                            Singapore, Singapore)
Speakers: I. Dr Parichart Suwanbubbha
                                (Department of Humanities, Mahidol
                                University, Thailand)
                            2. Ms Lies Marcoes-Natsir
                                (Insan Hitawasana Sejahtera, Indonesia)
                            3. Sr. Mary John Mananzan, OSB
                                (St. Scholastica's College, Philippines)
Discussant: Mr Zainuddin Mohamed
                            (Jamiyah, Singapore)

Session Four: Religion and the Philosophy of Education (1:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.)
Chairperson: Mr Imran Andrew Price
                            (Muslim Converts' Association, Singapore)
Speakers: I. Assoc. Prof. Saranindranath Tagore
                                (Department of Philosophy, National University
                                of Singapore, Singapore)
                            2. Mr Ambeth Ocampo
                                (Department of History, Ateneo de Manila
                                University, Philippines)
Discussant: Dr Ulrike Niklas
                            (South Asian Studies Programme, National
                            University of Singapore, Singapore)

<u>Session Five</u>: Achieving Interfaith Dialogue through Education
(2:45 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.)

Chairperson: Mr Yang Razali Kassim
                         (The Business Times, Singapore)

Speakers: 1. Prof. Franz Magnis-Suseno, SJ
                            (Driyarkara School of Philosophy, Indonesia)
                         2. Dr Vineeta Sinha
                            (Department of Sociology, National University of
                            Singapore, Singapore)

Discussant: Sr. Theresa L.H. Seow
                         (Canossian Daughters of Charity, Singapore)

<u>Roundtable Discussion</u> (4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.)

Chairperson: Dr Syed Farid Alatas
                         (Department of Sociology, National University of
                         Singapore, Singapore)

<u>Closing Remarks</u> (5:30 p.m. – 5:35 p.m.)

List of Participants

ABDUL HAMID Abdullah
Association of Muslim Professionals

ALBAKRI Ahmad
Islamic Religious Council of
Singapore

Ethel BARTER
Focolare Movement

CHAN Heng Yuen
Singapore Soka Association

CHUA Marcus
Graduates Christian Fellowship

IDRIS Rashid
Singapore Press Holdings

Imran Andrew PRICE
Muslim Converts' Association,
Singapore

JAMILAH A. Lajam
United World College of Southeast
Asia

Thavamalar KANAGARATNAM
Ministry of Education

Habibul KHONDKER
National University of Singapore

KOH Tai Ann
National Institute of Education

Medha KUDAISYA
National University of Singapore

Sharon LEE Yuet San
Ministry of Community
Development and Sports

MOHD ANUAR Yusop
Association of Muslim Professionals

MOHD GHAZALI Nasir
Individual

MOHD ZAIDI Yacob
MERCU Learning Point

Ulrike NIKLAS
National University of Singapore

Lillian ONG
Ministry of Community
Development and Sports

Srilata RAVI
National University of Singapore

SEE Guat Kwee
Individual

Theresa L.H. SEOW
Canossian Daughters of Charity

Sandra SIN
Singapore Soka Association

Betsie SMITH
High Commission of the Republic of
South Africa

SURIANI Suratman
National University of Singapore

WONG Allan
Graduates Christian Fellowship

YANG RAZALI Kassim
Association of Muslim Professionals

Grace YAP
Individual

YAP Kim Hao
Individual

Fuwa YOSHITARO
Japan Bank for International
Co-operation

ZAINUDDIN Mohamed
Jamiyah Singapore

ZUBAIDAH Osman
Yayasan MENDAKI

[Organisers]

Syed Farid ALATAS
National University of Singapore

ANNY ROEZZA Abdul Aziz
Association of Muslim Professionals

DARKE M. Sani
Centre for Research on Islamic and
Malay Affairs

ELINAH Abdullah
Centre for Research on Islamic and
Malay Affairs

ISKANDAR Yuen Abdullah
Association of Muslim Professionals

JAMALIAH Mohd Saleh
Centre for Research on Islamic and
Malay Affairs

Kazuhide KURODA
The World Bank

LIM Teck Ghee
The World Bank

MOHD ALAMI Musa
Association of Muslim Professionals

MOHD KHALID Bohari
Association of Muslim Professionals

MUHAMAD NAZZIM Hussain
Association of Muslim Professionals

SARJONO Salleh Khan
Association of Muslim Professionals

YUSOF Sulaiman
Centre for Research on Islamic and
Malay Affairs

About the Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA)

The Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs, (RIMA), Singapore is a research organisation wholly-owned by the Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP). It focuses its research and related activities on issues affecting Malay and Muslim societies and Islam.

RIMA is governed by a Board of Directors and is strongly supported by a Steering Committee made up of Malay and Muslim community leaders, academics and professionals. An International Resource Panel comprising renowned academics from around the world is also in place to widen RIMA's efforts in networking within the research community.

RIMA's programmes include:

(a) *Research Programme,* which comprises both applied and issue-oriented research conducted on a regular basis or as specially commissioned projects;

(b) *Seminars Programme,* which comprises seminars, roundtable discussions, forums, lectures and focus group discussions, to serve as a formal as well as an informal meeting ground for researchers, academics and interested individuals to discuss and examine issues and developments pertaining to Malays and Muslims;

(c) *Publications Programme,* where the *Occasional Paper Series* and other forms of publications are produced to document research findings and discussion of issues relating to Malays/Muslims and Islam.
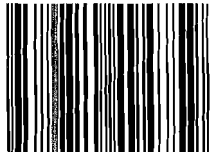
About the Post-Conflict Fund of the World Bank

The Post-Conflict Fund (PCF) of the World Bank was established in 1997 in order to enhance the Bank's ability to support countries in transition from conflict to sustainable peace and economic growth. As innovative work in uncertain and fragile conflict-affected societies is often not possible through normal sources of Bank funding, the PCF supports planning, piloting and analysis of ground-breaking activities through funding governments and partner organizations in the forefront of this work. The emphasis is on speed and flexibility without sacrificing quality. The PCF makes grants to a wide range of partners (institutions, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, transitional authorities, governments, and other civil society institutions) to provide earlier and broader Bank assistance to conflict-affected countries. Grants are focused on the restoration of the lives and livelihood of war-affected population, with a premium placed on innovative approaches to conflict, partnerships with donors and executing agencies and leveraging resources through a variety of funding arrangements. As of 31 March 2003, the PCF has approved a total of US$55.9 million for 114 grants.