

2010 - 2023



FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
VOLUME ONE DECEMBER 2022

A close-up portrait of a woman with dark hair pulled back, smiling warmly at the camera. She is wearing a dark blue or black top. The background is slightly blurred, showing a brick wall and some greenery.

**DR CAUVERY GANAPATHY**  
**ENERGY TRANSITIONS**  
*Reneging on ambitions*





©Mark Ulyseas

Shrine with the holy relic of St. Thomas, who landed at Cranganore Port in 52 CE, Kondangallur, on the bank of river Periyar, Thrissur district, Kerala, India. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



### SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS. DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2024

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

*Live Encounters Magazine* (2010), *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* (2016), *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers* (2019) and now, *Live Encounters Books* (August 2020).

We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas  
Publisher/Editor  
[markulyseas@liveencounters.net](mailto:markulyseas@liveencounters.net)

[Donate](#)

**All articles and photographs are the copyright of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net) and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of [www.liveencounters.net](http://www.liveencounters.net). Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.**



## CONTRIBUTORS

DR. CAUVERY GANAPATHY - GUEST EDITORIAL

MARK ULYSEAS

DR. (FATHER) IVO COELHO

DR. PARAMA SINHA PALIT

DR. ASHOK SHARMA

DR. DEBARATI HALDER

DR. HOWARD RICHARDS

DR. SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA

DR. BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

PROFESSOR DAYA SOMASUNDARAM

PERCY AARON



Dr. Cauvery Ganapathy is a strategic affairs analyst, and works as a Strategic Risk Management Consultant. She has been a Research Associate with the Office of Net Assessment under the US Department of Defense previously. As a Fellow of Global India Foundation, she has presented and published at various national and international forums. She has been a recipient of the Pavate Fellowship to the University of Cambridge as Visiting Research Faculty and a recipient of the Fulbright-Nehru Doctoral Fellowship to the University of California, Berkeley.

## DR CAUVERY GANAPATHY

### ENERGY TRANSITIONS RENEGING ON AMBITIONS

The most compelling answer to addressing the fallouts of climate change, and inhibiting, if not marginally stalling, the negative impacts of global warming is, quite expectedly, a transition to cleaner forms of energy. The low-carbon pathways that are being charted to this end, use remarkable technological innovation to bring about this transformation in the field of energy usage. There are, however, many loftier presumptions that have been attributed to the anticipated deliverables from this clean energy transition. Prominent among these is the expectation that these largely decentralized systems of energy, will necessarily translate into a diffusion of egalitarian distributive systems alongside greater democratization of energy access, and eventually rectify the past injustices and inequities of the traditional energy system. This commentary is based upon the premise that there is a blind-spot in this mammoth expectation that is commonly levied upon the new energy systems.



Dr Cauvery Ganapathy





Laos. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



In many ways, the deliverables set up for these new forms of energy, far supersede their ability as well as their mandate. The clean energy transition, by being bestowed with the expectation of delivering ambitious deliverables such as energy justice and greater democratization of energy, is quite unfairly being asked to fix fractured local and global politics, something considerably more complicated than the energy systems are equipped to handle. Although their very purpose and objective is to revolutionize the ways of global energy generation and usage, these low-carbon systems, and the efforts to expand their base operate within socio-political ecosystems that have hardly mutated at the pace the technologies emerging from it have. As a result, the persistence of divisions continues to be the norm within this new energy system too.

There are two significant divisions that may broadly be drawn in the story of the new energy system transition presently. The first is based on the issue of resource distribution. The rare earth elements that are the essential raw materials that power the clean energy systems, have a spatial distribution that is even more skewed in favour of a tiny group of countries than was the case with the fossil fuels. The Democratic Republic of Congo, for instance, has 49% of the world's confirmed cobalt reserves- nearly all of which again, is concentrated in a single region of the DRC itself, Katanga. Simultaneously, according to the IEA, the concentration of the processing capacity of these raw materials is even more pronounced with China alone accounting for nearly 90% of the world's rare earths, 50-70% of lithium and cobalt, and nearly 35% of the world's nickel refining. The second division, part of both, the upstream as well as downstream of this global supply chain, is that the countries of the Global South which, at the moment, use a tiny fraction of the final products generated through these new technologies, find themselves being central to the whole enterprise with the extraction of their natural resources while also being the largest recipients of the toxic e-waste that is generated from these products. It would be worthwhile to consider if as a result of these two divisions the clean energy systems find themselves straddling the mandates of energy justice, energy inefficiencies, energy access, climate injustice, energy poverty, energy and resource inequities, while repeating the errors of the old system that it was engineered to replace, in the first place.

IRENA's projections suggest that a meaningful shift to low carbon pathways would mean the deployment of close to a billion passenger electric vehicles by 2050. Accompanying that number is the agency's projection for a significant jump in the storage capacity to be close to 12,380GWh by the same time. Both of these numbers have substantive implications for the kind of mineral and rare

earth elements extraction and processing that would be needed- highest among them being the spike in demand for cobalt, copper, lithium and nickel.<sup>1</sup> The finite nature of the resources that undergird the clean energy transition, whether the raw materials for the photovoltaic cells or the lithium batteries, lie at the heart of the problems that allow for the faults of the old system to seep into these new energy forms. The economic motivations for the rampant and urgent exploitation of scarce commodities that fuel this inspired low-carbon answer to the travails of climate change, vitiate the potential of the new energy systems to break the intergenerational inequities that abounded in the old energy systems. Unfortunately, the upstream processes such as mining and extraction that are involved in the sourcing of these essential elements for the fueling of this clean energy revolution is beget with a rate of human and environmental exploitation that is at par, if not greater, than the transgressions in the domain made in the traditional energy systems.

The Global South has been the overwhelming recipient of the e-waste that has been generated through the downstream process of the supply chain. Despite the upward trajectory in the production of EVs, that use the lithium batteries, for instance, technology has not yet been fine-tuned to address the question of efficiently and safely recycling the gigantic amounts of depleted batteries that are to be produced as part of the EV revolution in the automotive sector. At the downstream end of the supply chain, the e-waste that is generated by the depleted batteries as well as the solar panels<sup>2</sup> that are central to the low-carbon transitions, as well as the waste generated by the wind turbines, have been actively destroying environmental protection mandates in the Global South. This, then, would result in an increased exposure of e-waste to the water bodies and landfills of the Global South.

Environmental pollution has been proven to be a part of the extraction process for cobalt, for instance, and yet it remains on the fringe of the clean energy transition discussions. A clean energy transition that is just and addresses the inequities of the old systems is importantly a temporal issue, which means that to not regulate globally immediately on the issues of extraction, usage and disposal of waste would endanger the possibility of a sustainable energy transition. Externalities such as the environmental risk and pollution that are ancillary to the extraction and processing of cobalt, throughout its life-cycle and the entire supply chain that makes use of it, for instance, should be an important factor of consideration when the final costs of the clean energy options are computed.





Collage.



The fact that many of the fundamental elements that the new forms of energy are dependent on are rare resources that need to be mined introduces into the transition the element of exploitation in the labour force. The very conduct of the extraction process in countries of Africa where the use of child-labour and abysmal working conditions has been shown to exist, feed into the structural inequities that existed in the traditional resource exploitations of the old system. To not, then, demand a clean and transparent supply chain, would feed into the older narrative and perpetuate and aggravate the flaws of the older system.

Existing cleavages are exacerbated when underlined by a profit motivation, just as ethnic tensions and community fractures are known to expand far more rapidly in the case of resource extraction. Unfortunately, the lucrative nature of mining for these elements, despite their environmental and health costs, has meant that it has become an avenue- oftentimes, the only one- for marginalized populations to escape the scourge of poverty and hunger. It is an arrangement that works for both sides- all of us who need that cobalt for fulfilling our earnest commitment to the clean energy transition, and them, who need for that cobalt to be in constant demand, so that they can monetize their land and labour to escape their vicious reality of impecuniousness.

While there are these undercurrents of persisting tensions inherent in the supply chains and the very generation of these low carbon forms of energy, there are also examples where the deployment of the cleaner forms of energy through new technologies have in fact, fulfilled some of the grand ambitions that have been made synonymous to them through policy pronouncements. These systems have, in places, challenged and dramatically altered the long-drawn monopolies of the energy behemoths. The deployment of solar panels on residential rooftops, for instance, has been responsible for creating substantive leaps in the process of not just energy access but triggered a fantastic devolution of authority in the field of energy systems. The creation of micro-grids where excess energy generated off solar panels in houses can be sold within the local community, through the use of blockchain technology in some places, for instance, is an example of how greater agency has been accorded to people in the adaptation and spread of cleaner forms of energy. The use of these formats also enables considerable controls over the loss of excess energy and partly addresses the issue of energy storage. Initiatives/projects such as this, enable a decentralization of the energy systems that would be impossible if left to the more traditional energy pathways.

Good prudent policy imperatives also carry unintended consequences. This is something that the efforts to enable low-carbon energy transitions has also had to contend with. The diffusion of new technologies, naturally, has a much steeper learning curve than the continued proliferation of the older forms of energy. These new cleaner forms of energy are order of magnitudes more preferable to the older forms, by virtue of their impact on the environment, and on a possible devolution of energy authority leading to lessened monopolies. Delving into any possible lacunae within either their deployment or ramifications, should not, therefore, be understood as being an exercise in undermining their value. It is instead an effort to identify the features that may plague these energy systems in the future, in a manner that would nullify the massive benefits that would most naturally flow from it.

The propagation of these cleaner forms of energy borne of new technologies, not only makes abundant sense but is, in fact, the only prudent trajectory to pursue to mitigate the impacts of Climate change. Yet, given that the new energy transition is the only alternative that the world has available, the margin for error is that much more meagre. It is this very imperative of getting it right that makes it necessary to appreciate that these new low carbon energy systems, harbour within their global supply chain, some of the negatives of the old forms of energy. It would serve our clean energy ambitions better to urgently consider the possibility that overlooking these remnants of the old form would negate any efforts for the end result of this promising transition to be sustainable.

1. E. Dominish, N. Florin, S. Teske  
*Responsible minerals sourcing for renewable energy*, Report prepared for earthworks by the institute for sustainable futures, University of Sydney (2019)

2. Solar panels are ahead in terms of pure numbers and scale than the lithium batteries, presently, where their proportionate contribution to the e-waste segment is concerned





Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Mark Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photo-grapher. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. In February 2019 the third publication was launched, *LE Children Poetry & Writing* (now renamed *Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers*). In August 2020 the fourth publication, *Live Encounters Books*, was launched. He has edited, designed and produced all of *Live Encounters'* 286 publications (till November 2023). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*; *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*.  
<https://liveencounters.net/mark-ulyseas-publisher-editor-of-live-encounters-magazines/>  
<https://www.amazon.com/Mark-Ulyseas/>



# MARK ULYSEAS

## 2023

### ANOTHER YEAR OF LIVING FOOLISHLY?

*This essay was written and published in 2008. Since then I have updated it every year. It is a reminder to us that the inhumanity of humanity has not changed. In fact, it appears to be growing in intensity.*

- This year is grinding to a close, so what will it be in 2024?
- More wars for religious or commercial purposes or perceived historical lands?
- More bombings of civilians, children, hospitals and schools under the garb of fighting terrorism?
- Cultural genocide... like the deconstruction of indigenous cultures for homogenisation by a godless State?
- Child abuse?
- Human slavery?
- Theft of human organs?
- More public stabbings of innocent people?
- And is our dead better than their dead? Do we continue killing them?



Is there another Mass Extinction in the making, perhaps the Palestinians, followed closely by the rest of humanity?

Are there more insidious revelations that expose the all-pervasive criminality of governments, international politics and sections of the Media?

Is the UN still a coffee shop for the rich and powerful to hang out and where honour still exists among thieves?

And are the medusa-like social media barons still lords of the manor? Do they control our hearts and minds and our freedom of speech? Or is the rise of *artificial* intelligence taking the baton from them to continue the relay race to the *lobotomisation* of humanity?

And are the pharma and armaments companies increasing their profits as the body count grows

And is tourism fast becoming online voyeurism? Or, has the tourist flood gates opened to the peddlers of obscenity?

And is the ether now the domain of roaming viral vitriolic mindsets looking for any cause?

And is liberalism the bastard offspring of fascism?

And has exceptionalism and wokism become a fundamental right?

There is so much to choose from. It's like a supermarket out there with all kinds of man-made disasters available on the shelves, one has simply to reach out and grab one. 2023 is ending on a note of negotiated delusions with the Climate Change Conference in Dubai. What happened to the good old days when we used a blanket instead of a heater? All this talk of saving the world is pointless. Everything is done half-heartedly. Let's make a resolution for the New Year to decimate the planet. Destroy all our natural resources, pollute the rivers and farm the seas to extinction. At least we would be doing one thing properly.



©Mark Ulyseas

Buffalo skin drying in the sun. It is a delicacy in parts of South-east Asia. Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.





©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

On one hand we talk of peace, love and no war. On the other hand, we bomb, rape, pillage, annex and subdue nations with money, military power and warped religiosity.

For instance, let's take a quick look at Afghanistan. The British couldn't control the tribes in the 19th century, the Russians failed miserably and the Americans with their assorted comrades in arms, poor souls, were being killed along with thousands of faceless unarmed Afghan civilians. I suppose life is cheaper by the dozen. After a two-decade war the invaders have left the country in the hands of the great unwashed. Afghan women and children are now at the mercy of these pathological misogynistic aberrations of humanity. Will the ordinary Afghan civilians ever get to live in peace?

And what about that European country presently being devastated by a war that has been created and funded by those countries whose mantra is 'rules based international order'. Has it become the testing ground for newly developed killing machines? And when the killings subside will groups of loving hands at home descend on the land to make money from donations in the name of one fraud or another?

What about certain parts of the Middle East, areas that have become mass open-air abattoirs for the mindless slaughter of innocent people? Do you think they will run out of people considering the number of killings that are taking place? Education there is history – like the slaughter of unarmed civilians, including children, by an army from God. It stems from the barrel of a gun. The pen is for signing death certificates.

Statistics are essential in war zones. They can always be rearranged to suit one's perceived objectives. The little numbers represent people, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, relatives and friends. A neat way to manage these numbers is to write in pencil so that an eraser can be used judiciously. And as the death toll in war ravaged countries rises, a hysterical caucus threatens a host of other countries for deviating from the 'the international rules based order' like illegally invading countries on trumped up charges and bombing innocent folk back to the stone age. The 'rules based order' are, perhaps, former colonial masters and their former colonies in their death throes.



Are these the same countries that accuse China of ruthlessly dismantling the vibrant ancient Uighur culture, brainwashing and incarcerating the Uighurs in re-education camps whilst the Islamic countries appear deaf, blind and dumb to the slaughter of their fellow brethren?

Is Tibet now lost forever in the dragon's jaws of modernisation?

And will Taiwan become just another killing field for jingoists in 2024?

This dragon, which had unleashed a terrible virus (a natural phenomenon?) on the world, killing millions, shutting down tourism and all but destroying economies, has quickly recovered from the scourge and is now selling merchandise in the millions across the world. Is this the soul of *Profit & Loss* - where people continue to get poorer while the rich get richer?

And is the much-peddled term of democracy actually the mask of plutocracy, where the rich get to be elected and poor are fed promises?

Africa, the Dark Continent, what can one say about its peoples and their ancient civilizations that have slowly been corrupted by large corporations and foreign governments meddling in the affairs of the states: Buying and selling governments on mammoth proportions? Oh, for the days of the Rwandan blood bath.

Everything is quiet now, no excitement and drama except for bloody popular uprisings, theft of natural resources and other inconsequential happenings like the sudden spread of highly infectious diseases and mass kidnapping of school children for forced marriage and conversion...and the continuing practice of female genital mutilation, which appears to be a thriving business across the world where doting parents in western countries take their little girls on 'vacation' cuts while their governments lecture Africans on the scourge of female genital mutilation.

What about the sub-continent, India? Do they still abort female fetuses or do they bury them alive, now? Burn women who don't bring enough dowry? Is rape intrinsic to the male mindset? Do they continue to decimate wildlife? Persevere in the destruction of the environment? And do millions still exist on the threshold of life and death? And is the arrogant Indian Middle Class growing to newer levels of self-indulgence?

And is protection of the holy cow more important than feeding millions of people living below the poverty line? And are politicians continuing to feed off the socio-economic-religious insecurities of its people? And are sections of its media turning into manic performing artists, deliberately taking sides in political dramas and creating news for ratings?

Forgive me... I missed that little country to the west of India, the homeland of terrorists and an illicit nuclear arsenal – Pakistan, an army that has a country. Poor chaps they've had such a tiresome year with the constant ebb and flow of political violence and religious fundamentalism peppered with suicide bombers that probably the common folk want to migrate to the West... can't really blame them. Their government is its armed forces' ventriloquist doll. The common folks' only desire is to live in peace to pray, work and procreate. Meanwhile, their government has been switching debtors from the West to China to the Middle East, countries that in turn have commercially colonised this country bleeding it by a thousand loans and assorted ventures like the supply of weapons to countries at war.

Now let's see who is left on the black board? Hmmm...the indigenous people of the Amazon are still fighting a losing battle with the powers that be to stop the plunder of their home, the rain forest, the green lung of mother earth. South America appears to be lost in translation. We never seem to get a lot of news from there except for soccer, drug lords, plunder of the marine world and the continued exploitation of the poor and defenceless by rapacious governments sponsored by those from the North and elsewhere. It has become the battle ground of powerful countries that use the common folk as cannon fodder.

Let's leave all this violence for some tuna, shark fin, whale, and dolphin meat. The Japanese and an assortment of other 'civilised' countries, Norway in particular, are so considerate to the world at large. For countries that pride themselves on rejecting nuclear weapons they have a rather odd way of showing their respect for the environment. I am referring to the mass killing of whales, dolphins and other sea creatures on an industrial scale. Actually, you must admire their concern. Ever considered the fact that they maybe ridding the oceans of monsters that take up so much space and are a serious health hazard to humanity?

However, the dumping of radioactive waste into the ocean by Japan is its main contribution to preserving the environment in 2023.

I think Japan's neighbour China has the right approach. It has dispensed with the cumbersome concept of human rights and its implementation. In its place totalitarianism with a large dose of plutocracy has been suitably installed. It uses its economic power and loan shark activities to threaten countries that do not kowtow its line.

There are many countries that lecture China on its human rights. Wonder who has a perfect track record...The world's last self-proclaimed superpower? A superpower that continues to interfere in the affairs of other nations by supplying state of the art weapons that are often used against civilians living a hand to mouth existence. I suppose the term 'collateral damage' is more palatable than the term... murder. There is a killing to be made on the sale of armaments but little or no desire to urgently help its own people devastated by natural disasters like massive fires and super storms and joblessness and crumbling infrastructure.

Civil liberties are essential for the survival of a nation and so is the health of its people. In some areas of society where common sense has been the victim, Nature has found a way of retaliating with diseases like Ebola, AIDS, Swine Flu and Zika, infecting millions and helping to keep the population in check: Of course, with a little assistance from the scientific community who often test drugs on unsuspecting illiterate folk and other living beings, in the holy name of finding new cures, while making a profit.



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.





Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

But Nature has a conscience. It has distanced itself from the prevailing pestilence, COVID-19... a deadly virus that originated from the den of the dragon...a Biblical-like plague not from God, but from the godless. A virus that has receded into the realms of laboratories after killing millions and making huge profits for pharma companies. There is now excited discussions and expectations for upcoming newer more deadly viruses.

Meanwhile, humanity is susceptible to dangerous new strains of super bacteria resistant to antibiotics.

As 2023 downs its shutters the price of human body parts has gone up. Human trafficking, organ trafficking and harvesting around the world (transplant tourism), including the 'civilised' nations, is now second only to drug peddling in revenue. Profiteers forecast a higher income in 2024, thanks to continuing wars, growing poverty, disease and transmigration of people (illegal migrants?).

And once again, as we have done in the past, this Christmas and New Year we shall all sit down to sumptuous meals, drink whatever fancies our taste buds, shop till we drop and pamper our overweight children and pets. It's the season of happiness, love and family especially for the homeless, injured and maimed children of wars, missing people in Gaza, Ukraine, Russia, Afghanistan, Syria, Xinjiang (Uighur), Tibet, Yemen, and elsewhere; asylum seekers, political detainees and the fringe folk of the planet. They will surely be very happy and content with what they see, hear, feel and touch this festive season.

From genocide to environmental disasters to devastating civil wars it has been a roller coaster ride through many countries and peoples and cultures and religions. This journey will end only when we truly comprehend the reason as to why we have been put on this planet by a power far greater than we can ever imagine.

Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year to you.

*Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om*

Ivo Coelho, SDB earned a PhD in philosophy at the Gregorian University, Rome, for his work on the hermeneutics of the philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, SJ (1904-1984). After teaching philosophy in Divyadaan: Salesian Institute of Philosophy, Nashik (India) and holding various offices in his religious congregation, in Nashik, Mumbai and Jerusalem, he is currently based in Rome, where he is in charge of the sector of training and formation for the Salesians of Don Bosco. Besides his interest in Lonergan, he has also edited collections of the essays of the Indologist Richard De Smet, SJ (1916-1997).

## DR (FATHER) IVO COELHO

### A LOST BOOK

#### THE FASCINATING STORY OF THOMAS STEPHENS' *Khristapurana*

Thomas Stephens' *Khristapurana* (Life of Christ) is an extraordinary work composed in Marathi by an Englishman in Goa in the year 1616. It has the distinction of being one of the first books printed in the first ever printing press in India, imported by the Jesuits in 1556. The book was, in fact, printed thrice – in 1616, 1649 and 1654. It is, therefore, in many ways a unique and historical book. The tragedy is that no copy of any of these editions has ever been found.

Thomas Stephens was born at Clyffe Pipard, Bushton (Wiltshire – England) in 1549 and died in Rachol, Goa in 1619. To escape the persecution of Catholics under Queen Elizabeth I, he fled to Rome and there entered the Society of Jesus on 20 October 1575. He volunteered for the missions of the nascent Society and was assigned to the Portuguese enclave of Goa. Leaving Lisbon by sea in April 1579, he arrived in Goa seven months later, on 24 October.

Stephens was one of the first Englishmen to set foot in India. His letters to his father about his voyage around the Cape of Good Hope and about the Portuguese commercial ventures in the East are considered to have inspired the English to establish their first commercial relations with India. He has the distinction of being the first European to write a grammar of an Indian language (Konkani), the first to compose a catechism in the same language, and the first to write a Christian poem in Marathi (his *Khristapurana*).



Dr (Father)Ivo Coelho



The *Khristapurana* was a response to the need of the people. The new converts from Hinduism were forbidden to read the great texts of their former religion, but they had nothing comparable in their new faith. They therefore appealed to Padre Estevão. The result was the *Khristapurana*, a retelling of the biblical story in Marathi, using the ovi metre. The book fell into two parts, along the lines of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and ran into some 11,000 verses. At a time when the Bible was forbidden to Catholics, the *Khristapurana* must have been a godsend. The fact that it was sung every Wednesday in the Churches of Goa, and that it was printed thrice in the span of some forty years, gives us an indication about its popularity.

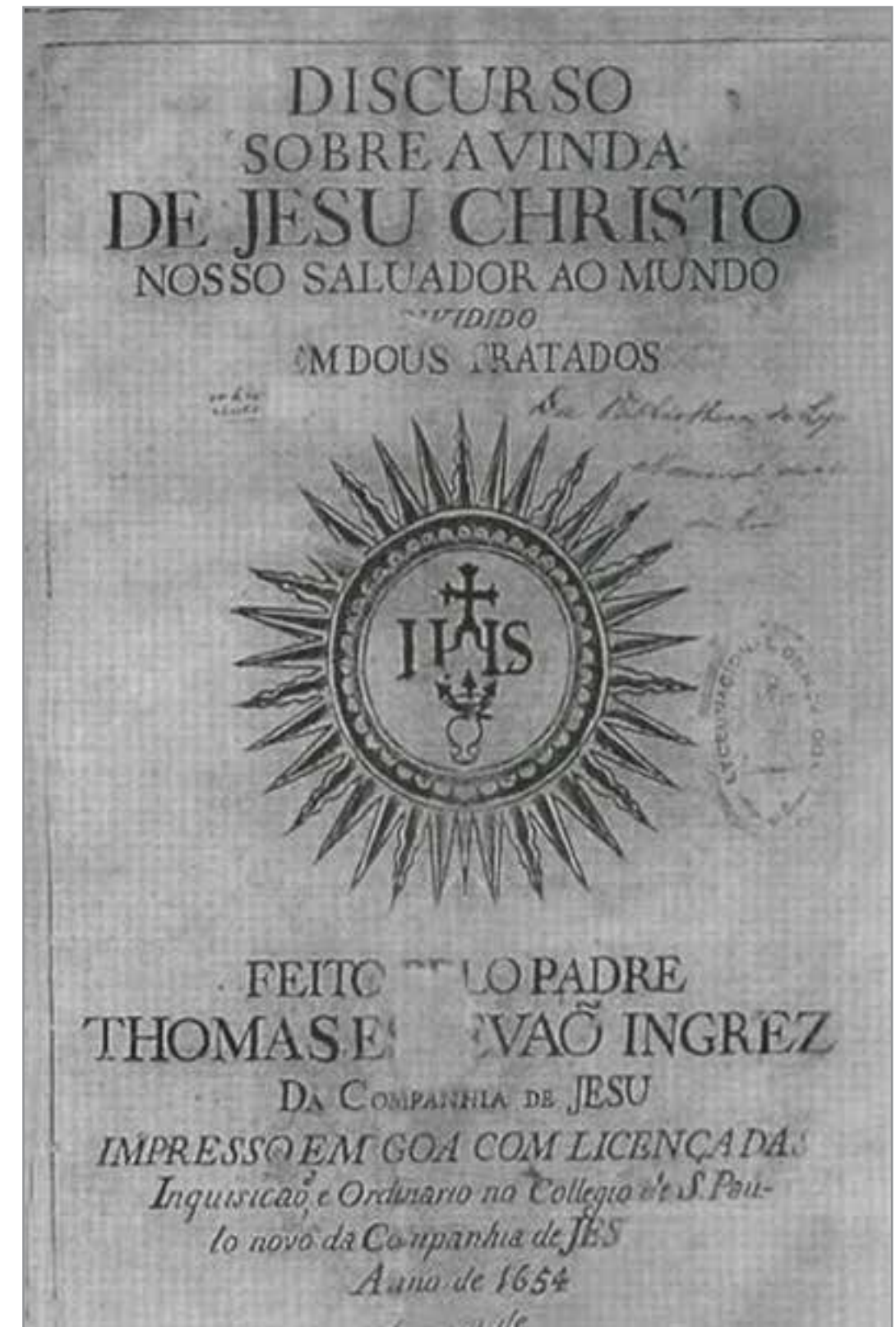
This last was also the first literary work in an Indian language to be printed (1615) in Roman characters, and its preface is cited as one of the first specimens of Marathi prose. Finally, it was this same Englishman who, two centuries before his compatriot William Jones, brought to the notice of Europe the similarity between Indian languages and Greek and Latin.

Known as Padre Estevão in Portuguese Goa, he served in various capacities in different places, endearing himself to the people. He spent a total of 39 years in Goa, broken only by a one year stint in Vasai, another Portuguese enclave north of Mumbai. Blessed with a robust constitution, he was energetic, vivacious and optimistic by nature. Through his work he comes across not only as a lover of the Konkani and Marathi languages but also as a human being of extraordinary sensibility and sensitivity. His delicacy and his capacity for understanding, negotiation and dialogue is borne out by the fact that, after the disastrous incident at Cuncolim, when the Hindu villagers refused to surrender the bodies of the Jesuits killed for desecrating their temple, it was he who negotiated with them and obtained the remains of his confreres.

The *Khristapurana* was a response to the need of the people. The new converts from Hinduism were forbidden to read the great texts of their former religion, but they had nothing comparable in their new faith. They therefore appealed to Padre Estevão. The result was the *Khristapurana*, a retelling of the biblical story in Marathi, using the ovi metre. The book fell into two parts, along the lines of the Old Testament and the New Testament, and ran into some 11,000 verses. At a time when the Bible was forbidden to Catholics, the *Khristapurana* must have been a godsend. The fact that it was sung every Wednesday in the Churches of Goa, and that it was printed thrice in the span of some forty years, gives us an indication about its popularity.

Stephens' efforts, we must add, were very much in keeping with the decision of the first Provincial Council of the Church in Goa in 1567, which had opted to promote the work of evangelization and catechesis in the local languages. The result was a flourishing of Marathi and Konkani literature in the first century of Portuguese rule in Goa – a body of literature that is still being studied in the Goa University and elsewhere.

The tragedy, however, is that not a single copy of the first three print editions has ever been found. The reasons for this state of affairs are many.



The *Khristapurana* (3rd edition, 1654) by Fr. Thomas Stephens, English Jesuit missionary in India.



A first reason was the suppression of the use of the vernaculars in 1684, thus effectively reversing the decisions of the First Provincial Council of Goa. After the initial enthusiasm, some members of the Catholic religious orders, among them the Franciscan Friars of the Observance, resisted the need to learn the local languages and eventually persuaded the Viceroy to change the established policies. By the year 1684 the use of Konkani was suppressed in favour of Portuguese. The reading of the *Khristapurana* during religious services went on a little longer but was eventually banned in 1776.

Another reason was the suppression of the Jesuit Society in 1773, leading to the loss of most of its Goa archives. The underground legend among historians is that these archives were sent by sea to Lisbon. Since there was no longer any official body of Jesuits in Lisbon to receive them, they were sent back to Goa. From there, it seems, they were sent once again to Lisbon. At this point, the story goes, the frustrated captain resolved matters by dumping them into the sea.

Whatever the truth of the matter, between the cessation of the use of the vernaculars and the suppression of the Jesuit Society, the *Khristapurana* was no longer printed and copies became difficult to find.

The closest idea we have of the print editions now comes from several handwritten copies of these editions. This is probably a rare if not unique case – that we have handwritten copies of what was originally in print. There are several such manuscripts. There is a well-preserved one in the Krishna-das Shama Goa Central Library, Panjim, Goa; it was copied in 1767 from the third edition of 1654. There is another, possibly older but undated manuscript in the museum of the monastery at Pilar, Goa. The Thomas Stephens Konknni Kendra (TSKK) at Porvorim, Goa has two manuscripts, one of which seems to have belonged to a certain M.C. Saldanha. Finally, there is the incomplete “Bhaugun Kamat Vagh” manuscript in the Pissurlencar Collection at the Goa University Library, Taleigao Plateau, Goa.

When Joseph L. Saldanha produced what he called the “fourth” edition of the *Khristapurana* (The *Christian Puranna*, Mangalore 1907) he reports having based himself on at least five manuscripts. Four of these were in the Roman script: those of Messrs. Dunbar Brothers of Parel, Bombay; Mr Marian Saldanha (probably Dr Mariano Saldanha of Ucassaim, Goa); Mr Julian Coelho; and the Rev. S.B.C. Luis. The fifth, interestingly, was in Devanagari script, and was borrowed from a Mr Jerome A. Saldanha,

Falcao reports having searched libraries in the UK, Portugal and Rome, but does not, unfortunately, give us a detailed account of his findings. Given the fact that there are many variations of Stephens’ name (Tomás Estêvão, Estevão, Esteves, Estevam, Busten, Stephen de Buston, Stephen de Bubston, Thomas Stevens, Thomas Stephens) as well as of the title of his work itself (*Discurso sobre a vinda do Jesu-Christo Nosso Salvador ao mundo*; *Purana*; *Puránna*; *The Adi Puran* and *The Deva Puran*; *Khristapurana*), I would think that a second and more thorough search is needed, especially in the national libraries in Lisbon and Porto, the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the Jesuit Central Archives in Rome.

Sub-Judge of Alibagh, Bombay Presidency. Unfortunately, we have been unable to trace any of these manuscripts, unless the one belonging to Mr Marian Saldanha coincides with the “M.C. Saldanha” copy held by the TSKK in Goa.

Interestingly, however, another manuscript of the *Khristapurana* in the Devanagari script came to light in 1923. This was discovered and identified by Justin E. Abbott in the Marsden Collection at the School of Oriental Studies in London. The collection had belonged to the library of a certain William Marsden “who a century ago [Abbott was writing in 1925], had made a large collection of coins and Oriental books when in India; many of the latter having been obtained from the Archives in Goa.” The text of the “Marsden manuscript” is now available to scholars both in the Devanagari script (with a translation into current Marathi) and in Roman script (with a translation into English) thanks to the painstaking labours of Nelson Falcao.

Far from being a copy of the print editions, the “Marsden manuscript” displays several variations and differences, giving scholars much food for thought. Was the *Khristapurana* composed in Devanagari script and then transposed into Roman script, or was it the other way round? Why is the Marsden manuscript shorter than the ones in the Roman script? Most importantly, why is there a systematic difference in terminology between the two sets of manuscripts, with the Marsden manuscript making use of biblical and ecclesiastical terms deriving from Sanskrit, and the others using Latinized and Portuguese forms?

Falcao reports having searched libraries in the UK, Portugal and Rome, but does not, unfortunately, give us a detailed account of his findings. Given the fact that there are many variations of Stephens’ name (Tomás Estêvão, Estevão, Esteves, Estevam, Busten, Stephen de Buston, Stephen de Bubston, Thomas Stevens, Thomas Stephens) as well as of the title of his work itself (*Discurso sobre a vinda do Jesu-Christo Nosso Salvador ao mundo*; *Purana*; *Puránna*; *The Adi Puran* and *The Deva Puran*; *Khristapurana*), I would think that a second and more thorough search is needed, especially in the national libraries in Lisbon and Porto, the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana and the Jesuit Central Archives in Rome.

It would certainly be an important scholarly event if we were to find even a single copy of the three print editions of Thomas Stephens’ great work.





Dr Parama Sinha Palit is [Adjunct Senior](#) Fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore. She was a Cooperative Monitoring Center (CMC) Fellow with the Sandia National Laboratories, the US Department of Energy in 2021 and a Consultant with the CRDF Global, USA in 2022. She specializes in foreign policy, diplomacy and international relations. Her latest book, [New Media and Public Diplomacy: Political Communication in India, the United States and China](#) was published by Routledge early this year. She is also the author of [Analyzing China's Soft Power Strategy and Comparative Indian Initiatives](#), published in 2017 by SAGE. She has been a Researcher with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) and the United Services Institution (USI), New Delhi, India and had a brief stint with the National University of Singapore (NUS) as well.

## DR PARAMA SINHA PALIT

### INDIA'S G20 PROJECT: BRAND-BUILDING FOR POLITICAL MESSAGING

India's G20 Presidency has been an exhaustive effort in projecting the idea of 'Brand India' centrally positioned on the image of its Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The 'Brand India' identity has been in the works for quite some time. In 2021, Modi emphasized India's role as a 'reliable, democratic partner' at the [United Nation General Assembly](#). During the same year, he conveyed India's desire to assume global responsibility at the Quad [first in-person Leaders' Summit](#). The 'Brand India' message was substantially expanded at the [World Economic Forum](#), Davos, in 2022. Modi not only highlighted the country's capabilities in innovation, technology adaptation and entrepreneurship, but also its ability to be a reliable partner in global supply chains. India's global social responsibilities by committing to safeguarding environment through climate-friendly lifestyles was advanced through 'Lifestyle for Environment' (LiFE) on the same occasion. LiFE figured prominently on the Indian agenda during its Presidency of G20, as did its accomplishments on digital public infrastructure, outlining its [digital diplomacy strategy](#) focusing on a [human-centric approach](#) to technology.

Establishing 'Brand India' has been a key objective of Modi's BJP in the foreign policy arena. The BJP's [manifesto](#) for the general election of 2019, which elected Modi to office for a second term, underscored the Party's vision to 'fundamentally reboot and reorient' India's foreign policy goals 'in a manner that locates India's global strategic engagement in a new paradigm and on a wider canvass'. Establishing 'Brand India' for enhancing the country's reputation both globally and locally was an important part of the vision. The effort represents strategies of modern nation states and their governments to generate specific agendas for communicating with the *new* global public.

Dr Parama Sinha Palit



By managing a consensus among the G20 members on the Ukraine issue, securing membership for the African Union (AU) and pushing China to the margins of the Summit, India consolidated its brand image as a responsible global actor communicating the Voice of the Global South – a role where it competes with China. By doing what it did, 'Brand India' has made itself widely visible in the global strategic discourse. The visibility was obtained by India's efforts to chart out a decisive course in external engagement, unaffected by disruptions caused by estranged ties with China.

Contemporary political communication emphasizes agenda setting for engaging public attentions on the same, thereby enabling governments to achieve certain purposes, including exercising greater influence through foreign policies. The BJP has explicitly pursued agenda setting for making foreign policy deliver both global and local goals. With the next general election a few months away, 'Brand India' has been used purposefully for stretching India's global influence and using the same for conveying political messages to the domestic constituencies. Prime Minister Modi – the BJP's face and its biggest electoral asset, as well as a global leader with strong strategic heft – has been seamlessly blended into the visualization of 'Brand India'.

Advancing 'Brand India' has faced significant challenges. The context of India's G20 Presidency was marred by hostile great power rivalry, India's own strained ties with China and the indefinitely prolonging Russia-Ukraine conflict. Irreconcilable differences between the G7 and other G20 members on the Ukraine conflict on the one hand, and other key agenda issues (e.g., reforming global financial institutions, affordable climate finance) on the other, posed as key hurdles. Challenges continue to persist even after the successful delivery of the Leader's Declaration with the India-Canada row threatening to impact 'Brand India'. There were also significant domestic challenges: ethnic strife in India's north-eastern state of Manipur and communal violence in the Northern Indian state of Haryana figured prominently in the greater global and national media coverage on India in the run-up to the G20 Summit.

By managing a consensus among the G20 members on the Ukraine issue, securing membership for the African Union (AU) and pushing China to the margins of the Summit, India consolidated its brand image as a responsible global actor communicating the Voice of the Global South – a role where it competes with China. By doing what it did, 'Brand India' has made itself widely visible in the global strategic discourse. The visibility was obtained by India's efforts to chart out a decisive course in external engagement, unaffected by disruptions caused by estranged ties with China.

The BJP's wider domestic and nationalist political agenda has also resonated through the G20 exercise of consolidating 'Brand India'. Extensive use of *Bharat* on the high-level occasions of the Delhi Summit, as opposed to *India*, is a relevant example. The purported objective was to communicate the idea of a new India confident and determined to cast off its colonial past.

Addressing the domestic publics was also visible through India's showcasing of its achievements in delivering public goods digitally. Indeed, for a domestic audience embedded to unique digital identity (*Aadhar*) and home-grown digital payment platforms [e.g. United Payments Interface (UPI)], the knowledge of the same being discussed by the world's most powerful policy-making group for greater global adoption, can generate great confidence in the country's ability to take Indian innovations far and wide.

Latest opinion polls confirm strong public support for the Prime Minister in his quest for a third term in office. The political messaging conveyed through projection of 'Brand India' at the G20 will contribute to the prevailing public sentiment. The obvious challenge for the BJP is to retain the political capital till the general election. The challenge could be substantial in a complex and unpredictable global environment, where international relations, even between allies and partners, appear distinctly fragile. The current India-Canada tensions, for example, might be a test for 'Brand India' in this regard.



Dr. Ashok Sharma is a Visiting Fellow at the University of New South Wales Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy; an Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of the Faculty of Business, Government and Law at the University of Canberra; and an Academic Fellow of the Australia-India Institute at the University of Melbourne. An alumnus of the Jawaharlal Nehru University and Delhi University, Dr. Sharma has held Faculty/Fellow/Honorary positions at the Australian National University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Auckland, the University of Waikato, Victoria University of Wellington, and the University of Delhi. Dr. Sharma was also the Deputy Chair of the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs, Auckland Branch (February 2012- June 2022), the Head of the “South Asia Strategic, State Fragile and Security Program, and Conjoint Head of “Indo-Pacific Strategic Issues and Major Powers Studies” at the National Asian Security Studies Centre, the University of Canberra. Dr. Sharma, specialises in International Relations, Global Security and Indo-Pacific strategic issues with a focus on the US-India-China great power politics, and is one of the leading experts on India’s global positioning, notably on India’s growing strategic ties with the US and Australia, and the Quad in the emerging strategic geometry in the Indo-Pacific. Extensively published, Ashok is the author of “India’s Pursuit of Energy Security: Domestic Measures, Foreign Policy and Geopolitics” and “Indian Lobbying and its Influence in US Decision Making: Post-Cold War”.

## DR. ASHOK SHARMA

### BIDEN AND MODI ELEVATE THE US - INDIA COMPREHENSIVE GLOBAL AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP TO THE “NEXT GENERATION PARTNERSHIP”

The India-US relationship continues to grow stronger. This is reflected in back to back two summit meetings, one during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s first state visit to the US in June 2023 under the Biden Presidency and another at G20 Summit in Delhi. President Biden and Prime Minister Modi struck agreements in Washington to deepen the US-India Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership. In the course of the summit meeting, [Biden and Modi made a number of commitments](#) that covered a wide range of topics, including defence and security, cooperation in space and emerging technologies with a path toward the transfer of technology for jet engines, drones, and critical technology, health, energy, and mobility. While at the side-lines of the G20 Summit, Biden and Modi assessed the progress in the US-India Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership.

Biden and Modi dubbed the strengthening connections between the US and India as the “[Next Generation Partnership](#)”. India has become crucial in the US attempts to address pressing global issues including climate change, artificial intelligence, reconstructing the global supply chain, and preserving a free, secure, and open Indo-Pacific in the midst of the rising strategic tensions between the US and China.



Dr. Ashok Sharma

Biden and Modi reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to a [free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region](#) with respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as international law. These measures by China, coupled with its [apparent assertive and belligerent military posture during the Covid-19 outbreak](#), have only sped up efforts by the US and India to band together and develop closer defence and technological relations.

### Meetings at the summit level: advancing the strategic partnership between the US and India:

Prior to the June 2023 trip to the US, Prime Minister Modi made multiple trips to the US and held summit talks which have been significant in terms of crucial global issues, and fostering trade and investment, and defence and security ties between India and the US. However, the steps that were taken during PM Modi's visit to the US in and his meeting with counterpart was termed as ushering in a new era in the US-India bilateral relationship.

The India-US relations has come a long way. The US-India relationship has changed over time, [transitioning from a cautious relationship during the Cold War to a strategic partnership](#). During the Cold War era, relations between the two countries were not particularly cordial. However, the altered post-Cold War situation gave both countries the flexibility to mend their relations. Following India's nuclear test in 1998 and the immediate aftermath, ties between the two countries improved. Since that time, there has been no stopping in the relationship between India and the US, which has only continued to expand, deepen, and strengthen in every field. The signing of the US-India civilian nuclear accord marked one of the key turning points in ties which removed India's nearly three-decade-long nuclear pariah status. This ended the system of technological exclusion for India and paved the door for collaboration in the civilian nuclear energy sector as well as the transfer of high-tech and sensitive defence technologies to India.

Significant actions were taken throughout the George W. Bush administration and Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, and India and the US were positioned as "natural allies". Amidst the unfolding geopolitics with the rise of China and the post-911 security threat environment, both leaders established the course for the US-India relationship, which successive US presidents and Indian prime ministers stood to take to the strategic partnership that has been steadily expanding and hailed as the pivotal partnership of the twenty-first century. Beginning with Prime Ministers Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Manmohan Singh, and Narendra Modi, the connection has a bipartition node in both nations. These leaders have worked sincerely to build this partnership. In the US, starting with President Bill Clinton's last two years in office, George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joe Biden have all made sure that the US keeps up a steady and thorough engagement with India.

The shared commitment to democratic values, principles, a democratic way of life, and safeguarding democratic norms and institutions has served as the foundation for both nations' ties over the years. Modi and Biden reiterated their dedication to democracy by citing the fact that the founding documents of their respective nations begin with the words "[We the people](#)" as well as the strong strategic partnership between India and the US as solid examples of the effectiveness of democracy.

### In the direction of joint efforts in space, technology, and defence:

The growing and robust India-US bonhomie has considerable impact on geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific, and not surprisingly keenly monitored by China. This has been one of the major highlights of the recent summit meetings. During PM Modi's US visit, the remarkable steps were taken towards strengthening of the US-India ties. The US-India cooperation in the fields of space, defence, and emerging technology has put the Chinese government keeping a close eye on this major visit by PM Modi. It's significant because renewable energy and space have become contested geopolitics space, where China has enormous stakes. India is also starting to emerge as a major take part, but China has dominated the renewable energy industry and made major strides in space technology recently. Through its projects like "Made in [China 2025](#)" strategic plan and "China Standards 2035" strategy, China has made rapid advancements in the fields of information and technology, renewable energy, and space exploration. Beijing intends to control critical and emerging technology through these regulations.

Biden and Modi reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to a [free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region](#) with respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty as well as international law. These measures by China, coupled with its [apparent assertive and belligerent military posture during the Covid-19 outbreak](#), have only sped up efforts by the US and India to band together and develop closer defence and technological relations. Both nations have been working to improve their high-end technology collaboration. Additionally, both countries are addressing issues brought on by the digital revolution, such as data privacy, cybercrime, national security, and terrorism, through diplomatic channels. Prior to PM Modi's visit to the US, Biden and Modi launched the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies in Japan.



The focus on artificial intelligence, critical technologies, and the trade and transfer of cutting-edge technology only serves to highlight how the mutual trust and confidence between the two nations has taken their long-standing partnership to a new level. Increased cooperation in the areas of space, artificial intelligence, defense, and technology transfer will be the cornerstone of the US-India Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership, where the two biggest democracies in the world will work together for the good of humanity.

In addition to projects in data science, artificial intelligence, agriculture, and the environment, the United States and India also committed to work together on a number of other research initiatives. The agreements reached at the Modi-Biden summit are seen as the next phase of the [US-India initiative on critical and emerging technologies \(iCET\)](#), which was signed in May 2022 and aimed to expand and improve bilateral strategic technology collaborations and defence-industry cooperation. In order to accomplish the objectives of iCET, which is led by the National Security Councils of India and the US, a number of research institutions are engaged in technological research and development.

Both leaders set the foundation for American [General Electric to collaborate with India's Hindustan Aeronautics](#) to develop jet engines for Indian aircraft there as well as the sale of armed MQ-9B Sea Guardian drones made in the United States. A \$2.75 billion semiconductor assembly and testing facility will be built in India by the American company Micron Technology, with India funding the remaining \$1.25 billion.

### Countering China's assertiveness Indo-Pacific:

The world has seen a significant movement in international trade and investment trends toward the Indo-Pacific during the past two decades. The US-India Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership is deeply ingrained in the strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific, mostly caused by China's ascent and desire to rule the region.

In the Indo-Pacific, China continues to be assertive. India objected to China's new map standard, which claims Indian territory along their shared border, in August 2023 by communicating with Beijing diplomatically. India's Arunachal Pradesh, the Doklam Plateau, and Aksai Chin are all included on the Chinese map that was made available online by the [Ministry of Natural Resources of China](#). Aksai Chin is also shown in the western region of the map that China controls. The chart was made public just days after [Modi and Jinping pledged to cooperate to de-escalate tensions](#) along their disputed border during a meeting sidelines of a BRICS summit.

The US administration was eager to make the most of Modi's state visit in June, which included statements to the environment, healthcare, and space exploration as well as some important private sector projects. In September, on the sidelines of the G20 Summit, Modi and Biden met for the second time in a span of three months. By hosting the discussion at his home, Modi demonstrated the goodwill and mutual respect the two leaders have developed to share. China's military and economic machinations in the Indo-Pacific have gradually brought the two leaders together to work on common security challenge.

The focus on artificial intelligence, critical technologies, and the trade and transfer of cutting-edge technology only serves to highlight how the mutual trust and confidence between the two nations have taken their long-standing partnership to a new level. Increased cooperation in the areas of space, artificial intelligence, defense, and technology transfer will be the cornerstone of the US-India Comprehensive Global and Strategic Partnership, where the two biggest democracies in the world will work together for the good of humanity. Today, warm sentiments have replaced a sense of distrust and uncertainty that previously defined relations between India and the US. There is no look back and stopping to this defining partnership of 21st century.

Prof(Dr) Debarati Halder, LL.B, LL.M( International & Constitutional Law), LLM(Criminal & Security Laws), Ph.D(Law) (NLSIU, Bangalore) is engaged as Professor of Law at Parul Institute of Law, Parul University (NAAC A++)LL.B, LL.M( International & Constitutional Law), LLM(Criminal & Security Laws), Ph.D(Law) (NLSIU, Bangalore).  
More about her can be found <https://internetlegalstudies.com/about-me/>



## PROF (DR) DEBARATI HALDER

### THE WAR AIDED BY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY: CAN WE REALLY WIN OVER IT?

When I am writing this piece in India, we are celebrating Vijaya Dashami, the annual Hindu festival of winning over negative energies by [Goddess Durga](#), the ultimate divine power in Hinduism. Most of us enjoy the days by doing pujas at home, visiting temples and community places and joining the celebrations with music and dance. YouTube plays a big role in enhancing the festive spirit for people who stay away from their homes. Most of us enjoy the festive vibe by watching the Durga Puja over the digital screen, communicate with each other and greet each other over internet and digital communication technology based platforms. But this year the digital screen based festivity has taken a different shape. Almost every news channel on YouTube are busy sharing the devastating consequences of [Hamas - Israel](#) conflict. Such news items are again being shared by certain influencers and content creators who may make money from the 'views' they get out of their contents. What is more painful is the scene of children wounded in the war. The presentations in the [YouTube](#) platform are enough to create extremely disturbing spell on the minds of the viewers including children and young adults. Majority of the conflict related contents are created on grieving parents, dead bodies being uncovered by shocked and traumatized relatives including the parents and children, wounded civilians being rescued and the crying faces of people who are directly or indirectly affected by the war.

Prof (Dr.) Debarati Halder



Is this really a war between State and non-state actors which in turn is affecting many civilians from different jurisdictions? Or is this a never ending war with the aid of digital technology? I would prefer to say this is a never ending war with the aid of digital technology. Greed for making money by showcasing victimization of war affected people especially children on the cyber platforms has turned individuals into shameless monsters. Unless the healthy minded society unitedly prevent such visual victimization, this war will never end.

The more the contents are being shared by authorized news channels, the more the contents are being re-shared by private content creators with customized background noise and selected edited clippings that are psychologically extremely disturbing for majority of the viewers. Question is: (i) are the content creators aware about the rules that [prohibit sharing images of children affected due to conflicts](#)? (ii) why people are 'viewing' images of wounded children and adults (mostly parents) ?

There are no data available for the first question as of now, as this is a very new phenomenon in the form of old wine in new bottle. Sine YouTube has created a platform for revenue generation, many people have been surviving on the revenue generated from the 'views' they get on their contents. This has encouraged content creators to create contents on subjects that may have the ability to attract the attention of viewers. Unfortunately, contents depicting sexuality, sexual and physical abuse, pain, emotional breakdowns etc., may attract more views (even if it is for couple of seconds) than contents with positive subjects like creativity, gardening, educational video series, awareness building videos etc. I call this as 'old wine in new bottle phenomena' because there are numerous contents on aftermath of mass shooting, motor vehicle accidents, natural calamities, terrorism related violence etc, created by private content creators as well as by small to medium level news channels in the past few years. Consider the [videos on 2004 Tsunami](#), or the [Himalayan tsunami](#) that had happened in India, or [mass shooting attacks](#): these were re-shared by many content creators and they received many views as well as comments which further made them prominently searchable on internet platforms. But the 2023 Israel-Hamas conflict related contents are larger in volume than the others. There is an urgent need for research as how many content creators are sharing such information as the stakeholders need to know the volume of creators who are spreading information about the present conflict especially images of wounded, grieving and [dead children](#). Such data will be helpful to find out whether such creators are aware of the rules related to online child protection and safety.

Let me now discuss about the second question: why people are viewing images of war affected children. This is directly connected with [psychology of viewers](#). Several researches have suggested that people may view such violent contents on the screen to get a sadistic pleasure. Such contents may have been created with a positive intention to share the actual consequences of war and its effect on innocent civilians, especially children.

But this 'intention' may have been dominated now with intentions of profit gaining by sharing and enhancing visual victimization, online religious hatred and above all ethnic and political enmity. One content creator may influence thousands of viewers to share hate comments and this escalates with every content creator who may continue to share the clippings of children affected by armed conflict.

Is this really a war between State and non-state actors which in turn is affecting many civilians from different jurisdictions? Or is this a never ending war with the aid of digital technology? I would prefer to say this is a never ending war with the aid of digital technology. Greed for making money by showcasing victimization of war affected people especially children on the cyber platforms has turned individuals into shameless monsters. Unless the healthy minded society unitedly prevent such visual victimization, this war will never end.

May peace prevail.

Dr Howard Richards (born June 10, 1938) is a philosopher of Social Science who has worked with the concepts of basic cultural structures and constitutive rules. He holds the title of Research Professor of Philosophy at Earlham College, a liberal arts college in Richmond, Indiana, USA, the Quaker School where he taught for thirty years. He officially retired from Earlham College, together with his wife Caroline Higgins in 2007, but retained the title of Research Professor of Philosophy. A member of the Yale class of 1960, he holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of California, Santa Barbara, a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the Stanford Law School, an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) from Oxford University (UK) and a PhD in Educational Planning, with a specialization in applied psychology and moral education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada. Dr Richards is a Catholic, a member of Holy Trinity (Santisima Trinidad) parish in Limache, Chile, and a member of the third order of St. Francis, S.F.O [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

## DR. HOWARD RICHARDS

### RURAL HAPPINESS

At least since the *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of Virgil (around 30 B.C.), if not since the *Works and Days* of Hesiod (700 B.C. or earlier), creative writers broadly categorized as romantic have portrayed rural life as the consummate *beau ideal* of what human life should be, close to nature, faithful to beautiful traditions. Historians, being aptly regarded as having sworn an oath to Thucydides as medical doctors swear an oath to Hippocrates, are professionally committed to recount the facts *wie sie eigentlich gewesen waren* (as they really happened). Historians are more likely to depict life in the countryside as never-ending grinding poverty coupled with, in Marx's words, "rural idiocy."

Now, in 2023, in the following pages I will develop the thought that devoting time, treasure and talent to nurturing rural happiness would be a key contribution to *changing the catastrophic direction in which history is now moving*.

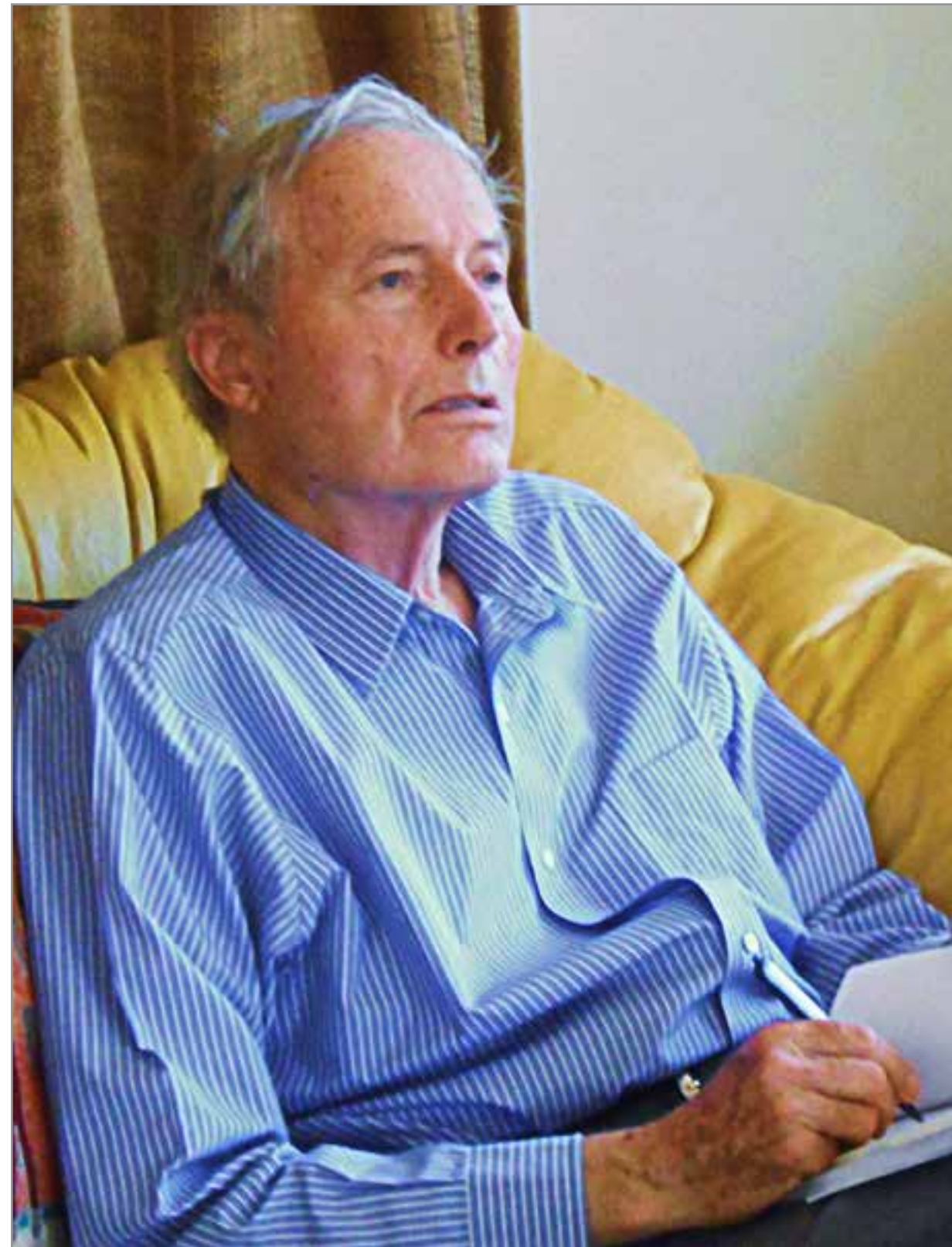
But what does this mean? As a first approximation, admittedly a mainly negative approximation, *rural happiness* as I employ the phrase, means improving the quality of life in rural areas; (1) without being too romantic<sup>1</sup>; and (2) without continuing untransformed any of the social structures or economic models that have mass-produced, or failed to terminate, rural poverty in the past or present. In one word, it is unbounded. Or, to choose one word that is less precise but more familiar, rural happiness is innovative.

First, I will make a remark about language.

Second, I will briefly sketch some general features of my unbounded moral realist perspective on today's world.

Third, I will make some relatively specific proposals for South Africa.

Fourth, I will come back to the word "happiness," explaining why I chose it and not some other word I might have chosen.



Dr Howard Richards





Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

## 1. About language

I do not claim that my way of talking and writing about these issues is the only way, or even the best way. Given that the objects of scientific study are independent of the vocabularies and theories of the scientists who study them, nobody's way of talking about them can claim to be reality's only authorized representative. This disclaimer applies to social institutions (regarded, following Durkheim, as social facts that for any given individual are as solid and as unchangeable as natural facts) as well as to nature.

## 2. About my general perspective

As a quick way to frame my perspective on the contemporary world, I will introduce it as an answer to questions like: Why was general prosperity for all expected after the end of apartheid an immense disappointment when it did not materialize? Why did Nelson Mandela believe that social rights guaranteed by the new South African constitution of 1994, could be funded and could become realities? Why did Eleanor Roosevelt believe that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 could effectively guarantee social rights? Why did Gunnar Myrdal believe that the classic Swedish Model could be applied, albeit with modifications, in Africa and in Asia?

I regard these four questions, and others in the same vein, as four or more blind men touching different parts of the same elephant. And I regard them all as having the same answer: because it was believed that "Keynesian" economics (not to be identified with the views of the economist of a similar name who wrote the General Theory<sup>2</sup>) would work.

Keynesian economics does not work. Consequently, social democracy ("liberalism" in the USA) does not work, except in unusual circumstances such as those prevailing in North West Europe during the trente années glorieuses 1945-1975.<sup>3</sup>

We have to forget the idea that dignified livelihoods for all can be achieved by paying workers out of funds created by the sale of the products they contribute to making. Keynes never thought he had found a solution to modernity's problems.

He never believed that countercyclical government spending would be a sufficient and sustainable solution to the problem he and his contemporaries defined as unemployment. We define that problem as including the excluded, as dignified livelihoods for all, or more broadly as meeting human needs in harmony with nature.

Keynes glimpsed but did not grasp that both the chronic deficiency of demand and the chronic deficiency of the inducement to invest were consequences of the basic social structure. That basic structure has many names, as do other social facts existing independently of the scholars who study them: Tauschprinzip for Adorno and Horkheimer, échangiste for Marcel Mauss, economic relations dominating social relations for Karl Polanyi, patriarchy morphed into capitalism for Nancy Hartsock,<sup>4</sup> the moral code of a free society for Friedrich von Hayek...and so on.

Including the excluded in South Africa, or in any other country, absent exceptional circumstances, requires funding that does not come from selling the products they would make, or the services they would render, if they could succeed in becoming employed. The importance of this point cannot be overestimated. Attempts to end poverty, and thus greatly to facilitate solving ecological problems like global warming and social problems like racism, have regularly failed because they have sought solutions where no solutions are to be found. They seek solutions changing characteristics of the poor, as if the bottleneck problem were that characteristics of the poor prevent them from holding well-paying good jobs. It is tacitly assumed, more than it is consciously believed, that if the poor had more skills and better attitudes, and if there were sufficient incentives to invest and to grow the economy, then if job training and growth went on long enough, poverty and all of its painful consequences could come to an end.

## 3. About South Africa

From the unbounded point of view I am advocating, in principle South Africa has not run out of viable options. Unbounded organization is a philosophy that postulates that where there is good-will –the most precious of all commodities and the character trait it should be the first and primary goal of education to cultivate—the number of viable solutions to any given problem is never finite.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

My sketch of a generic solution to more than one problem, expressed in hermetic brevity that hopefully is more tantalizing than frustrating, calls for paying more people to be what Adam Smith called “servants.” And to do this especially in the countryside. And to do it especially calling on the servants to perform the most useful kinds of service anybody could possibly perform at this point in history: contributing to saving humanity from destroying itself by destroying its habitat.

The specific practices this general suggestion cashes out as, mesh with new thinking. New mental models. Other paradigms. One of Martin Luther King Jr.’s favourite Bible verses provides a slogan.: “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”<sup>5</sup>

Let me explain. I will start by explaining what Smith meant by “servants.”<sup>6</sup>

For Smith, by definition a servant is someone who creates no product for his or her employer to sell. Smith distinguishes between servants and workers. A worker produces a vendible product. His master can sell it at a profit. A servant does not. A servant, by definition, is not productive. From Smith’s day until now measures of productivity measure only the production of what the science of economics defines as products, and products, by definition, can be sold.

More servants are needed because:

1. Much indispensable work still needs to be done that...
2. ...workers are not going to do because there are no profits to be made hiring workers to do it...
3. ...and because there is a deficit of dignified livelihoods (good jobs) leading to intolerable structural humiliation, depression, crime, violence and misery...
4. ...and that intolerable deficit must be made up funding servants because it cannot sustainably be made up generating profits by hiring workers.
5. (This analysis is complicated but in the last analysis not refuted considering that many people e.g. homemakers, professional thieves, self-employed people, rentiers...are neither workers nor servants.)

South Africa already has considerable public sector experience in paying servants to do useful work in order to create employment that the labour market does not create. For example: in creating dignified livelihoods for people employed to bathe old ladies who live alone and have no one to help them, for example people employed to counsel prisoners in jail on how to adjust to life after release, for example in gardening not to sell the vegetables but to give them free to impecunious people who would otherwise be reduced to living on mealy meal... and so on.<sup>7</sup>

Trying out this different paradigm, more ancient than new, South Africa already has made many mistakes to learn from. It also has accrued a small but real number of successes to learn from. The brick wall that stops promising starts is the public deficit. Joseph Schumpeter’s thesis that a *Steuerstaat* (a state that relies on taxes for all or most of its income) cannot be a sustainable welfare state, is once again confirmed by historical experience.

One success, rare but real, is the use of public employment to catalyse community development. There are good examples to build on, carefully documented by Malose Langa and colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Reconciliation and Violence. In principle, social inclusion by strengthening community bonds, facilitating the empowerment of the excluded, and mobilizing the assets poor people already have, has already happened in pilots. But tying public spending on useful work to community development has not gone to scale.<sup>8</sup>

In the big business private sector, the Spirit of Davos, stakeholder capitalism, the doctrine of shared value taught at Harvard Business School, a merger of Ubuntu with today’s global revival of amended Aristotelian ethics leading to Kosheek Sewchurran’s and Reuel Khoza’s concepts of moral leadership, and many other initiatives make South Africa part of today’s global ethical sea-change. Nevertheless, while ethical consciousness is growing. ecological and social disasters are becoming more severe, not less severe. And according to a 2012 report by the Organization of African States and the UN Economic Commission for Africa, while the Spirit of Davos was proclaiming the dawn of the age of the moral corporation, multinational business firms were dwarfing organized criminals and drug dealers in the sheer size of sums illicitly taken out of Africa, mainly by transfer pricing.<sup>9</sup> Whether business ethics have improved in this respect between 2022 and 2023 I do not know.





Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

In any case my hypothesis is still that the private business sector is ready willing and able to contribute to rural happiness in South Africa. The business sector nationally and worldwide already donates large sums to non-profits dedicated to the common good, in addition to generating employment, goods and services in their own operations. Unfortunately, for the most part it appears to be trapped in mental models that assume that if economic growth goes on long enough, and if enough people are educated and trained to qualify for employment, then eventually it will be possible to solve humanity's principal problems. It is not so.

Rural happiness, as a second approximation, consists of doing meaningful work, enjoying the prestige of being a valued member of a community, getting paid well enough to enjoy basic security, and doing this in the country instead of the city. While declining to call myself a romantic, I still imagine country spaces as spaces where for many thousands of years humans have lived close to nature, preserving community traditions, far from the madding crowds of great cities. So conceived, rural happiness can be an ethical contribution to coping with at least three of South Africa's problems that are so severe that they can be called existential challenges:

The Existential Challenge of the morally indefensible (mostly black) poverty that generates violent anger.

A good start toward viable solutions would be to work for the happiness of two million black households who already own land in areas reserved for blacks under apartheid. Now they mainly experience never-ending grinding poverty practicing subsistence-oriented agriculture. South Africa –like almost every other country-- has too few good jobs. Dignified rural livelihoods complementing what smallholders get from their land could have the effect of helping fill the good jobs deficit, both because the country dwellers could piece together decent livings and because urban job-seekers would face less competition from people who seek work in the city after giving up on trying to eke out a living in the country.

What *exactly* should members of the two million households do? For those of us who believe in local community leadership of asset-based local community development, the answer to this question must be "It is not for us to say."

It is for conscientious outsiders of one kind or another to provide discreet material and financial support, to audit to combat corruption, to harmonize local autonomy with the national and global necessity of working to save the planet, and to facilitate making the work done educational, not just a job. Concerning education, the members of poor black households not now getting much benefit from their land should be encouraged to pick up their formal and informal education at whatever point it formerly came to an end, learning among other things the science behind the work they are doing, like for example the science behind planting native trees. I suggest inviting Sidwell Mokgothu, the Methodist bishop of Limpopo, to participate in the process of developing this concept.

The existential challenges of food security, essential export earnings, and justice for the non-poor.

In South Africa no issue is more emotionally charged, or more dangerous as a potential detonator of violent conflict and as a threat to the stability of democratic institutions, than land reform.

It is too easy to reason that we, the blacks, were the owners of the land, it was taken from us by force, not just once in 1648 but also in 1913 and at other points of time. Now we are poor, deprived of the land that was for centuries our means of livelihood, while people whose skin is of a different colour have waxed rich exploiting their ill-gotten gains, and often also have exploited us, the true owners, as poorly paid labourers. In the face of the conclusions of this kind of easy reasoning, any justifications for delay in giving back the land are easily framed as self-serving procrastination.

But achieving rural happiness for people who now are poor but could be happy working the land they already own if only their sector had sufficient community organization discreetly backed up by socially conscious outsiders, can be decoupled from issues around the large industrial farm sector. Seizing the lands of today's high tech large scale agricultural entrepreneurs to atone for the sins of persons now deceased is not practical or ethical. The two sectors have complementary purposes. The main goals of the first are the happiness of the people, demonstrating methods capable of eradicating misery elsewhere, and the reversal of global warming and other threats to the biosphere.



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

The second sector adds two more goals: producing enough food at low enough prices to assure the food security of South Africa's city dwellers, and bringing to South Africa export earnings in foreign currencies necessary to pay for essential items South Africa does not produce and must import.

These considerations assume that some form of land reform, with willing sellers and willing buyers, as well as a general tendency for more of the large scale agricultural entrepreneurs to be black, will go forward at a reasonable pace. A government might even try pilot runs testing novel approaches like the EFF idea of the state acquiring land and leasing it.

These suggestions for supporting poor black landowners, if they work, will make further land reform easier, not harder. It will be easier because there will be working models of rural happiness that avoid the fate of so many land reforms in so many countries where new land-owners came into the possession of a piece of land, but found that there was nothing much they could do with it.

And these specific suggestions do not exempt anyone from general ethics. Everyone and every organization of any size should do their part to achieve humanity's green transition. Everyone should, as best they can, contribute to making life sustainable, safer, more meaningful, and more enjoyable for everyone else. Ubuntu is on the agenda, as are dharma, zakat and stewardship.

### **The existential challenge of saving the biosphere.**

Nature needs servants to help her to repair the damage that humans have done to her, but she has no money to pay them. She would be grateful for anything we, who might have some money or have some influence with somebody who has money, could do to multiply leafy villages and towns all around the countryside. They would be rural spaces where many plants would be at work photosynthesizing carbon dioxide and releasing the oxygen thus liberated into the atmosphere. Some of the humans there would earn their livings, or parts of their livings, helping Nature to recover.

### **4. About Happiness**

Nominating candidates for ways to help South Africans to cope with their existential challenges is not the main theme of these pages. The main theme is a flexible unbounded cosmovision, designed to orient the reinvention of humanity and its institutions. Because of the causal powers driving the catastrophic direction in which history is now moving; without reinventing ourselves, homo sapiens cannot survive.

For all of prehistory and most of history humans have been too few and too poor to destabilize the delicate balances that make life possible. Now because we are too many and half of us are consuming too much, we are unsustainable. We are bringing many other species down with us. Since the main ideas in our minds, and the main norms that organize our institutions, were formed before we became a toxic species, in 2023 it is mind-blowing and revolutionary to adapt our mental models, our technologies and our economies to reality.

Living leafy models of escape from rural poverty, should also be frugal models. They should inspire frugality among the non-poor. They should display low tech paths to sustainability, like bicycles; complementing high tech paths to the same end, like phasing out generating electricity from fossil fuels while phasing in state-of-the-art renewables. As a third approximation, rural happiness is an educational ideal. It teaches lessons that can quickly go global on the Internet. It creates prototypes and best practices that can be replicated. It motivates both the poor and the non-poor to shrink their ecological footprints, because it is so easy to do after you learn how to do it, so much fun, and so deeply satisfying.

The word "happiness" (*eudaimonia* in ancient Greek) as a name for the purpose (*telos*) of actions implies caring about people. It implies attention to the details of people's lives, for any number of different good or bad outcomes can affect whether people are happy or not. It puts moral development on the agenda, for the relationship of happiness (*eudaimonia*) to virtue (*arête*) has been a central theme of necessary conversations in the West for many centuries. This agenda item, far from museumizing the ceremonies and beliefs and child rearing practices of other cultures present at any time and place, features them on the agenda too. It puts faith-based activities and projects on the agenda.





Photograph by Mark Ulyseas

More recently psychologists have had much to say about happiness, for example Melanie Klein’s essays on the relationship between happiness in later life and experience at birth and in early childhood,<sup>10</sup> and Martin Seligman’s work growing out of his studies of depression –one of the opposites of happiness.<sup>11</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, a focus on happiness marks a clean break with excessive reliance on narrowly economic thinking and on narrowly economic criteria for making decisions. It is a reminder that the whole purpose of an economy is to enable people to live well, happily, in harmony with nature. Economic issues today are at the core of our problems. Economics has to be reinvented, but it cannot be successfully reinvented by designing new approaches and transforming old approaches using only criteria internal to economics itself. The presence of the venerable word “happiness” denoting long histories of ethical and religious conversations in many cultures is an invitation to work on reinventing humanity and its institutions in more open conversations. It admits more criteria as relevant to distinguishing successes from failures<sup>12</sup>

P.D. This is the end of this short paper. The same ideas will be found explained at greater length in other writings. If there is interest in practical applications, I would like to follow this paper with a sequel devoted to organizational and financial aspects of next steps.

End Notes

1. And without being romantic at all as the term is understood by Pierre Bourdieu and likeminded left-leaning scholars. See Pierre Bourdieu, The Political Ontology of Martin Heidegger. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996.
2. See Hyman Minsky. John Maynard Keynes. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
3. For an explanation of why this is the case, see Howard Richards and Joanna Swanger, The Dilemmas of Social Democracies. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006.
4. Nancy Hartsock, Money, Sex and Power. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1983.
5. Howard Richards with the assistance of Gavin Andersson and Malose Langa, Economic Theory and Community Development. Lake Oswego OR: Dignity Press, 2022. Chapter 9.
7. Howard Richards with the assistance of Gavin Andersson and Malose Langa, Economic Theory and Community Development. Lake Oswego OR: Dignity Press, 2022. Chapter 9.
8. On failure to go to scale, see the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Rejoice Shumba at University of Johannesburg.
9. To read this report google Report of the High Level Panel on illicit financial flows from Africa
10. Melanie Klein, Envy and Gratitude. London: Hogarth Press, 1924.
11. Martin Seligman, Authentic Happiness. New York: Free Press. 2011.
12. Amartya Sen laments the narrowness of economics, and calls for incorporating more insights from more sources into decision-making processes in his book The Idea of Justice. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2011.



Dr. Bibhu Prasad Routray held the position of Visiting Professor and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) chair, India Studies at Murdoch University, Perth between July-December 2017. He served as a Deputy Director in the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India and Director of the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM)'s Database & Documentation Centre, Guwahati, Assam. He was a Visiting Fellow at the South Asia programme of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore between 2010 and 2012. Routray specialises in decision-making, governance, counter-terrorism, force modernisation, intelligence reforms, foreign policy and dissent articulation issues in South and South East Asia. His writings, based on his projects and extensive field based research in Indian conflict theatres of the Northeastern states and the left-wing extremism affected areas, have appeared in a wide range of academic as well as policy journals, websites, and magazines.



Dr. Shanthie Mariet D'Souza is Founder & President of Mantraya; Teacher and guide in Defence and Strategic Studies; Member of Research & Advisory Committee, Naval War College, Goa; Board Director at Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo; Research Fellow at Welt-Trends-Institut für internationale Politik, Potsdam, Germany; Editorial board member of Small Wars & Insurgencies (Routledge: UK); Expert and Contributor to the Middle East-Asia Project at the Middle East Institute, Washington DC; Senior analyst for the South Asia desk with the Wikistrat Analytic Community and Adviser for Independent Conflict Research and Analysis, London. Research Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies. Among her most recent published work are edited books titled Countering Insurgencies and Violent Extremism in South and South East Asia (Cass Military Studies, Routledge: UK), Afghanistan in Transition: Beyond 2014?, co-edited books, Perspectives on South Asian Security and Saving Afghanistan. She has guest edited a special issue on "Countering insurgencies and violent extremism in South Asia" in Small Wars & Insurgencies (UK: Routledge), February 2017. Tweets @shanmariet. This article republished by permission of [www.mantraya.org](http://www.mantraya.org)

## DR. SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA DR. BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY INDIA'S CENTRAL ASIA OUTREACH: COUNTERING CHINA'S EXPANDING FOOTPRINT

### Abstract

*For the past couple of years, India has used several forums and mechanisms to reach out to five Central Asian countries. Connectivity and economic integration with these countries being its key objectives, New Delhi has tried to evolve a common security outlook to foster a cooperative framework that will nudge these countries to look beyond China. However, instability in Afghanistan and India's bilateral relations with Pakistan and China are the factors that pose continuous challenges to New Delhi's objectives.*

### Common Security Threat: The Afghan dilemma

New Delhi appears to be relying on what it calls a 'common security threat' to establish a co-operative framework with the five Central Asian (CA) countries, [Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan]. This was evident in National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval's address to the second NSA-level meeting between India and CA countries on 17 October in Kazakhstan.

Doval underlined India's concerns regarding the prevailing situation in Afghanistan. He blamed a "particular country" (i.e. Pakistan) for denying connectivity between India and the central Asian region. He also indirectly blamed China's infrastructure projects in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) for violating India's sovereignty and argued that such projects should respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. "They should also adhere to environmental parameters, ensure financial viability, and not become debt burdens", [he said](#).





The concerns highlighted remained more or less similar to the ones mentioned during the first NSA-level meeting hosted by India in New Delhi on 6 December 2022. During that meeting, the NSAs discussed the challenges of extremism, terrorism, and radicalisation in the region. NSA Doval had said financing is the “lifeblood” of terrorism, and countering it should be a priority.

India brought a bouquet of offers for the CA countries in Kazakhstan. This included ‘fully funded capacity-building programmes in a range of areas to tackle both terrorism and drug trafficking’; ‘close cooperation to help CA countries build defences against cyber threats and create a secure cyber ecosystem’; invitation to the ‘heads of cyber security agencies of the CA countries to India for a “strategic cyber experience” and offer of providing India’s United Payment Interface (UPI) technology free of cost to facilitate the setting up of sovereign digital real-time payment systems in line with the needs of these countries. India has also proposed the setting up of an India-Central Asia Rare Earths Forum to explore partnerships in strategic minerals.

### **Multi-layer Threat Perceptions: Need for a Cooperative Framework**

For India, engagement with the CA countries is important because of a range of reasons — security cooperation after the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan; to counter China’s influence in the region; plans for connectivity with Europe including the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC); to meet its energy needs (Turkmenistan is part of the proposed, but much-delayed TAPI gas pipeline); and for reasons of old cultural links and trade potential.

To achieve some of these objectives, in various forums, India has tried to draw similarities between the security concerns of New Delhi and the CA countries. For instance, at the 19 December 2021 meeting of India-Central Asia foreign ministers, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar told his Central Asia counterparts that their “concerns and objectives” in Afghanistan were “similar”, and their goal was “a truly inclusive and representative government, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, ensuring unhindered humanitarian assistance and preserving the rights of women, children and the minorities”. On 27 January 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a virtual summit with the leaders of CA countries. He called for an integrated approach to regional cooperation and flagged Afghanistan as a common concern.

Since early 2022, India and the CA countries have established a multi-level periodic engagement framework. This includes a leaders’ summit every two years; regular meetings among their foreign and trade ministers; a joint working group on Afghanistan; joint counter-terrorism exercises between India and interested Central Asian countries; and a group to operationalise the use of Chabahar port by all five countries.

### **Countering China: Being on Board?**

While it is inevitable that the CA countries, three (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) of which have borders with Afghanistan, share some of the security concerns highlighted by India, and will also be amenable to the prospect of increasing their bilateral trade with New Delhi, are they fully on board with what India wishes to achieve in that region, especially with regard to the BRI? That appears unlikely.

While being partly weary of Beijing’s political ambitions and concerned about their over-reliance on China, some CA countries do see benefits of the BRI. Unlike India, China has a direct border with the CA region. It has a bilateral annual trade of \$50 billion with Central Asia. India’s trade with the region, in comparison, is a paltry \$2 billion. Not surprisingly, as the India-CA countries NSAs were meeting in Astana, the heads of state or representatives of three of these countries were in Beijing to attend the Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation on 17 and 18 October.

On 18 October, Kazakh President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, in his speech at the Forum, noted the key role of China in ensuring global security and called it the locomotive of economic and technological development. The Kazakh Presidential Press Service [reported](#) Tokayev’s speech in detail, which was full of appreciation for the BRI and his commitment to remain a part of the project.

Turkmenistan was represented at the Forum by ‘National Leader’ Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Chairman of the People’s Council of Turkmenistan. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, till March 2022 was the country’s President and currently his son, Serdar Berdimuhamedov, holds the post. At the sidelines of the Forum, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov met to sign a number of bilateral agreements.

Xi Jinping also promised to “strengthen the alignment between the BRI and Turkmenistan’s development strategy”, according to [Chinese media](#). Incidentally, Turkmenistan, which shares excellent relations with Beijing, for instance, has not sent its NSA (or any senior security official) to the meetings in New Delhi and Astana, asking its ambassadors in those countries to participate.

Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who attended the Forum, was [personally greeted](#) by President Xi. This was Mirziyoyev’s second visit to China this year, the first being for the China-Central Asia Summit in the city of Xi’an in May.

The two CA countries who were among the absentees at the Forum were Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. However, in both these countries Chinese economic influence is [widespread](#). Both are part of the BRI and have been roped into a large number of infrastructural as well as connectivity projects by Beijing.

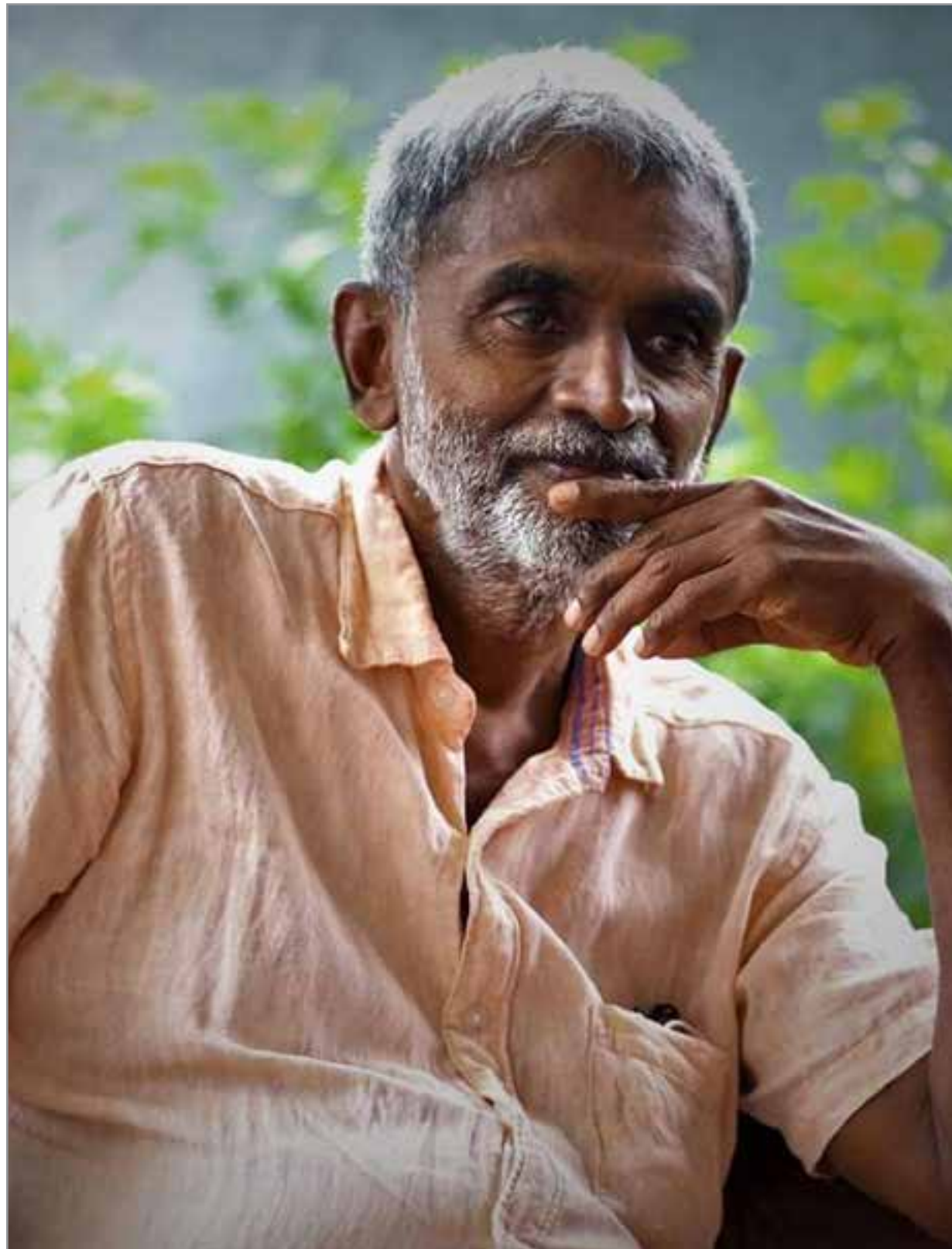
### Way Forward: Keeping the Dragon at Bay

India does not want the post-Soviet space in Central Asia to be completely under the influence of the Chinese. Constant engagement with these five CA countries leading to some concrete achievements, hence, is a key mechanism in Delhi’s toolkit. New Delhi realises that the TAPI project may not see the light of the day, due to both instability in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s negative attitude.

Hence, it has tried to focus on [integrating the INSTC with Chabahar port](#) in Iran to access the CA region. The INSTC envisages the movement of goods from Mumbai to Shahid Beheshti Port – Chabahar (Iran) by sea, from Chabahar to Bandar-e-Anzali (an Iranian port on the Caspian Sea) by road, and then onwards to Astrakhan (port in the Russian Federation) by ship across the Caspian Sea, and after that to other regions of the Russian Federation and further into Europe by Russian railways. Western sanctions on Iran and Russia have made Tehran and Moscow look at the INSTC project with renewed interest. However, the actual implementation of the project could take years, without a clear roadmap. Time is of the essence here. India’s Central Asian outreach needs to gather pace.

At the same time, New Delhi while crafting its outreach strategies needs to factor in the existing integration between the economies of those countries with that of China. While meeting the Chinese influence can be a long-term goal to pursue, India can certainly bring in its own unique strengths and expertise to boost the relationship in areas of trade, transit, connectivity, and integration to actualise its Central Asia Connect policy.





Prof. (Rtd.) Daya Somasundaram, BA (USA), MBBS (India), MD (SL), FRCPsych (UK), FRANZCP (AUS), SLCP (SL), was a senior professor of psychiatry at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, and a consultant psychiatrist working, often solely, in northern Sri Lanka for over three decades during the civil war. He has worked as a consultant psychiatrist at Glenside Hospital; with indigenous mental health services; supporting those coming as refugees and asylum seekers in Australia at Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS), and is a clinical associate professor at the University of Adelaide. He retired as a consultant from the Wide Bay Mental Health Services, Hervey Bay, Queensland. He has also worked in Cambodia for two years in a community mental health programme with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation. He has functioned as co-chair of the subcommittee on PTSD formed under the WHO working group on stress-related disorders during the ICD-11 revision process. Apart from teaching and training a variety of health staff and community-level workers, his research and publications have mainly concentrated on the psychological effects of disasters, both man-made wars and natural tsunami, and the treatment of such effects. He also functioned in two national bodies, as the co-chair of the Task Force on Psycho-social Support, Office for National Unity and Reconciliation (ONUR), and on the UN mandated Consultation Task Force on Reconciliation Mechanisms, Sri Lanka. In retirement, he is involved in studying the health impact and creating awareness of the local and transborder hazardous air pollution during the North East monsoonal blowing from northern India and Bangladesh. In addition, he is trying to establish an eco-friendly wellbeing yoga and meditation centre at Thapovanam in Allaipiddy island and Mullaithivu.

*This article is an English adaptation of a Tamil lecture I delivered in 1994 :  
Prof S. Vithyananthan Memorial Lecture on “Man in Search of His Soul” (Tamil).  
Kailasapathy Auditorium. University of Jaffna. 18th May 1994.*

## PROFESSOR DAYA SOMASUNDARAM CHAKRAS - A TANTRIC DESCRIPTION OF LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

### Abstract:

An interpretation of levels of consciousness based on Tantric texts is presented. Each *chakra* is described as a level of consciousness with its own characteristics, features, organizing principle and theme. The problems of each *chakra* have to be worked through and mastered before a person can move on to the next higher level of consciousness. There are said to be six standard *chakras*. The first, *Muladharam*, corresponds to basic material needs like water, food and shelter. Next comes, *Swadhishtanam*, which is the sex centre. The third chakra, *Manipuraham*, represents power. The fourth, *Anahatham*, is the centre for love. The higher states of Visudhi and Ajna are more reflective of cognitive and spiritual development. It is explained that progressive evolution through each *chakra* is accompanied by a corresponding expansion of consciousness.

### Introduction

*“Consciousness is a fascinating but elusive phenomenon: it is impossible to specify what it is, what it does, or why it evolved. Nothing worth reading has been written about it.”*

(Sutherland, 1989)

Consciousness studies is in its infancy in the West, perhaps no more than a century old (Guzeldere, 1995). There is considerable confusion on what consciousness is, how it should be defined, why it has evolved and even if it exists at all (Guzeldere, 1995; Shear, 1995). According to John Searle, “....at our present state of the investigation of consciousness.. We don’t know how it works and we need to try all kinds of different ideas”.

Professor Daya Somasundaram. Photograph by Dr. S. Sivathas.

It is remarkable that there is a treasure house of ideas on consciousness in the spiritual texts and traditions of the East, but most modern ‘cognitive scientists’, with a few notable exceptions, seem to ignore this vast gold mine of knowledge. The explorations of the reasons for this off hand dismissal of the Eastern contribution to understanding consciousness will in itself be an instructive exercise. Most western scientists do not expect any thing of value to come out of the East. Whatever the truth of this assertion, it is perhaps in the field of consciousness studies that the East has excelled herself. While neglecting all other pursuits, even to the point of her ruination, the East has systematically cultivated and encouraged the exploration of the field of consciousness. Somewhat akin to present day western societies’ dedication to science, creating a whole culture for the advancement of scientific studies through universities, research bodies and grants, the East had built a complete culture that allowed and admired those who pursued consciousness. For centuries, the most gifted and dedicated gave up all to investigate consciousness. They submit themselves to the hardest discipline, the most rigorous methods and an inner longing for genuine personal experience and proof. It may not be necessary, therefore, to rediscover these old truths anew or invent the wheel again.

Part of the East-West impasse may be the unscientific and often heavy religious language that basic texts are clothed in, the obvious dross, dust and thick veil that covers and often misleads. The research will mean learning a new and strange language (which is not a difficult pursuit for scientists considering the whole new language of consciousness studies now being created and the willingness of newcomers to learn it) and a new system. Perhaps more difficult will be the paradigm shift that goes against the most basic assumptions of a materialistic world view that has been learnt from childhood. For in most Eastern schools of thought, Consciousness is primary, the fundamental stuff of the universe while in western science matter, particularly sub-atomic particles are primary and consciousness a mere epiphenomena. One way to bridge this seemingly unsurpassable gap, to find a common ground, would be to go behind the sub-atomic particles to the underlying energy (according to Einstein’s famous  $E=mc^2$ ) which could be the primal consciousness of the East (Capra, 1980). The Eastern concept of consciousness tends to be much more deeper and richer. Thus when an one tries to define consciousness, insurmountable difficulties arise. Unlike in the west, there are many words for what could be termed consciousness with subtle differences in meaning. Thus we have *Chit*, *Saythanyam* and *Prajna* all depicting consciousness. In fact, *Prajna* goes much farther, to the far East, and incorporates the nuances of Zen (Neng, 1969).

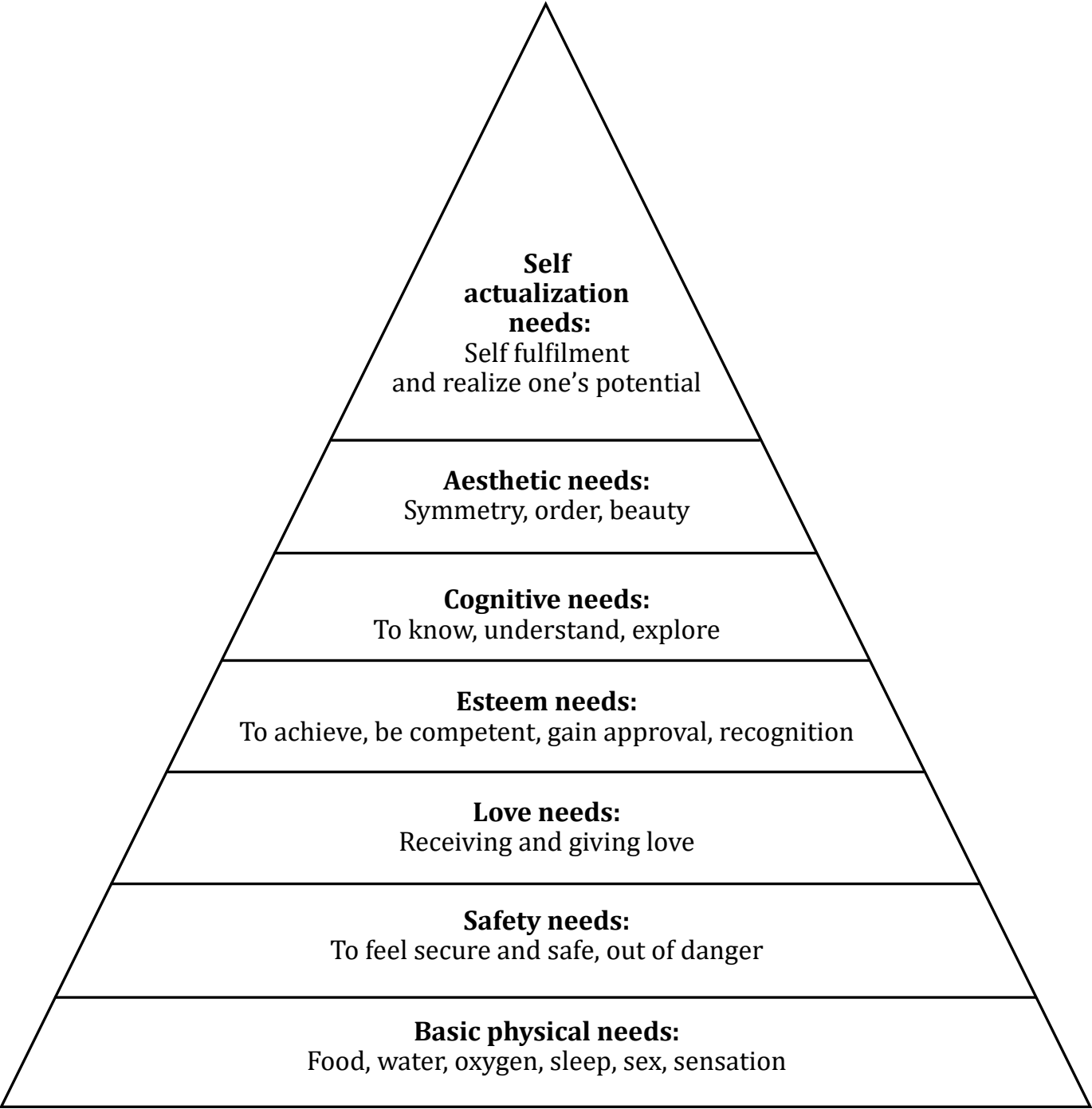
## Method

It is not the purpose of this paper to inquire into the finer meaning of these terms nor to defend or explain the Eastern views on consciousness. What I would like to do is present one more way of looking at levels, states or dimensions of consciousness. There is already the well known differentiation into waking, sleeping and dreaming states presented in the Upanishads, for example in the Mandukya (Ghambirananda, 1958) which also describes a fourth- Turiya state. The first three states are a favourite among our scientific colleagues and established by a wealth of experimental studies including physiological and EEG correlation. Interestingly, the Transcendental Meditation (TM) researchers claim to have found similar evidence for the fourth state also (Borland & Landrith, 1976; Benson, 1975). More recently, Wilbur (1993) and Farthing (1992) have described the spectrum and levels of consciousness, respectively. A description based on the WHO holistic definition of health (WHO, 1984), which speaks of the physical, psychological, social and spiritual dimensions will be presented in a subsequent paper. It is not that one is right and another is wrong, though their may be minor mistakes. We are only human. On the other hand, these and many other descriptions enrich our understating of consciousness. Consciousness is a multidimensional continuum and includes much variety within its fold. None can claim to exhaust its possibilities. One description may be more useful for a particular way of understanding a problem than another.

Most Eastern schools speak of a progressive development or evolution of the human being (or soul) through different stages or levels. Each stage has its own unique characteristics, needs, goals, consciousness. The needs at each level are akin to Abraham Maslow’s (1970) *Hierarchy of Needs* (see fig. 1). At the bottom are the basic physical needs of water, food and sex. Next comes security and feeling of safety. At the next level there is the emotional need for love, relationships, acceptance and sense of belonging. Following this is the need for self-respect, dignity, skill and recognition. As a higher intellectual or cognitive need is understanding, clarity, curiosity and knowledge. Higher than this is the aesthetic needs for art, creativity and enjoyment of beauty (rasa) or symmetry. Finally, in a few individuals at the pinnacle of human achievement, is the drive for self-actualization, fulfillment or attainment of the highest potential. Every human being will function at one of these levels.



Fig. 1 Maslow’s hierarchy of needs



Whichever level (s)he or she is at, that will form the basis of the person’s thoughts, emotions, goals, dreams, desires, behaviour, perceptions, world-view, meaning, frustrations, fulfillment - in short their consciousness. For the time being that level is their world. Man strives to attain and fulfill the needs of that particular level before progressing onto the next higher level and so on.

According to orthodox psychoanalytic theory of Freud (1939) and his followers, the driving force in man has been called the Libidinal energy. Depending on a person’s needs, experiences, childhood complexes, opportunity and inherited character, this largely unconscious energy will invest internal and external objects to determine man’s thoughts and actions. Later day humanistic psychotherapists have described this fundamental motivation in man as an inherent tendency to evolve, develop and climb higher, to achieve the highest potential. Carl Rogers (1977) taught that our goal should be help man to find his inner self and live genuinely according to that. Victor Frankl (1959) described man’s search for meaning as the most important need. Modern humanists like Assogioli (1982) have developed the field of transpersonal psychology which teaches that in all of man’s striving, needs, and goals the highest is to find the Self. This highest goal has been called by many names including God, Holy Grail, Truth, *Atma*, *Brahmam*, *Nirvana* etc. In the Tantra, this driving energy to develop and evolve, this prime motivating force is called the *Kundalini Sakti*. It is said that this force will push man through each level, each *chakra*, till the final goal is to attain the highest level, in esoteric language, unite with *Siva*.

For this paper, a model based on the Tantric *Chakras* is presented. An interpretation of the older texts based on more modern psychological theory is attempted. As such it can be hardly called orthodox and may not be acceptable to all. The attempt is at a metaphorical or symbolic description and not meant to be taken literally. So for the skeptical, strict cognitive scientist or neurophysiologist, the following can be taken as mere fiction, written just for their reading pleasure, an invitation to take a journey into pure imagination. However, as always, most discerning readers should find a germ of truth and intuitive confirmation in this exposition which was first presented as the Prof. Vithiyananthan 2nd Memorial Lecture on May 18th 1994 at the University of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

## Chakra

Each *chakra* is a level of consciousness, a world of its own with its own characteristics, needs, goals etc. (see fig. 2). In the symbolic Tantric description each *chakra* is a lotus and these characteristics are described as its location, hue, petals, deity, logos, *bija* mantra, number, letter, theme, *thathuvam* (basic substance) etc. There is an organizing principle for each level and particular construction of reality. Man's task at each level, similar to Erikson's (1963) fulfillment of the psychosocial tasks for each stage, would be to grapple with the problems of that level, meet its needs, the desires for that level have to be fulfilled, the person has to be satiated, to reach a poise of neither like or dislike for the objects of that *chakra* before moving onto the next level. The integration of the opposites, the black and white, good and evil, pleasure and pain, male and female, known as the *Yin* and *Yang* principles in the Chinese *Tao* system (Watts, 1986) is an essential step. The world of that level has to be experienced, the theme processed and integrated. The work for each level has to be completed before graduation. According to Eastern doctrine, man is given the where'll to meet his needs or work set out for him according to his stage of development. Literally, man receives a body (*thanu*), organs (*karanam*), world (s)he inhabits (*puvanam*) and experiences (*anupavam*) or enjoyment (*bogam*) depending on his/her past actions (*karma*) and stage of development. The problems, difficulties, challenges a man faces in life are those necessary for his advancement. And (s)he is given the necessary strength, skills, materials and opportunities for it, but progress depends on their personal effort, motivation, *free will* if you will. That is the freedom to go forward, backward, sideways, get lost or stay in the same place. The work for each level may not necessarily be completed in one lifetime. The world is like a classroom for learning the lessons for that level, it becomes the testing ground, an examination before graduation, for man's evolution to the next *chakra*. There is a slight increase in understanding, a small expansion of the consciousness, the veil hiding the eternal Truth is drawn back a little for a moment to perhaps give just a glimpse. In the beautiful symbolism of the Tantric texts, this completion of the tasks for that level and the graduation to the next is described as the lotus of that *chakra* opening up, blooming with all its petals spreading out as the *Kundalini sakti* passes onto the next *chakra*.

The tantric texts describe the *chakras* as located along the spinal cord (see fig. 3). Although some enthusiasts (Seat, 1953) ascribe anatomical and physiological significance to these locations in terms of nerve plexus or spinal centres, they will be only taken in a metaphorical or symbolic sense here<sup>1</sup>, more as a convenient framework for the description that is to follow. There are six standard *chakras*, though some schools describe more. They are from below, *Muladharam*, *Swadhishtanam*, *Manipuraham*, *Anahatham*, *Visudhi*, *Ajna* and on top, the thousand petalled *Sahasrara Lotus* (see fig. 3).

In what is to follow the explanation for the first four *chakras* will differ considerably from the orthodox view. Traditionally, the *chakras* are considered to be stages or centres on the spiritual path for aspirants or *shadakas*, who actually make a very small minority of mankind. However, for this interpretation, the first three *chakras* will describe the state of consciousness of the majority of ordinary, normal human beings immersed in the worldly life. They comprise the usual binding attachments and desires of the mundane world. These three together are also sometimes referred to as the fire system (*mandalam*), the lower states (*kilalawasthai*) or path, in contrast to the other four which are the higher states (*nirmalawasthai*) or pathway. If one is to follow the tantra strictly, one would have to go below the *Muladharam*, to the lower worlds (*pathalam*) for the psychospiritual explanation of the first three states of consciousness as described here. There is considerable variation in the various texts (Arunanthisivachariyar, 1971). Nevertheless, the interpretations presented here will be based on the Tantric texts, particularly Sir John Woodroffe's monumental works (Avalon, 1953; 1980), with a selected textual excerpt at the beginning of the section for each *chakra*, followed by a psychospiritual interpretation.

### Muladharam (see fig. 3)

*At the centre of the body, just above the anus at the bottom of the spinal cord is found the Muladharam. Brahma, the creator, is the deity sitting atop Indra's vehicle, the elephant. Its thathuvam is the earth (soil). The bewitcher of the world, Kundalini sakti in the form of a serpent lies coiled up in deep sleep. The goal of shadana is to awaken the kundalini sakti and make her rise up through the chakras.*



Fig. 2 Characteristics of a Chakra

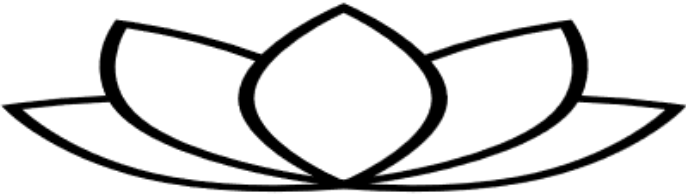
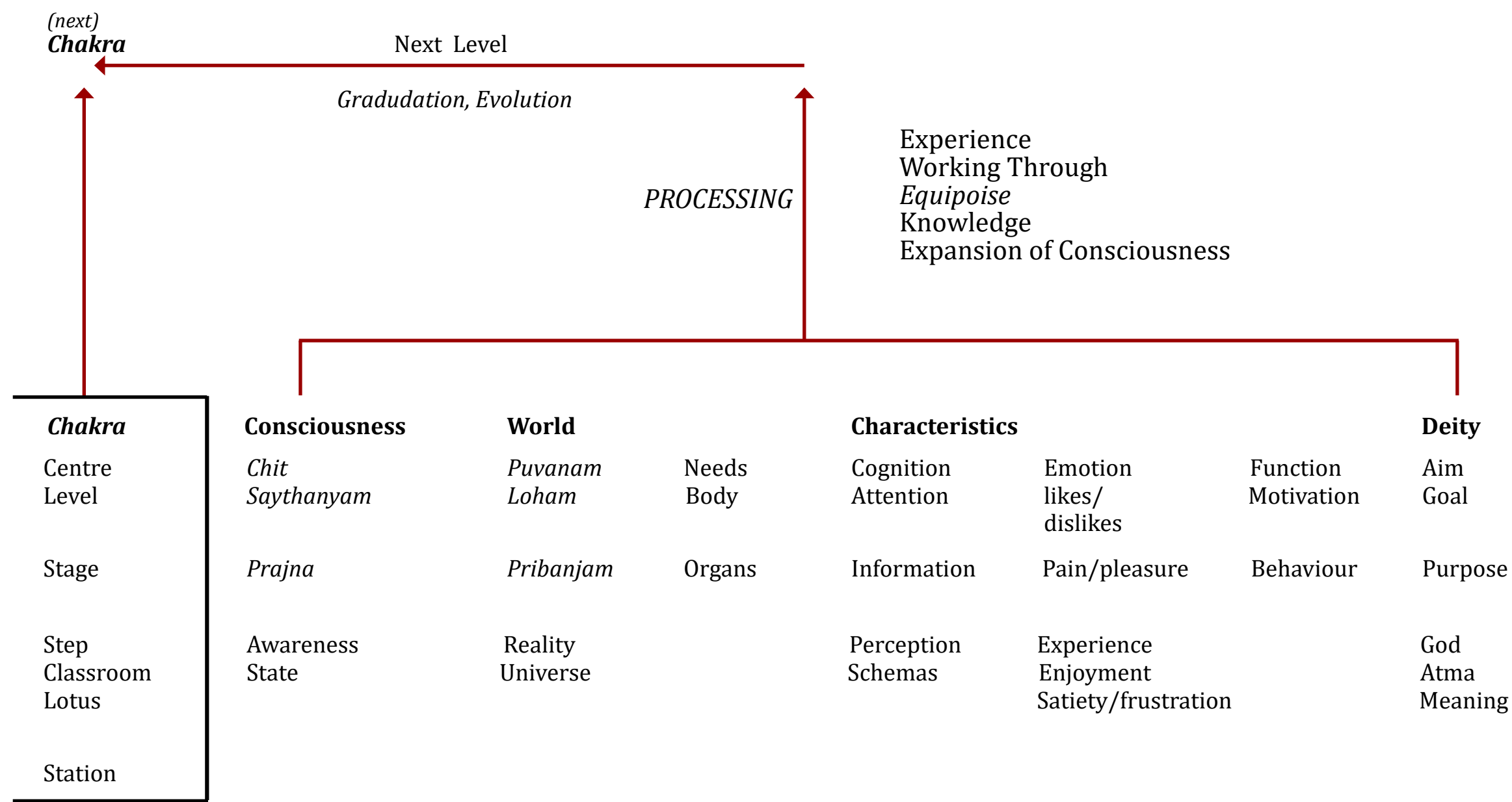
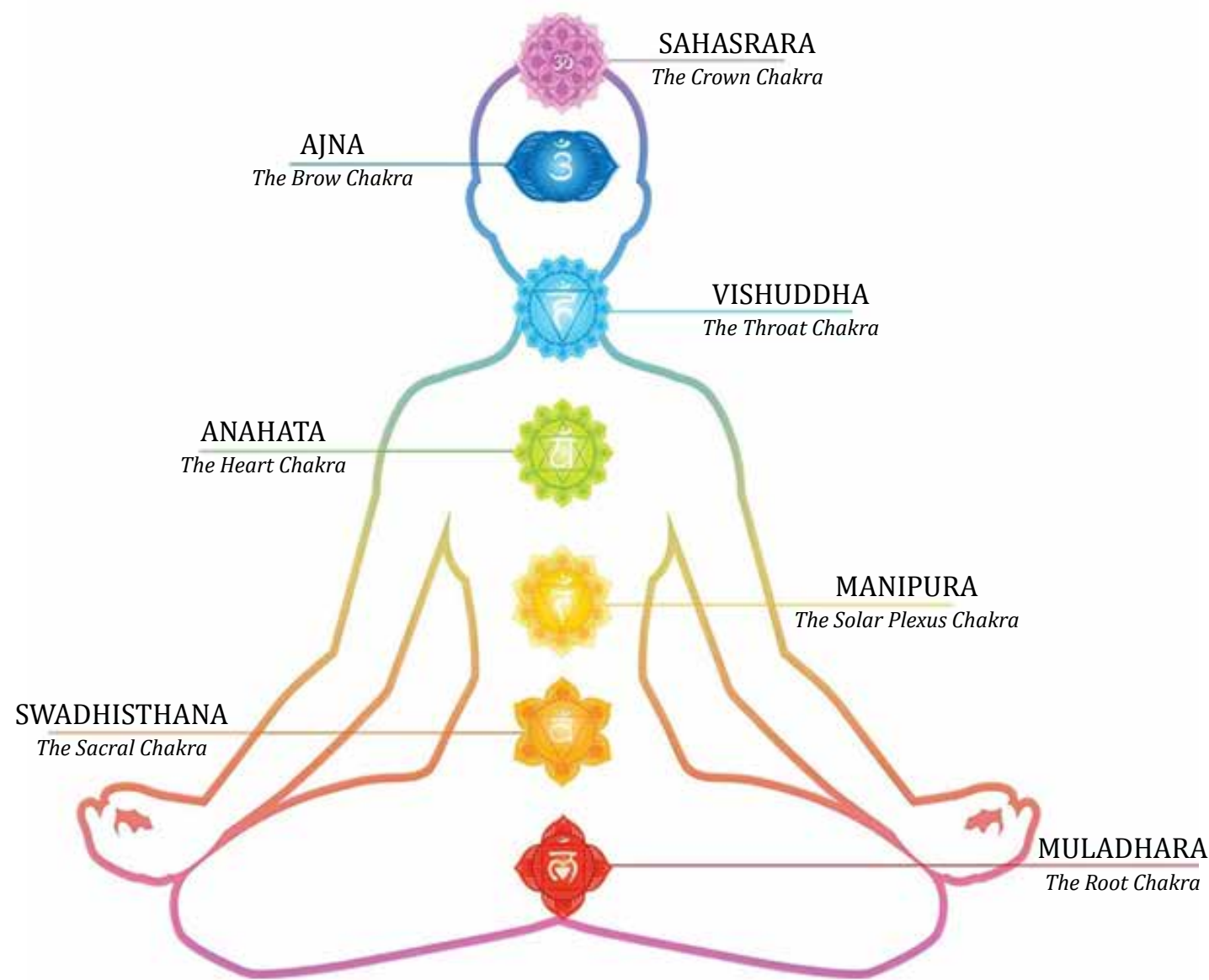


Fig. 3 Six standard Chakras and Sahasrara above



At the *Muladharam*, man’s basic needs for life, namely air, water, food, health, shelter and clothes can be taken as central or organizing principles. In other words, this is the *annamayakosha*, the physical sheath, the materialistic world, very much down to earth. A person’s consciousness, attention and thoughts, likes and dislikes, desires and satisfaction, pain and pleasure will be centred around the gross physical body.

Water and food are essential for survival. Thirst and hunger are terrible states of agony. Food, particularly for those millions of families caught below the poverty line, becomes an overriding need. The stories of the daily struggle for a piece of bread or handful of rice shapes current history and future reality.

In contrast, there are those privileged few who spend all their time, energy and thoughts in searching for, preparing and eating all varieties of culinary delights. Some eat to live, while others live to eat. After tasting and gorging themselves with one meal of many courses, they may rest for a while in a torporous state, before they are off again preparing for the next meal. For some overeating becomes a disease, putting on excess weight leading to many of modern day illnesses that are basically due to obesity. Some have to spend more energy and money in trying to keep their weight down by fancy diets, exercises and drugs.

Others find their pleasure in drinks, drugs and other substances and pain when they are not able to obtain them. They soon become dependent on these substances, some become physically addicted. Their whole life revolves around these substances: their friends, life style, their consciousness. Everyday they scheme on how they will get their drink or fix. They are willing to beg, burrow or steal to satisfy their unsatiable craving. When they obtain it, they may wallow in an all too temporary altered state of consciousness, mainly a depressed state of consciousness, before the unbearable withdrawal symptoms drive them to again seek another dose. They become completely immersed in this drug culture or alcoholic world. In time this leads to the complete ruination of their health, socio-economic and spiritual state, not only for themselves but of their family and community.



Others will spend their time and efforts to look after their bodies. Some become obsessed that some dreadful disease has inflicted them and spend their time and energy in hypochondriacal worrying. They waste considerable money in visiting many doctors, having multifarious investigations, blood tests, x-rays, cat-scan and even surgery to find out what is ailing them. A quest that never ceases or is satisfied. Some others will spend their time in dressing themselves to look attractive to others. Money is spent in buying the latest fashions, going to tailors, dress makers; or, in purchasing all types of make-up, perfumes, going to beauty saloons and wasting hours before the mirror or parading their beauty for others to admire. Others concentrate their efforts in finding or building cozy homes, and then furnishing them with comfortable or fashionable furniture. Others will expend all their efforts to save and accumulate wealth, land and other properties in the belief that these are needed to enjoy the above. But they get caught in money making and never get the time or frame of mind to actually enjoy its fruits.

Marx (1954), Lenin, Mao and others believed that the struggle to fulfill these basic physical needs of food, shelter, clothes and the materialistic and economical forces thus unleashed determine world, social and class forces or history. It is often said that man can begin to think of higher things only after meeting his basic needs. However, Jesus has said, “*Man doesn’t live by bread alone*”. Thus we are able to see some who are able to forego the above, sacrifice their creature comforts and needs, for a cause, a higher calling. Some are able to fast for justice, political or religious reasons. Some torture their bodies as a penance to obtain relief for their sins or for merit. This shows that man can overcome and control this basic need, attain mastery and freedom from these binding shackles.

However this may be, whether it be those trying to maintain their health medically or those involved in spiritual *shadana*, it would be wise to follow the commonsense adage to stick to the middle path, not indulge in extremes, not eat too much or too little, but do just what is necessary in moderation.

### Swadhishtanam (see fig. 3)

*This centre is found just above Muladharam, at the base of the sexual organ. The deity is amorous Krishna. This is the stage where the internal enemies like lust and craving are met and mastered.*

Thus, those at this stage will have sexual pleasure, satisfaction and enjoyment as a central feature of their life. Starting from touch, caressing, seeing and imagining to physical relationships and sexual intercourse, they will expend their time, energy, efforts and thoughts on sex. They enjoy watching the body movements of the opposite sex, their coy glances, seeing through what their clothes reveal and hide. To match this, the opposite sex will walk with a sway, look with an entrancing side-way glance, suggestively drape their clothes, make other seductive gestures and behave provocatively. In addition, sexual stimulation is obtained from the countless phonographic magazines, books, films, videos, advertisements, songs, night shows, massage parlors and more recently Internet.

Those whose carnal appetites and lust is thus stimulated will live in a world of sex, their perception and consciousness will be immersed in it. Their perception becomes coloured by sexual desire. They will see, hear, feel and smell in a completely distorted way. In place of an ordinary mortal human being, they will actually see a heavenly Venus. There are some beautiful literary portrayals of characters, for example by John Steinbeck and Herman Hesse, who have uncanny ability to win over and seduce the opposite sex wherever they go. When one considers the time and energy spent on thinking, day dreaming, planning, looking, talking etc. on sexual matters, one realizes how much mankind is caught in this centre. The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1939), also came to this conclusion. According to his estimation, behind most of our conscious and unconscious thoughts and behaviour is sexual causes- frustrated desires, unresolved (Oedipal) complexes, attractions, competition, future hopes etc.

Some, for example students, social or humanitarian workers, shadakas, are able to control and divert this powerful force to higher ends, a process termed sublimation. However, according to modern psychological theory, it is dangerous to forcefully suppress sexual energy. It will somehow come out in one way or another. Freud felt that sexual repression or denial was the underlying aetiological cause for neurosis, hysteria in particular. Probably it was for the same reason that Apostle Paul said “*It is better to marry than to burn*” (Gideons, 1978).

**Manipuraham** (see fig. 3)

*Right behind the navel is the Manipuraha lotus that shines like many jewels. Fire is the thathuvam in a triangular shape with three swastikas as symbols in each corner. Urithiran is the deity and the courageous bull his vehicle. His consort, Vahini sakti, likes to eat meat. From the mouth with two vampire like teeth jutting out, drips blood and fat wetting her chest red. By meditating diligently on this centre, one gains the power to create, rule and destroy this world.*

The *Manipuraha* centre corresponds to power. Individuals at this level will function to bring others under their power and control them. When they attain this superior position they gain satisfaction. They are able to manipulate and take advantage of the needs, desires and hopes of the aforementioned *Mulathara* and *Swadhishtana* people to bring them under their control. At times, they will not hesitate to betray, sacrifice or murder friend or foe in their intoxicated drive for power. They spend their time and effort in thus planning strategy, intriguing, maneuvering, manipulating and exploiting others and the situation. They see the world as an opportunity to achieve power. They are easily tempted into adopting authoritarian and totalitarian methods.

Most if not all politicians belong to this *chakra*. Vilfred Pareto (Zeitlin, 1968) has aptly compared the competition for political positions as a continuous struggle between lions and foxes. This struggle for power not only takes place between countries, nations, groups, communities, institutions, organizations, and families but within them as well. Leaders aspiring for power are able to manipulate people's frustrations, anger, expectations, perceptions, ethnic and national consciousness and patriotic feelings through clever propaganda, arousing demagogue and the mass media for their own ends. They have the special ability to brainwash a whole people and reconstruct social reality. Hitler was thus able to constrict the German peoples' consciousness within this narrow circle of Nazi ethnocentrism through indoctrination and use the energy released for his rise to power.

Those functioning at this *chakra* will be found to possess authoritarian personalities (Frenkel-Brunswik & Sanford, 1945), though most individuals belong to the bottom of hierarchy. Nevertheless, they are basically "Power oriented in their personal relationships-submissive and obedient to those they consider their superiors, but contemptible and authoritarian towards those considered inferior" (Atkinson, 1987).

They will invariably possess the *rajas guna*, acting with courage to lead others and solve problems. They look towards recognition and respect from others and society.

The drive for power was described by both Adler and Nietzsche as the 'Will to Power'. According to Adler (Mairet, 1928), each individual from childhood is exposed to experiences that make him feel inferior. The world and society are instinctively felt as hostile to his/her real interests and (s)he constantly perceives events around him as slights or proof of rejection. His life goal then becomes a constant striving for compensation by struggling for supremacy, control and domination, a battle between the inferiority and superiority complexes. Nietzsche (Kennedy, 1909) goes even further by describing this 'will to power' as desirable and a positive characteristic of his Superman: "And as the lesser surrendereth himself to the greater so that he may have delight and power over the least of all, so doth even the greatest surrender himself, and staketh-life, for the sake of Power".

In the case of Germany, we can see historically that Nietzsche's ideology of the superman and the *will to power* led to the development of the Nazi fascist order. The tragedy is that it caused enormous suffering and misery to Germany as well as to the rest of the world, though at the time the Germans were riding high on nationalistic glorification of a third Reich that was to last a 'thousand years', quite unaware of their real predicament. More recently, similar ethnic and national consciousness has served a few to attain power but spelt real misery and suffering for the ordinary people.

What is evident is that there is a will to power manifesting itself in extreme form in a few leaders as an intense struggle to dominate and rule, using all the means available, eliminating all obstacles in their path. Yet, in all fairness, it must be said of those in power see everything in political terms and genuinely believe that they are acting for the good of society, their community or nation. Due to this fundamental misperception, they may be responsible for untold miseries caused by conflict and war. Most people in the first three chakras are not quite conscious ('**they know not..**') of what they are doing. According to the texts, it is only past these three, that is by renouncing attachments and desires, that one is able cross-over to the higher path (*nirmalawathai*) and real spiritual growth starts.



**Anahatham** (see fig. 3)

*Next, the heart lotus is red in colour. Air is the thathuvam and it contains the wish fulfilling tree(katpahatheru). It is here that one can hear the Sabdha Brahmam (sound) that is born from the original source, Nadam. The Jeevatma can be seen as a thumb size motionless flame. Your Ishta deity and Vahini sakti whose heart is melted by amirtham are appropriate for inner worship.*

This is the centre of love. Compassion, sympathy, care, charity and service are the important characteristics of this chakra. In the East, love is divided into four types: the love of a mother for her child, the love of children for their parents, brotherly love and romantic love. Love is said to be selfless and unconditional, not something that traps or enslaves the other. The other person is respected and allowed to live independently. Fulfillment is gained by just the chance to love and doesn't expect anything in return. Thus love permeates their consciousness, they live in giving love.

Artists and poets who create, forgetting their small ego, reach a high transpersonal level. Similarly there are those who sacrifice themselves for a higher calling, or work selflessly for an organization or society. Mother Teresa is one modern day example.

Love ripens into *bhakti*. The four types of love merge in the love for God. In love for God one completely loses oneself. Jesus Christ declares that *God is love* and commands us to, "*love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind*". Then He commands us to, "*love thy neighbour as thyself*" (Gideons, 1978). The mystics from different ages and all parts of the world are the best example of this high state. The Islamic *Sufi* tradition also centres on love (Shah, 1968). Buddha taught that *Meththa, Maditha and Karuna* (compassion) are the highest qualities (Burt, 1955). The Tamil saint Thirumoolar (1993) has sung of becoming the embodiment of love itself, for then, one merges into the form of love, which is God:

*Love and God are different say the ignorant  
Love is God no one understands  
Love is God once known  
Love as God they will be.*

**Visudham** (see fig. 3)

*Above the heart lotus comes the throat centre. The ethereal open space is its thathuvam. This is also referred to as the Chidambara rhasiam (the secret of the temple of consciousness). Ardhanareeswarar is the presiding deity. It is here that the Jeevatama is purified (atma sudhi) so that the intellect is able to know the past, present and the future, opening the way for the atma to proceed towards mukti or liberation.*

Ramakrishnan used to say that for bhakti a tiny bit of ego is necessary so that one can have the feeling, "*I am the devotee, to praise and pray to you, I am a separate person*", and with it the right to that relationship. But in *Visudhi* even this egoism is lost. Patriotism, ethnicity, nationality, religion, family, sex and even bodily identification has to be given up in this purification process. It is significant that the presiding deity, *Ardhanareeswarar* who is half male and half female, represents a deep psychological truth. Carl Jung (1939) described this through the androgynous concept. All of us have a part male and a part female as an integral part of our personality. In some, one part may be more dominant or overt. However, the true inner self, the atma, has no sex. Maya creates this illusion in us. This is one of the most difficult barriers to cross, as is body consciousness itself. One has to rend asunder all these coverings, veils, to finally reach ethereal open space.

Harvard University's Professor Allport (1958) has beautifully portrayed this progressively unfolding identity through concentrically expanding circles. These can also be seen as levels of consciousness. At the centre, within a constricted circle is self-interest, egoism or individualism, so important in the west. Next comes the feeling of belonging to a family and identification with it. The extended family circle follows. Then comes membership in a community, group, society, nation, country, motherland and identification with its way of life, culture, language, religion and so on. Most of us are caught at this level of consciousness, and that mainly in a form of narrow ethnocentrism. Above all this, is the identification with all of humanity; or even more broader, is to feel one with all life. The highest experience is to reach universality, to experience Paramatma in all his splendor.

**Ajna** (see fig. 3)

*This chakra, located at the centre of the forehead, is white in colour like the moon. The long journey up the Sulumanai, the central canal of spinal cord, ends here by joining the pingalay and idaikalay. The Bija mantra of this chakra, the Pranava Om, should be regularly repeated while meditating with the thathuvam of this centre, the subtle mind, to attain pure consciousness where the inner atma can be realized in the form of light.*

The soul's long journey evolves step by step to reach this chakra. The fruition of this development is symbolically called the opening of the third eye, the purification of *saythanyam* (consciousness) or birth of Prajna, the wisdom of Zen (Neng, 1969). In this Jeevamukta state, the perception becomes cleansed, without blemish or veils of the previous levels. The true reality can be seen.

**Sahasrara lotus** (see fig. 3)

*Above all the chakras, at the top of the head, is the thousand petal white lotus, the abode of ParamaSivan. Kundalini sakti awakens at the Muladharam and works her way up through each chakra to finally unite with Siva at the Sahasrara lotus. This is where the Jeevatma becomes the Paramatma, to attain the Advaita state. "Thathuvamisi" (Thou art That), Satchitanandam (existence-consciousness-bliss), mukti (liberation), Truth, Heaven, Paravindhu (the great circle), Sunya or Nirvana is also this. Man's saythanyam or consciousness is completely evolved to reach Thuriyattheetham or Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Nadarajan's eternal cosmic dance can be seen here.*

This is a state transcending words or the mind. Yoga swami (1974) has pointed to this experience:

*Those who have seen do not speak  
Those who speak have not seen - Thangam  
There is nothing else.*

One cannot say much more than this.

**Conclusion**

Man, perhaps without quite realizing it, is on a long and arduous journey. There will be many ups and downs, wrong turns, side-tracks, blind alleys, mountains to climb and conquer. But through all these experiences, the consciousness slowly grows and evolves, expands. Of course, there may be temporary set backs, regressions, narrowing or constrictions of consciousness. Each chakra (see fig. 2) is a field for experience, a classroom for learning, an opportunity for progress. Man grapples with the thematic problem of each level until (s)he masters it, learns about the good and the evil for that level, tries to do the good and avoid the evil. (S)he will experience the pleasures and pains of that level. Dream and wish for the objects of the chakra. Finally (s)he is satiated, all the wishes fulfilled. There is no more likes and dislikes at that level. An equipoise is reached and (s)he graduates to the next stage. We have described this long journey symbolically as the Kundalini sakti working her way up through each chakra, from the Muladharam to the Sahasrara lotus (see fig. 3).

Though for the sake of easy understanding each chakra has been described separately, in reality the boundaries are not that rigid and the picture more complex, more subtle. There are said to be many sub-levels within each chakra. Further, a person may be at different levels for different problems and at varying degrees of processing or evolution. Each person is unique with their own past experiences, personality, problems, behaviour and thinking patterns. Thus the paths followed also are unique. Each person is different and lives in a completely different world. However, their worlds intersect at some common points. At level of the family, group, community, village, nation and society there are shared characteristics, a mingling of worlds. The chakras are general organizing principles, similar levels of consciousness, helpful symbols, signposts, or guide to explain man's mainly unconscious travels through the worlds and search for his/her own soul or primary consciousness.



References

Allport,G.W. (1958) The Nature of Prejudice, (USA: Anchor books).

Arunandisivachariar (1971) Sivagnana Subakam. (Jaffna: Jaffna Co- Operative Tamil Publishing Society).

Assogioli,R. (1982) Psychosynthesis. (New York: Penguin Books).

Avalon, A., (Woodroffe,J.) (1953) The Serpent Power. (Madras: Ganesh & Co). See also Woodroffe J. (1980) Introduction to Tantra Sastras, (Madras: Ganesh & Co).

Benson, H. (1975) The Relaxation Response (New York: Avon Books).

Borland, C., & Landrith, G. (1976) Improved Quality of life. Scientific Research on the Transcendental Meditation Programme, Collected papers, Vol 1. (West Germany: Meru Press).

Burrt, E.A.(1955) The Compassionate Buddha (New York: Mentor books).

Capra, F. (1980) The Tao of Physics (Great Britain: Fontana).

Erikson, E.H. (1963) Childhood and Society. (New York: Norten & CC).

Farthing, G.W. (1992) The Psychology of Consciousness (New Jersey: Prentice Hall)

Frankl. V.E.( 1959) Man`s Search for Meaning. (Boston: Beacon press).

Frenkel-Brunswik, E. & Sanford, R.N.(1945) Some Personality Factors in Anti-Sementism, Journal of Psychology, 20:271-91.

Freud, S. (1939) Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed J. Strachey; (London: Hogarth press).

Gambhirananda Swami (1958) Mandukya Upanishads in Eight Upanishads. Trans., (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama).

Gideons (1978) The Holy Bible. (USA: National Publishing Company).

Guzeldere, G. (1995) Consciousness: What it is, How to study it, What to Learn form its History. Journal of Consciousness Studies, 2, 30-51.

Hu Neng (1969) The Sutra. Translated by Wong Mou-Lam in The Diamond Sutra. (Colorado: Shambhala Boulder).

Jung, C,G,. (1939) Integration of Personalities in Collected Works of G,C,Jung (United States: Bolling Foundation).

Kennedy,J.M. (1909) The Quintessence of Nietzsche (London: T.Werner Laure).

Mahendra Nath Gupta (1974) The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Trans. Swami Nikhilananda, (Madras: Sri Rammakrishna Math).

Mairet,P. (1928) A B C of Adler`s Psychology, (London: Kegan Paul).

Maslow, A.H. (1970) Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper and Row).

Marx, K. (1954) Das Capital (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House).

Rogers, C.R. (1977) Carl Rogers on Personal Power. (New York: Delacorte press).

Seat, B. (?1953) Appendix to: Sarkar, B,K., Positive Background of Hindu Sociology quoted in Avalon, A., (1953) above.

Shah, I. (1968) The Way of the Sufi. (United Kingdom: E.P. Dutton).

Somasundaram, D.J. (1994) Man in search of his soul. Professor Subramaniam Vidhyananthan Second Memorial Lecture (Sri Lanka: University of Jaffna).

Shear, J. (1995) Explaining Consciousness- ‘The Hard Problem’. Ed. Journal of Consciousness Studies, 2, 194-199.

Sutherlands, S. (1989) ‘Consciousness’, in Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology. (London: Macmillan). Quoted by Guzeldere (1995).

Thirumoolar (1993) Thirumanthiram (Colombo: Mounachiramam)

Watts, A. (1986) Tao-The Watercourse Way (England: Penguin Books)

Wilber, K. (1993) The Spectrum of Consciousness. (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books).

World Health Organization (1984) World Health Resolution (37.13) (Geneva:WHO).

Yoga Swami (1974) Natchinthanai (Jaffna: Sivathodan Nilayam).

Zeitlin, I. N. (1968) Vilfred Pareto in Ideology and the Development of Sociological Theory. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall).

Percy Aaron is an ESL teacher at Vientiane College in the Lao PDR and a freelance editor for a number of international organisations. He has had published a number of short stories, edited three books and was editor of *Champa Holidays*, the Lao Airlines in-flight magazine and *Oh!* - a Southeast Asia-centric travel and culture publication. As lead writer for the Lao Business Forum, he was also on the World Bank's panel of editors. Before unleashing his ignorance on his students, he was an entrepreneur, a director with Omega and Swatch in their India operations and an architectural draughtsman. He has answers to most of the world's problems and is the epitome of the 'Argumentative Indian'. He can be contacted at [percy.aaron@gmail.com](mailto:percy.aaron@gmail.com)

## PERCY AARON

### WESTERN MEDIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

*"If you don't read the newspaper, you're uninformed.  
If you read the newspaper, you're mis-informed."*

- Mark Twain

I was in my mid-teens when the 1967 Middle East crisis was reaching boiling point. The novels of Leon Uris had filled me with admiration for the spirit of the Jews and so, my sense of fairness was outraged that tiny Israel was surrounded by these big, bad nations and that more Arab states were sending regiments to assist their 'blood brothers'. I went to the principal of my school and demanded that he send student volunteers to fight alongside the Israelis. I wanted my name first on the list. He looked at me in exasperation and said that I should worry about my poor grades and leave the fighting to the armies there. He must have realised that he had offended me because in a more mellow tone, added that any fighting would end quickly because both sides would soon run out of armaments.

Then the Six-Day War happened and the roles of David and Goliath were reversed. Later, brought up on a weekly diet of *Time* and *Newsweek* bias and gung-ho Hollywood garbage, I tended to see the world through the haze of American propaganda. But after Bangladesh, Chile and the Pentagon Papers, the scales fell from my eyes. As I learned to be more discerning in my reading, I felt cheated by the fact that all media organizations had a slant, determined by their governments in some states, or by the owners' business interests in others. And the truth? Damn the truth.



Percy Aaron



A Semite in a yarmulke evokes more sympathy than a Semite (for that is what Palestinians are too) in a hijab.

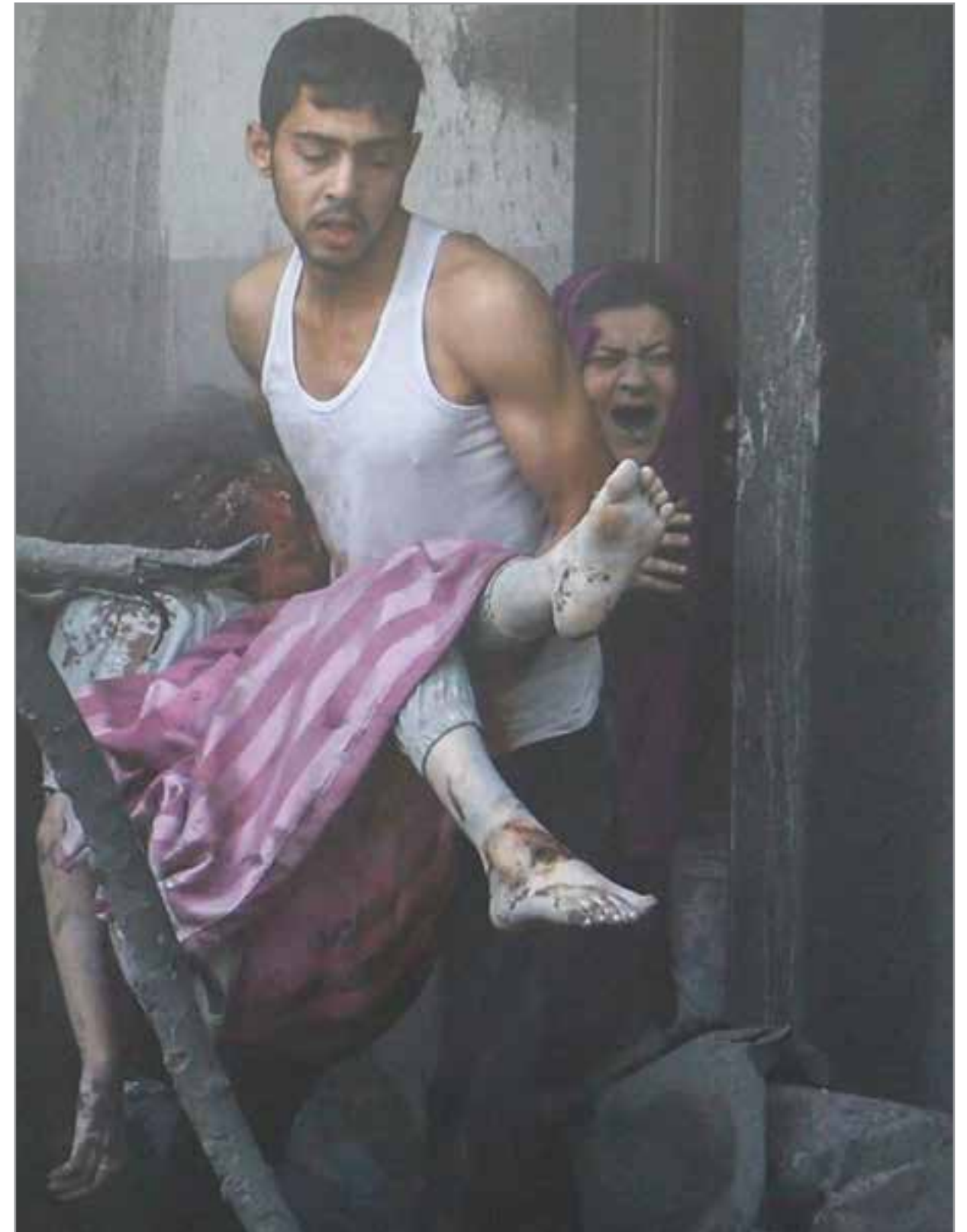
When the war in Ukraine broke out last year, I was teaching a course on *Bias in the Media* at my school. Several of my colleagues and friends, mainly American and British couldn't understand why India didn't fall in line with the perspectives coming out of, mainly, Washington and London. The readings in the course were often too difficult for the students and since I wanted them to understand the concept of bias, I showed them how the western media was covering the conflict vis-à-vis news organizations in China, India and other countries that didn't toe the western line. Very effectively, I got the message through. One student, sharper than the others, pointed out that in the west, people tend to believe most things they read, whereas in countries where the press was controlled by the government, people tend to disbelieve most things in print

The Hamas attack on several Israeli targets has once again highlighted the bias in the Euro and Anglo-sphere.

*CNN* and *The New York Times* in particular, but even the *BBC* and *The Guardian*, are full of reports of individual Israeli victims. The coverage of the death and destruction being rained down on the people of Gaza, most of whom are non-combatants, is disproportionately less. The imbalance is probably similar to the number of casualties on either side. The life of a light-skinned Israeli appears to be more valuable than that of a brown-skinned Palestinian. *A Semite in a yarmulke evokes more sympathy than a Semite (for that is what Palestinians are too) in a hijab.*

*"Israeli murderers are called commandos; Arab commandos are called terrorists."*  
- George Carlin, American humorist

It's a fact that even if these armchair 'journalists' did try to be even-handed, AIPAC and other pro-Israeli lobbies would destroy their careers completely. While most of us swallow our principles from time to time when we have to put food on the table, washing cars or dishes is surely more honorable than shutting our eyes to the carnage in Gaza. Reporting misinformation is as dishonest as not reporting the truth. In the present situation, willful omissions are as criminal as willful commissions.



Source: REUTERS/Ibraheem Abu Mustafa. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2023/10/25/israel-palestine-conflict-pictures-gaza-hamas-violence/>

In U.S. universities, supposedly beacons of free speech and questioning minds, students are being threatened and academics are being censured, or losing their jobs outright, just for calling for a ceasefire and an end to the killing. What the Nazis did to Lidice in Czechoslovakia, the Israelis are doing to northern Gaza.

*Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.*  
- A.J. Liebling in *The New Yorker*

If you think that the United States is a shining example of free speech, think again. The hypocrisy of U.S. president Biden, asking the Emir of Qatar to rein in Al Jazeera, whose reporters on the ground in Gaza are showing what overwhelming Israeli force is doing to the people and the city. Likely to inflame passions around the Arab world, the president said. But passions in the non-Arab world are being inflamed too, at the indiscriminate and disproportionate destruction. Witness the growing number of demonstrations around the world of people calling for a ceasefire, or the rising tide of anti-Semitism, in Europe especially.

In U.S. universities, supposedly beacons of free speech and questioning minds, students are being threatened and academics are being censured, or losing their jobs outright, just for calling for a ceasefire and an end to the killing. So, being critical of Israel is tantamount to being anti-Semitic. Nothing is said about the anti-Semitism towards the Palestinians. I admit that I am confused. How can a white European Jew, be more Semitic than a brown Palestinian one?

What the Nazis did to Lidice in Czechoslovakia, the Israelis are doing to northern Gaza.

*The Guardian*, quotes casualty figures from Gaza as coming from the ' Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health'. Yes, of course, governments control their ministries. Would this newspaper refer to the Tory-controlled NHS? Friendly administrations such as Saudi Arabia, no matter how despotic, are governments; unfriendly ones are regimes.

### Some historical facts for the ignoramuses that report for Fox, CNN, the New York Times, et al.

- The Balfour Declaration was an undertaking by one people, to give away the land of a second people, to a third people. This wasn't the first time, nor would it be the last time, that Britain, that arch colonial master of divide and rule, was taking, or giving away things, that didn't belong to it.

- The Zionists pushed for a Jewish state as the only guarantee for their safety and security. The western powers, for various reasons, including guilt, acquiesced in the creation of Israel. To achieve this, the Palestinians who had lived on the land for centuries, were displaced to make way for Jews from other parts of the world but mainly from Eastern Europe. *In other words, the Palestinians were made to pay the price for the Holocaust and European anti-Semitism.*

- Following its massive victory in the Six-Day War in June 1967, Israel annexed Arab lands in Egypt, Jordan and Syria. However, with the Camp David Accords, the Sinai was returned to Egypt. This did not happen in Jordan or Syria and these territories are often referred to as the Occupied Lands.

- UN Resolution 242, which called for the return of all Arab lands seized in 1967 in exchange for firm guarantees of peace, is the most flouted UN resolution in the history of the world body. This was and is done in connivance with the United States.

In 2006, Hamas overwhelmingly won the elections in Gaza, certified as free and fair by Jimmy Carter and other international observers. But like it has always done with governments it does not approve of, the United States refused to recognize the victor. We can only wonder, how much different the situation in the Middle East might have been, had Hamas not been cast in the role of a pariah?



2010 - 2022

13  
YEARS

# Live encounters

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH  
VOLUME ONE DECEMBER 2022

