

Preface

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The word ‘development’ entered the lexicon of international relations in 1949, just before the process of decolonisation began in earnest, and at a time when much of Latin America, which had recovered its formal independence some generations before, was undergoing rapid industrialisation and export-led economic growth. Development was then, and continues to be, widely perceived as synonymous with Western-style modernisation. Under-development, within this world-view, is thus the widespread poverty that characterises the (mostly agriculture-based) economies of the South; hence the development process is perceived as one of ‘catching up’ with the industrialised economies of the North. This is a highly caricatured account, admittedly, but development assistance, whether official or voluntary, still emphasises economic growth at the macro level, and some form of income generation at the micro level, as the main key to eradicating poverty.

Where does culture fit within this discourse? Anthropological theory aside, how do development policies and practices understand or engage with culture? Sadly, for the most part they proceed as though all cultures are, or seek to be, more or less the same: development, from this perspective, is a normative project. ‘Local’ or ‘traditional’ cultures are even now seen as a brake on development, while the international development agencies and their national counterparts regard themselves as culturally neutral – if not superior. It might indeed be argued that the whole aid industry rests on the assumption that greater economic power implies superior wisdom and hence confers the moral duty, not merely the right, to intervene in the lives of those who are less fortunate (see Tucker 1996:11; Powell 1995). In such a framework, cultural identity and traditional practices are acceptable, provided that they do not interfere with economic progress or with the conventional development indicators; and that they do not represent ‘a culture of poverty’: that is, behaviours which prevent people from taking advantage

of economic development. Hence, culture is consigned to the supposedly private or subjective spheres of religious belief, dietary habits, dress, social customs, music, 'lifestyle', and so on: hearth and home, rather than government or the workplace. While everything around them is changing, these aspects of a people's lives may be viewed by outsiders as timeless or inviolable; and because all societies to a greater or lesser degree restrict women's involvement in the public world, the responsibility for preserving what women may themselves experience as oppressive aspects of their culture nevertheless falls to them.¹

The international development community, for want of a better term, is nevertheless becoming increasingly sensitive to the relationship between culture and development. We shall highlight just five of many contributory factors. One is the impact of the fall of the Berlin Wall on policies and popular mobilisation in favour of the notion that human rights are both universal and indivisible. During the long decades of the Cold War, there were sharp divisions between the West, which prioritised the so-called first generation of political and civil rights, and the countries within the Soviet sphere of influence and those adhering broadly to a socialist agenda, which emphasised the primordial nature of social and economic rights. (The question of cultural rights – of which gender-power relations are viewed as a sub-category – was not much of a priority for either side.) While many Southern governments would still hold that the universal enjoyment of political and civil rights itself depends upon social and economic equity at a global level as well as a national level, the removal of some of the ideological furniture has opened up more space for debate on how to define cultural rights, and how these can best be defended.²

Second, alongside the collapse of an alternative to neo-liberalism, we also see the rise of 'identity politics' throughout much of the Western and Westernised world. This finds popular expression in various forms of 'counter-culture', as well as in leisure industries such as 'world music' or 'world culture', themselves fuelled by the availability of cheap global communications. Although such inter-cultural exchange may seem banal, and a decidedly *apolitical* form of internationalism, it allows people to develop some knowledge of and sympathy with different ways of understanding the world, and to relate across cultures in a more egalitarian way than has ever before been possible.

A third element, epitomised by the World Bank but implicitly embraced by other international agencies, is that efforts at poverty reduction will be improved by the mobilisation of 'cultural strengths

and assets' and by 'explicit attention to culture in their design'.³ This argument is reminiscent of what has been termed the Bank's 'instrumental feminism' – a reference to its realisation that the continued subordination and oppression of women is economically 'inefficient' (Bessis 2001). Be that as it may, the Bank is certainly putting its weight behind high-level research into the relationship between development and culture and is, by virtue of the resources and influence that it can mobilise, doing more than most to put these issues on to the anti-poverty and aid agendas.⁴

Fourth, the increasing emphasis on civil society in global governance reflects the attention paid by Robert Putnam and others to 'social capital', the 'glue' that binds societies together beyond the immediate obligations of family and kinship. The failure of outsiders, and even of insiders, to understand how belief systems and loyalties intersect with the aspirations and frustrations of those who share them has been all too clear in the blood-baths of in-country 'ethnic cleansing', from Guatemala to Rwanda to Somalia to the Balkans and beyond.

Finally, and perhaps most significantly, we are witnessing widespread and broad-based rejection of the monocultural development model allegedly represented by economic globalisation: what Ignacio Ramonet terms '*la pensée unique*'. From small farmers in India opposing the attempt by a US company to patent *basmati* rice, to health activists and the governments of Brazil, South Africa, and even Canada calling for pharmaceutical companies to reduce the price of essential drugs, to otherwise law-abiding citizens trashing McDonald's or Starbucks in Bangalore or Seattle, or indeed the *zapatista* movement in Southern Mexico, whose inaugural actions took place on the very day that the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) came into force, many such protests claim to ground themselves in some form of cultural resistance to what they see as the domination of Western (specifically US) culture. They imply that if development means economic globalisation, and if economic globalisation means the ever more intense accumulation of wealth by the few and the exclusion of the majority, then for most of humanity 'development' is a bankrupt project.⁵

In a less positive vein, the writings of people such as Robert Kaplan and Samuel Huntington have also filtered into (and reflected) ways in which the non-Western world is viewed, even at the highest political levels.⁶ Huntington's 1993 forecast of a 'clash of civilisations' in which 'the dominating source of conflict will be cultural' is premised, according to Edward Said (2001), on a superficial and essentially

ideological account of what constitutes civilisations, cultures, and identities; one which ignores ‘the internal dynamics and plurality of every civilisation’ and the ‘myriad currents and counter-currents ... that have made it possible for [human] history not only to contain wars of religion and imperial conquest but also to be one of exchange, cross-fertilization and sharing’. Whatever the case, Huntington’s apocalyptic vision has been much invoked since the September 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA, and in ways that have tended to lock many people in the West more deeply into fear and prejudice, rather than drawing them into enlightened debate.

In this context of renewed interest in what constitutes cultural identity, particularly when it is invoked in response to a real or perceived threat, alternative understandings of the relationships between culture(s) and development may yet find fertile ground. An essay published in a special issue of the journal *Culturelink* entitled *Culture and Development vs Cultural Development* reproduced a 1998 overview paper by Mervyn Caxton. In it he points to ‘the general confusion that [exists] between “culture”, in its humanistic, artistic sense, and “culture” in its wider, anthropological sense’ and between ‘cultural development *per se* and the concept of culture and development’. **Thierry Verhelst** and **Wendy Tyndale** would concur with Caxton’s argument that ‘[all] models of development are essentially cultural’. Culture is not, therefore, an optional extra in development, or something to be taken on board in the way that an agency might take steps to ensure that its interventions will not worsen the situation of the most vulnerable. Rather, development is itself a cultural construct, a basis for inter-cultural engagement, albeit on generally unequal terms. Caxton (2000: 26-7) puts it thus:

When a people faces challenges from the environment which require responses and solutions, one of the functions of culture is to provide criteria which would enable a selection to be made between alternative solutions. This essential role of culture is usurped, and its capacity to provide adequate responses to development challenges is impaired, if the criteria used are ones that are external to the culture itself. This is what happens when external development models are exclusively relied upon.

He goes on:

A society’s creative genius and its cultural identity are expressed in a tangible, practical manner by the way in which it addresses its

problems in the various domains that are important to its proper functioning, and which, taken together, can be described as development action. Since a people's culture represents the totality of their framework for living, it incorporates all possible responses that they could make to the demands of their living environment.

This holistic approach finds its echo in a recent volume, subtitled *Women Practising Development Across Cultures*, whose editors observe that '...development takes place in parliaments, factories, courts, banks, classrooms, roadside stalls, guilds, athletic fields, publishing houses, hospitals, movie theatres, community theatres, novels, and even in the home', and its protagonists are 'community activists, empowering themselves by building development communities within and across cultures' (Perry and Schenck 2001, pp. 1 and 7).

This is a far cry from the type of cultural relativism that is born of fear of making judgements, and from the public-private dichotomy referred to earlier. While it won't completely rule out the 'misbehaviour' of project beneficiaries referred to by Buvinic (1986), or provide a simple narrative to explain their perverse behaviour,⁷ it lays the basis for a richer and more sustainable inter-cultural dialogue than most development agencies have engaged in to date.

Notes

1 I recall a conversation with the coordinator of a Guatemalan *indigenista* (pro-indian) organisation. This woman, known for her personal courage as well as her intellectual capacity, confided that she had been censured by her male colleagues because she was 'not Mayan enough'. The proof? She wore spectacles (she was severely short-sighted), she was wearing modern rather than traditional dress (though to have worn her *traje* would instantly have marked her out as an illegal refugee in Mexico City – which was why her critics had also adopted Western dress), and she used an electric blender rather than the traditional *molcahete* (a kind of pestle and mortar used to break down the maize before cooking it – the

ultimate in labour-intensive devices). Her question was whether these cultural signifiers were not in fact more concerned with poverty and with the oppression of women than with things that Mayans should defend. 'Women in my village go barefoot, while the men have sandals or shoes', she said. 'Is this by choice, because they can't afford shoes, or because our culture doesn't care about making life easier for women?' Subsequently she formed a feminist organisation – equally committed to the goal of grounding Guatemala's development policies in Mayan culture, but with a critical 'insider' perspective on what aspects of that culture could and should be abandoned.

- 2 As the false distinction begins to disappear, it has become clear that Western democracies are not unequivocally committed to the principles of universality and indivisibility: the USA, for instance, is one of only six countries that have yet to ratify the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). That said, UNDP's gender-related development index (GDI) places the USA fourth after Norway, Australia, and Canada, far above most of the signatories – including Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, for instance, both of them countries in which women make up less than ten per cent of the adult labour force and hold no seats in the parliament.
- 3 'Culture and Poverty: Learning and Research at the World Bank', www.worldbank.org/poverty/culture/overview/index.htm/
- 4 Initiatives supported by the Bank include the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), which sponsored the introductory essay to this volume.
- 5 As argued by a number of post-development writers, including Esteva and Prakash (1998) and by Kothari (1999).
- 6 Kaplan's paper 'The Coming Anarchy' was, according to Anne Mackintosh (1997), circulated to all US embassies early in 1994, shortly before the genocide in Rwanda.
- 7 Elora Shehabuddin (2001) uses the example of rural women in Bangladesh who confounded NGO workers and religious observers alike by spending their new savings on 'a nicer, fancier *burqa*' to illustrate that women are not so easily hoodwinked by the other side as either the NGOs imagine or

the religious fundamentalists fear. Rather, they try to make the most of the options available to them.

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Cultures, spirituality, and development

Thierry Verhelst with Wendy Tyndale

This essay addresses some of the ways in which culture and spirituality may be taken into account in development processes.¹ We shall consider the reasons for adopting an inclusive approach of this kind and ask to what degree it can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of development policies in general and of anti-poverty programmes in particular. Many issues are simplified for reasons of space, but we trust that the following thoughts will help to stimulate discussion.

We shall focus on the development processes promoted by the multilateral institutions, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the UN specialised agencies, and by individual governments and NGOs of the industrialised countries. These bodies have by no means taken a uniform approach to ‘co-operation’ with the countries of what used to be called the Third World and are now often referred to as ‘the South’. Nevertheless, their combined influence has been and continues to be decisive for millions of people in the world.

Many of the concepts we shall be discussing are difficult to define, so wherever possible we shall provide examples to give a sharper edge to what sometimes seems rather a vague area of debate. A vital task ahead is to engage more systematically in a search for case studies that show how culture and spirituality can influence efforts to support people in moving out of poverty in its multiple forms, towards a state of self-fulfilment and contentment.

Transforming international development

In the 1950s and 1960s, the multilateral institutions and the governments of the industrialised North began to draw up development strategies for the ‘developing countries’ of the South. Broadly speaking, their aim was to achieve visible goals associated with material development in the Northern hemisphere.² Much development planning has consequently been inspired by a vision of history as a

linear evolution, and conceived of as a way of 'catching up' with 'modernity'.

The process has emphasised the importance of economic growth and the central role of development experts. It has been embedded in an understanding of knowledge which gives priority to technology and science; and it has been guided by a dualistic world-view which separates the material from the spiritual. That the former has been granted precedence over the latter is made apparent by the scarcity of any mention in development literature of cultural, let alone spiritual, concerns – despite the fact that religious beliefs are the prime source of guidance and support for most human beings, especially those who are materially the poorest.

Over the past two decades, it has become apparent that this approach to development has contributed to the destruction of many societies and community structures. It has brought with it the imposition of the cultural norms of the development institutions and their agents, as though these had some kind of universal validity. The concept of private property and the encouragement of competition over co-operation are just two examples of what have been promoted as universal norms. The sustainable livelihoods of people whose customs and value systems do not fit these norms have often been jeopardised as a result.

Some of the most glaring examples of such destruction of traditional ways of life are found among indigenous peoples, such as the Guaraní, Quechua, and Maya in Latin America and the Maasai in East Africa. But the cost of encountering 'modernity' is not borne by indigenous cultures alone. There are many people outside the tribal communities in India, for example, who vehemently oppose the rapid spread of Western values and lifestyles, which they see as detrimental to much of what they most cherish in their culture, especially attitudes and customs related to their spiritual beliefs.

Today there is an increasing (though probably insufficient) awareness that quite different paths can be taken to improve human welfare, and that no programme can bring positive and lasting results unless it is well anchored in the cultural norms and values of the society in question. There is a gradual recognition of the need to acknowledge the central role of people, with their particular aspirations, attitudes, mentality, values, beliefs, spirituality, and sense of the sacred and of happiness, and with their own skills, expertise, and creativity, as a pre-requisite for the success of development programmes.

As all religions would confirm, to become fully human is more than a matter of improving one's material condition. That human beings do not live by bread alone is not only a Christian concept. As a Mayan woman from Mexico put it: 'The heart of our struggle, the soul of our vision for a better future is to be able to live with dignity on the basis of our culture. Our culture tells us that our economic activities cannot be separated from social and religious life and cannot be reduced to economics.'³

Who can decide what is positive or negative within any given cultural context?

To stress life's invisible and non-material dimensions seems to be interpreted by some as entertaining a romantic vision of material deprivation. But few people would defend living conditions which negate fundamental human freedom and dignity and which are offensive to social justice and equity. Cultures that discriminate on the basis of gender, race, or creed, for example – as many do – should surely be open to change. This does not, however, justify the all too common tendency of visiting experts to pass hasty judgement on other cultures, as if their own views were value-free and grounded in abstract objectivity.

Indeed, one of the questions often asked in debates on the issue of culture is: Who is to decide what is positive or negative within any given cultural context? The Nobel Prize-winning economist, Amartya Sen, is unambivalent in stating that people must set their own priorities: 'If a traditional way of life has to be sacrificed to escape grinding poverty or minuscule longevity (as many traditional societies have had for thousands of years), then it is the people directly involved who must have the opportunity to participate in deciding what should be chosen.'⁴

Susan Waffa-Ogoo, Secretary of State for Tourism and Culture of The Gambia, agrees:

It is not all of our societal norms and values, customs and beliefs that can be said to enhance development, but there are those that have helped to keep our people together for centuries and are such an important value system that, in spite of increasing modernisation and development, they need to be preserved for posterity. I believe this is where the equation lies, showing that development is inextricably linked to the people, for whom it should bring some fulfilment in life and thus improve upon their living standards in a sustainable way.⁵

What are the practical implications of the commitment of the multilateral development agencies to more inclusive processes?

The socio-cultural aspects of development are now established as elements of the official development agenda. In 1995, the World Commission on Culture and Development, chaired by former United Nations Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, published, with UNESCO, a report on the importance of the contribution of different cultures to the world, entitled *Our Creative Diversity*.⁶ And in its recent report on poverty, the UNDP draws attention to '[a] new generation of poverty programmes' which 'focus on building community organisations to directly articulate people's needs and priorities – rather than concentrating on income-generating activities alone.'⁷

Some years ago, the World Bank published a paper entitled *Using Knowledge from Social Science in Development Projects*, which squarely recognised the need for socio-cultural analysis. It would be interesting to find out how far its warning has been heeded: 'The penalty for not carrying out the social analysis and not incorporating social knowledge into financially induced growth programs is costly and swift.' The paper reports on a study of 57 World Bank-financed projects which examined the association between the socio-cultural fit (or misfit) of project design and the estimated economic rate of return at audit time. It found that the socio-culturally compatible projects studied had twice the average rate of return of the non-compatible ones.⁸

More recent documents issued by the World Bank, such as the *World Development Report 2000/2001 (WDR)*⁹ and *Voices of the Poor*,¹⁰ indicate a growing attention to such non-material and culture-related issues as dignity, freedom, and the centrality of local conditions. The *WDR* speaks of 'demand-driven assistance'¹¹ and, significantly, it argues that 'solutions that accommodate different perspectives on development' constitute one of the challenges in reforming international development practice. It concludes that 'history shows that uniformity is undesirable and that development is determined to a great extent by local conditions, including social institutions, social capability ...'.¹²

In his opening address to a conference on culture and development in October 1999, James D. Wolfensohn, the current president of the World Bank, repeated his often-stated belief in the importance of a focus on cultural issues. 'However you define culture,' he said, 'it is increasingly clear that those of us working in the field of sustainable development ignore it at our peril.'¹³

Is respect for traditional cultures incompatible with modernisation?

All this is encouraging, but the importance of cultural issues to development is far from being universally accepted, even within institutions whose public policy statements would lead us to think otherwise. The socio-cultural impact of a programme, even within many NGOs, is often considered a 'soft' issue and reduced to a subsidiary question at the bottom of a questionnaire. The failure to take it as seriously as economics, technology, and infrastructure, for example, is undoubtedly partly explained by the difficulty of quantifying and evaluating the cultural impact of any piece of work.

But, as Wolfensohn points out, we ignore culture at our peril. The issue of cultural norms is at the heart of many current debates. Some types of behaviour are judged very differently in different cultures. What is seen by some to be corruption on the part of government or other officials, for example, is understood by others merely as the fulfilment of traditional expectations that gifts should be given to one's family or clan members.

Some schools of thought see the plurality of cultures in the world as a danger, rather than as a source of enrichment. Samuel Huntington foretells a 'clash of civilisations', as the forces of globalisation and modernisation challenge the values and beliefs that provide the bedrock of the cultures of certain regions of the world.¹⁴ Moreover, those who still understand development to mean catching up with the material standard of living of the industrialised societies perceive the world-views of certain cultures as obstacles to this sort of progress, on account of their approach to economics, to time, to community, and to nature, as well as their religious beliefs, their social organisation, and decision-making processes. There are still many who believe that the job of development agencies is to bring such cultures into the modern age, even at the cost of destroying them.

And, of course, there are other plausible-sounding arguments. David Landes speaks of 'toxic cultures which handicap those who cling to them ... in their ability to compete in a modern world'. He then points to the unequal distribution of wealth and the *machismo* of Latin America as an example.¹⁵

Easy causal connections aside, the question here is not whether these cultural characteristics are to be defended, but by what standard they are to be judged. Is Landes justified in his assumption that the cultural characteristics of Latin America are to be assessed as good or

bad according to the extent to which they fulfil the 'duty' of that continent to 'keep up' (presumably with its northern neighbour)? In this context, it is important to note that the gradual opening up to more culture-sensitive approaches is linked to an increasing unease in the world about the shortcomings of 'modernity'. Many see our era as characterised by an undifferentiated obsession with technology, consumerism, the desire for quick profits (and quick solutions), and a general lack of respect for those who are left out of the benefits of the growth of prosperity. The supremacy of science and technology, greater efficiency, and the reliance on heightened managerial skills to solve problems have all been unable to bring an end to hunger and malnutrition. Moreover, widening disparities between the rich and the poor, social injustices, environmental destruction, and a creeping depression and sense of meaninglessness are all products of our age. In this context, a growing number of people are eager to see how differing cultural approaches to development can enrich and enhance each other.

It is not a question of rejecting all the benefits brought by modern scientific knowledge, but of weighing these up against the cultural losses that they often imply. As Denis Goulet puts it:

Chronic malnutrition and high mortality rates are doubtless dehumanising evils which ought to be abolished; and abolition requires the application of technology and 'modern' techniques. What is crucial, however, is that the people affected be helped to become fully conscious of the value implications inherent in proposed innovations.¹⁶

Planners, educators, and technicians (from South and North alike), says Goulet, must take responsibility for being explicit about and appraising the trade-offs in values implied in their own recommendations.

Knowing people's culture: how should this knowledge be used?

In the light of the increasing attention being paid to culture, we also need to accept that the desire to understand the culture of a community is not always disinterested. There have been cases when the knowledge, or partial knowledge, of cultural issues has been used to integrate communities into programmes designed in another context by people of another culture, or even to deceive communities into believing that non-existent benefits will come their way. By restricting itself to an instrumental use of culture, this approach excludes the possibility of

any genuine empathy and relationship of mutual learning between the development worker and the would-be beneficiaries.

An unfortunate example of this way of using culture are the many income-generating co-operatives set up by NGOs in various African countries in the 1980s. Building on the collective way of doing things which the development workers discovered within the communities, they quickly attracted people to take part in their programmes. But by overlooking the fact that traditional community ties in most African countries are based on a network of complex loyalties rather than on financial considerations, they often served to undermine community relations, causing rivalries and dissent.¹⁷

But in other cases, a knowledge of local culture has been used to empower communities, so as to help their members to achieve more autonomy and engage in cultural regeneration and an assertive citizenship. There are many cases of programmes which, through respecting the experience, knowledge, and outlook of traditional (often religious) leaders, have taken advantage of the authority that they already enjoy within their communities to train them to be highly effective ‘multipliers’ of modern agricultural, marketing, or medical knowledge. Thousands of traditional midwives all over the world have, for example, been trained in skills such as the use of local substances for treating trace-mineral deficiencies, or oral re-hydration as a way to combat the effects of diarrhoea. But these have complemented, rather than replaced, the midwives’ age-old wisdom, which often brings with it a stronger concern for the emotional and psychological state of the mother than most modern treatments.

Genuinely entering into another culture in this way invariably involves an openness to spiritual and religious concerns, and an awareness that development of any sort cannot be restricted to technical skills alone. The training of traditional midwives would never have been possible, had their beliefs about birth and the spirituality and rituals surrounding it not been respected and acknowledged to be beneficial and important to those involved. We contend that an understanding of cultures and their underlying spirituality and religious traditions can and should open the way to a new development paradigm, less materialistic and technocratic, and to criteria for success that are people-based and all-embracing. It thus results in a broadening of the scope of both the objectives of development and of the methodology to identify those objectives. This leads us beyond a dualistic approach which separates spirit from matter, culture from

economics, ethics from growth, and a sense of the sanctity of nature and human beings from rationalistic planning based on quantifiable data and mathematical models.

In practical terms, this must mean that support should no longer be given to development programmes which destroy people's capacity to manage their economic lives according to their own cultural values. It is not easy, without a specific context, to specify the positive actions required. However, one clear implication is the need to adopt an approach to development which transcends the boundaries of sectors such as health services, education, and agriculture, so that the various aspects of people's lives may be considered as a whole.

Another implication is the need for a more truly participative methodology. This calls for more time and resources for genuine consultation among various different groups within the community. It calls, too, for an ability on the part of the development professional to listen to and incorporate local wisdom and experience.

The sacred kernel of reality: how can this be recognised?

'If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is: infinite', wrote the English poet, William Blake, two centuries ago. Spiritual wisdom anywhere in the world would express a similar conviction. Most religions believe that there is a sacred kernel in every person, some would say in all of reality. If this is true, in order to be all-encompassing, knowledge must take it into account. Spirituality is not a special faculty that can be isolated. It functions in symbiosis with the rest of our human faculties. Spirituality is to be incorporated, not regarded as an optional 'add-on'.

According to this understanding, if development is to relate to the whole of human existence, analyses, planning, and development strategies will have to take into account transcendence – that depth of freedom, infinity, and inter-connectedness which is inherent in all human beings. Such an understanding requires a sense of mystery which enlightens from within, so as to open up our minds to an approach which does not separate the spiritual from the material. This is not to become irrational, but to become conscious of the unknown, which some religions see as the divine within. It is an essential process, if reason is to be recuperated from reductionist rationalism, which excludes any other kinds of knowledge.

This perception of the sacred kernel of reality is not easily absorbed into current development theory and practice, which perceives earthly

happiness in overwhelmingly material terms, and as a goal to be achieved through one's own effort. Professional development workers who are steeped in utilitarian values and restricted by bureaucratic systems which emphasise control will not find it easy to acquire the quality of detachment and the ability to 'let go'. Yet this is at the heart of the teaching of all religious and many philosophical traditions, as distinct in their nature as Pantanjali's yoga or Seneca's Stoicism, Bantu proverbs or Tao-inspired body movements, Zen texts or the Bible, Quechua wisdom or Sufi mysticism. Perhaps one of the key challenges for our age is to bring together these various views in a dynamic relationship and thus to find a way forward which leads to true contentment and peace.

Difficulties there are, but everyone can make a start. Merely to develop an awareness of the notion of the sacred at the heart of the lives of most people is a good beginning. An understanding of the essential importance of Candomblé deities, Catholic saints, and Carnival in the daily lives, concerns, and value systems of the vast majority of Brazilians, for example, will shed light on how people in Brazil view realities such as life and death, freedom, land, and wealth.

It may also be important to differentiate between a religious perspective or understanding of life on the one hand and the institutionalisation of religion on the other. Religions themselves have a fundamental message to deliver about an integrated vision of the world, a different approach to knowledge and the basic values that hold human societies together. But it is painfully obvious that religious institutions, sharing, as they do, the flaws of all humanity, have often failed to act in accordance with their vision. Inter-faith violence, 'communalism', aggressive proselytising, and unpalatable manoeuvring for power or money are real obstacles to social and economic well-being in and of themselves. They embody challenges which call for repentance and renewal, for a return to the original fire of each faith.

Culture as a life pattern

How do we understand culture?

Integrating the cultural dimension into development can lead to the adoption of a less reductive and more all-embracing approach. This means that development partners, especially the people affected, have to make special efforts to integrate culture from the earliest stages. For the purposes of development work, it is useful to look at culture as

both an aid for coping with negative influences and pressures and a creative and joyous response to people's relationship with themselves, with others, with the community, and with the environment.

A given culture has three 'dimensions': *the symbolic* (such as values, symbols, archetypes, myths, spirituality, religion – or often several different religions); *the societal* (organisational patterns for family and community linkages and support, systems for management, including business management, and political systems for decision making and conflict resolution, etc.); and *the technological* (skills, expertise, technology, agriculture, cooking, architecture, etc). Often these dimensions overlap, as for example in the fields of art, law, and language.

Culture does not belong only to the past. It evolves in response to outside influences and to the fact that people innovate and create new cultural traits. In a given culture, there are, therefore, some elements which are inherited, and others which are adopted and created. We suggest that a simple working definition would therefore be that culture is 'the complex whole of knowledge, wisdom, values, attitudes, customs and multiple resources which a community has inherited, adopted or created in order to flourish in the context of its social and natural environment'.

Development is cultural: how can local cultures and development programmes be mutually enhancing?

Culture may be relegated to a place of secondary importance, because it is difficult to include cultural issues in a model for action which sets objectives at the beginning and uses only quantifiable data. But a process-oriented approach, with more emphasis on qualitative evaluation, can lead us to appreciate and take account of the fact that culture is far from a superficial adjunct to life, the icing on the economic and technological cake. On the contrary, it permeates all aspects of life. It contains the local perception of the meaning of life and of what for a local population simply constitutes a 'good life'. It is a matrix, the software of social life, its 'symbolic engine'. It can be a source of positive dynamism. Conversely, it can lead to inertia, if it becomes what Paulo Freire called 'a culture of silence', with an internalised inferiority complex, leading to dependence.¹⁸

Cultural revitalisation is then needed, in order to enhance development by generating a sense of self-confidence and mutual trust. This can lead to more participative democracy, to more responsible

citizenship, to increased economic effectiveness, to creative technological change, and to more sustainable poverty reduction. A lively culture is both a heritage and a project. It gives meaning and direction. In the words of the Mexican poet, Carlos Fuentes, 'culture is like a seashell wherein we can hear whom we have been and listen to what we can become'.

It therefore follows that any development process must be embedded in local culture, or development simply will not take place. In fact, 'de-development' often occurs in the absence of cultural sensitivity. All too often in the past, educational curricula have, for instance, failed to address what people most need and want to learn. The result has been that school attendance has been low, and those who have succeeded in gaining good results have left their communities, since what they have learned has no practical application there. At worst, schools have offered a vision of the world which is opposed to that of the pupils' families. This leaves the pupils in the position of being forced to make a choice between loyalty to their homes or making the grade.

Cultural revitalisation can be brought about by culture-sensitive curriculum planning, which includes teaching in local languages, encouraging learning about regional and national history, geography, and literature, and teaching technical skills which are of use in local agriculture and industries. A good example of this is the work of the Bahá'í-inspired NGO, FUNDAEC, which founded the University for Integral Development in Colombia.¹⁹ The key learning processes promoted by the university are centred on alternative systems of production, appropriate formal education for children and youth, and strengthening local economies. The direction and elements of each process are dependent on the culture and context in which they are implemented.

The creative power of culture: how do people create alternatives to development models that they perceive as a threat?

When top-down development practices are hostile to the values of the people affected, local cultures may resist modernity and development. The failure of many development projects provides evidence of the ability of people to slow down, change, or block what they perceive as a threat.²⁰ True, some communities seem to fall into fatalism, resulting in submission or apathy. Others reject new inputs with fear, lack of discernment, and fanaticism. But there are plenty of examples of cultures which innovate and, through trial and error, set up alternatives.

No unique model is coming to the fore. But a large variety of cultural mixes are to be found, where local tradition mingles with imported modernity, capitalism with gift and counter-gift, streamlined business management with a village spirit and family-like bonds, and Western development with local rationality. Something else may be emerging, beyond the old opposition between tradition and modernity. Perhaps various kinds of local modernities (or trans-modernities) will arise, embedded in the creativity of each culture. Here are three examples to illustrate this point.

- In Mexico City and the area surrounding it, Tianguis Tlaloc (*tianguis* means 'Popular Market') is an organisation which brings about 100 small entrepreneurs into a system of exchange of products and services, within an environment-friendly concept and with an alternative 'currency'. The *tlaloc* is the equivalent of one hour's work. It is used in addition to the Mexican currency as a step towards setting up an economy based on appreciation and gifts, rather than prices and profit. A quarterly bulletin is published: *The Other Stock Exchange (La otra bolsa de valores)*, whose yellow pages give information about offers which accept the alternative 'currency'. Anyone may apply directly to the people offering the transactions. This is but one example of thousands of alternative trading programmes, with or without their own currency, which are mushrooming all over the world. They are a form of resistance to an increasingly globalised economy which almost always works to the disadvantage of the poorest.
- In Congo (formerly Zaire), an NGO project to introduce oxen for ploughing met with dismal failure because it attempted to turn local peasants into 'modern' farmers. They were supposed to raise income for their nuclear family only, and the equipment given on loan was to be repaid through income generated without assistance from the broader community. The expected increase in production did not occur, and most 'beneficiaries' opted out. However, much to the surprise of those promoting the project, a socially and religiously vibrant community living about 100 miles away sent two youngsters to look at the new technical inputs (ploughs, stables, fodder, etc.) and then successfully introduced them at home, with no financial support or other kinds of assistance. The key to the puzzle seemed to be the fact that the second community was able to adapt a new agricultural technique (ploughing with oxen) to the context of its traditional economic structures. The additional income raised in the

second location was not appropriated by the individual nuclear families, and thus the common interests of the entire community were recognised, and tensions in the group were avoided.

- In Mumbai (Bombay), a women's co-operative producing *chapati* is steeped in the Hindu religion. The common kitchens are considered temples, the *chapati* an offering to the godhead, and all the women are seen as worshippers. Their work is thus elevated to the status of a sacred undertaking, where precepts of the Bhagavad Gita relating to detachment from the fruits of the action (*nichkarma karma*) apply. The co-operative, which is run by mainly poor women, has not only raised the income of the community as a whole but has also increased the self-esteem and confidence of the women involved, by allowing them to share tasks, maintain a non-hierarchical atmosphere, and learn skills for the good of the group. It has branched out to other cities.

In conclusion, culture matters because it can be a source of dynamism and creativity. It is not purity which is most important in a culture, nor necessarily its antiquity, but its ability to adapt and be creative, and to screen and select from the many outside influences that it must confront. What matters in a culture is its capacity to generate self-respect, the ability to resist exploitation and domination, and the ability to offer meaning to what people produce and consume, to land, liberty, life and death, pain and joy. Culture is, in the final analysis, about meaning: that is why it is so closely related to spirituality.

Three caveats

It is useful to bear in mind three caveats when 'dealing with' culture. First, culture is not to be romanticised. No culture is ideal, nor is any culture static. All cultures have to evolve in our rapidly changing world. Many may need radical challenges, changes, and greater balance, but these transformations will be brought about only from within, since no outside view can be relied upon to be 'right' in any permanent sense.

Gender issues provide a good illustration of rapid cultural change in societies of the West – and we should be aware too that these views on gender relations are themselves still subject to change. But gender issues can also illustrate how lasting attitudinal changes will be brought about only by shifts arising from within a society. In the space of less than four years a locally impelled movement, which began in 1997 in the Senegalese village of Malicounda-Bambara, resulted in the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) being abandoned in 200 communities

nationwide and in several other African countries as well. This was made possible by the unity of the villagers and the support of a widely respected *imam*, but also by the removal of one of the main incentives to continue the practice. The change in attitude among the male villagers led to new ideas about the conditions for marriage. It was this which enabled people to comply, without jeopardising their future security. None of these changes could have happened without the local people's conviction and leadership.

A second caveat is that culture is not to be isolated from economics and power relations. All these fields are inter-connected and influence each other. Culture should not be regarded as something which hovers above people's heads and determines them for ever. Cultures determine local economics, which in turn determine culture, and both are influenced by power relations and technology.

Third, caution must also be exercised in the face of generalisations about 'a people', a community. Within any culture, sub-cultures abound, and they need to be taken into account, lest generalising but erroneous interpretations are taken for granted, for example on issues of gender or caste, or when an ethnic group is prone to ignore the rightful existence of others. A Brazilian *favela*, for example, has a distinct culture, a determinate attitude towards law, police, and citizenship, which slum dwellers have in common and which is quite different from the attitude of the formal 'asphalt city' inhabitants. Yet inside that slum, differences abound. Drug dealers and Christian base communities are in close proximity, yet do not form a single whole. Women tend to have altogether a different outlook from that of men on violence and community affairs.

Towards a code of conduct

Great spiritual leaders have taught throughout the ages that even if actions are good in themselves, if they are undertaken for unworthy motives they will, in the end, cause harm. Therefore we need to explore our inner depths. We need to know ourselves.²¹ Above all, it is important to examine why one should engage in development work at all, and whether we are open to learning from others.

Why are we doing development work?

Mahatma Gandhi used to speak of a secret law linking social transformation (changing external structures) to personal improvement (changing oneself internally). Buddhists, Muslims, Christians,

Hindus, and others would all agree that social action is a task of such importance that it requires spiritual depth in those who undertake it. More than 2000 years ago, the Bhagavad Gita introduced conditions to be observed when one enters into action. They are still relevant today in development work, or in any socio-political action for that matter.

One condition is to be 'detached from the fruits of the action', that is not to cling to ego-centred satisfaction, prestige, or ensuing power or wealth. It is a call to avoid the inflation of the ego, to open up to the Self, and to act with a combination of efficiency and gratuity. The second condition is to be aware that it is not we who act, but rather that it is a force from beyond, perhaps of divine origin, which acts through us. The third is to consider all actions as an offering to the deity, a humble return of human willpower and skill to the ultimate and the transcendent.

On a personal level, it is very difficult to be 'detached from the fruits of the action', even when the survival, career success, and self-esteem of those concerned do not depend on the outcomes of that action – which they usually do. But it is even more difficult for organisations which channel taxpayers' or investors' funds into development work to be unconcerned about the successes and failures of the people whom they employ to do it. So what can this mean? Perhaps it is, again, a question of 'letting go', being less determined to control the outcome according to one's own perceptions, and being more ready to recognise that success can be measured in many different ways, according to people's different priorities. In the end it is a question of remembering that the most important judges of the 'fruits of the action' are the individuals and families who are supposed to benefit from it. Their views might well be different from that of the development worker or institution.

Are we ready to learn from those in whose lives we seek to intervene?

This question relates to the cross-fertilisation made possible by cultural interaction. People are not a void to be filled, but a plenitude to be approached with a sense of wonder and respect. Their culture is a reservoir of wisdom and skill, even if it has – as any culture does – its dark sides and oppressive characteristics.

Donors and experts may often bring with them useful resources and expertise which are desperately needed in many parts of the world.

But if they fall into the trap of taking the centre stage in a development process or of playing the role of the bearers of solutions to other people's or even other countries' problems, the assistance they are offering will never be sustainable. True progress cannot be made unless individual development workers, donor institutions, and countries recognise their own shortcomings and limitations, and until they accept being enriched, challenged, and 'assisted' by their 'beneficiaries' (whom they in turn should challenge).

Indeed, different cultures very often open the eyes, minds, and hearts of the outsiders who enter into the process of recognising them. However, this requires an opening up of one's deeper self to what seems alien in the other. To go through such an experience with a grassroots community, one has to abandon some of one's most cherished intellectual convictions and to 'relativise' one's all-encompassing reason. This means abandoning some psychological security and making oneself vulnerable. 'The other' may then change us. The experts who avoid these challenges by persisting with a mechanistic approach, which they justify by their claim to use professional tools, will miss all the enrichment gained by entering into the complexity and the life and warmth of a community.

Surely it is against this broader background of reciprocity that future solidarity action should be launched, in order to avoid the pitfalls of paternalism and ethnocentric do-goodism. We might call this empathetic approach 'interactive self-discovery', replacing the word 'aid' with 'mutual enrichment'. A new paradigm, that of reciprocity, should offer a framework for thinking about future interaction between North and South, West and East, and a sense of co-responsibility for success and for failure.

Modesty, empathy, and respect: what right to we have to get involved in the lives of others?

There is a degree of intrusiveness in social research and planning. People should at least be informed about the objectives of the research carried out in their community. They should retain control and ownership of the knowledge gathered about them by the researcher. Studying from a distance, instructing, top-down planning, and 'controlled transformation' are all ways of imposing an agenda from outside. A better starting point is to ask: 'Tell us, how do *you* do this? Please show us!' People themselves can be among the best producers of knowledge about themselves. Research and planning bear full fruit

only when they are intensively participative. As we have already seen, this implies time, training, and costs; but an outsider will learn more and gather qualitatively far more valuable information by holding up a mirror to a local community, than by researching or acting 'on' people. Instead of being treated as objects, people then become subjects, and outsiders can act as 'midwives', helping people to bring their wisdom into the wider world.

Research must be carried out with the necessary intellectual discipline. But each approach will require a combination of technical skills and human qualities. The latter relate to the psychology, the ethics, and the spirituality of the researcher. In addition to material deprivation, we may define poverty as the absence of self-respect and self-confidence, the lack of awareness of the ability to transform oneself and one's surroundings, and the lack of an understanding of the power of united vision and action. In this case, spiritual qualities, such as humility, love, sincerity, patience, wisdom, perseverance, and open-mindedness are called for in all development workers. In this way, development activities can become spirituality in action.

This dimension is at least as important as the technical aspect but, as Robert Chambers points out, it has seldom been a focus in the past:

The personal dimension is a bizarre blind spot in development. Behaviour and attitudes have simply not been on the development map. As for beliefs, they have been debated almost entirely within the publicly contested areas of ideology and fundamentalisms, whether Marxist, neo-classical or more overtly religious. Personal responsibility for actions and non-actions has not been a subject.²²

Experiencing a community means participation, sharing, or at least feeling empathy for the joys and pains of a people, its spirituality, its sense of beauty or justice. It means taking time. In social research, it is important to beware of impatience. The ideal is not always attainable. The urgent needs of many people in the world lead social activists and development workers to want to cut corners, literally in order to save lives. Besides this, the resources for long-term social research are often not available. Concessions may have to be made, but these limitations should not lead us to lose sight of the vision of the kind of relationship that is the essential basis of any true solidarity.

Identifying the voiceless: who can speak for whom?

Social reality and social work are caught in a dialectic between creativity and control. If the objective is to study local culture and to empower the

underprivileged, special care must be exercised to listen to the voiceless and the least powerful. In a given place, one part of society may respond quite positively to influences and challenges from outside and may benefit from development projects, whereas other parts may become isolated and fragmented.

This is particularly applicable to gender relations. On far too many occasions the opinions of local male leaders are accepted as those of the 'community', often resulting in programmes which may bring in more income but also greatly increase the women's workload. But power relations, class distinctions, age, geographical origin, religious affiliations, and so on also help to shape sub-cultures and put them in a disadvantaged position. It is all too easy to listen only to those who speak the dominant (often European) language, for instance, or to limit one's investigation to the villages which lie nearest to a road.

Moreover, sometimes it is more important to see how people actually behave rather than merely to ask them to voice an opinion. Participative Action Research (PAR) is certainly an appropriate approach, for example, but it will be productive only if the researcher develops the kinds of attitude described above.

Methodological hints for socio-cultural analysis

The need to cope with complexity: do our analytical methods distort reality?

Science is excellent at 'experimenting' (on guinea pigs, for example, or on particles), at observing (phenomena such as climatic changes and chemical reactions), and at defining causal relationships. But, because it depends on the use of empirical and quantifiable data, it is poor at 'experiencing'. Scientific research has for too long been based on separation. It is time that science began to look at the whole, rather than the parts. In development studies, the 'chop up and study the parts' method will not do. People's lives should not be compartmentalised by an approach that separates behaviour from its deeper meaning. This meaning may often be hidden, or at least implicit. In fact, all practices, including economic practices, are rooted in the meaning which people give to their lives, that is to say in their culture. Thus, any particular political or economic practice, and any technology, must be linked up with its broader cultural context.

No mechanistic approach can apply to reality as a whole. Because of this, universally applicable tool kits, random questionnaires, and

similar methods inevitably miss the complexity and specificity of the situation. Nor is there any single, universally valid recipe for the understanding of local culture. The best method relates to the 'object' of the research. Albert Einstein once observed that if you have only a hammer, all problems will look like nails. Social reality will be understood only if approached with wisdom and a broad curiosity. The human soul will not be found with a surgeon's lancet. This does not, of course, mean that the researcher can dispense with the necessary intellectual discipline. Rigour and thoroughness are required, but not at the expense of humanity and sensitivity.

How development processes are carried out is not a trifling matter. The consequences of ignoring the people who are supposed to benefit have in many cases been disastrous. Robert Chambers asks, for instance, what might have happened if professionals had listened to, believed, and learned from rural people about their history and environment, and if they had understood the nature and rationale of rural people's practices? In reply to his own question, he suggests that it is reasonable to suppose that in Ethiopia there would have been terracing on a massive scale and in Kenya extensive tree-planting programmes, which would have reduced vulnerability and famines and advanced well-being on a huge scale.²³

What assets do local people bring to a development programme?

People are not first and foremost 'problems'. It is therefore important to look at the positive aspects of a community, not just the negative ones. Methods of social analysis which focus on 'problems', 'needs', 'deficiencies', and 'obstacles' tend to encourage negativity, passivity, dependence, weakness, or fatalism among local people. Problems may certainly be there and they need to be identified, but not separately from people's creative abilities, richness, beauty, success-stories, struggles, and values ... the positive side of their lives.

Thus, when using, for example, the Logical Framework ('logframe') method, which calls for the participative drawing of a 'tree' of local problems, one might add a collective exercise to identify, in a 'tree of expertise and skills', the local assets available to solve these problems.²⁴ Examples of such assets might be the knowledge of medicinal herbs, skills in pottery, weaving, and other crafts, organisational capacities, and the existence of networks which provide support and solidarity to those who most need them. In this way cultural elements will necessarily be included in the process of planning projects.

Looking at the signs: 'What are the dreams of the people?'

A culture, a people, and a village 'speak' in many ways. Silence can be very eloquent and tell an observer as much as articulate answers would do. As mentioned earlier, intuition and careful observation are required for an understanding of the non-verbal language of a community. Written and oral data, even qualitative, non-directive interviews, are never wholly reliable. Questions may pre-determine the answer, jeopardise the receptivity of the interviewer, and hinder the expression of many of the people's most important aspirations and needs. In Maori parlance, it is advisable to ask oneself: 'What are the dreams of the people? What has been their experience of pain?'

To consider the implicit meaning of local practices is the bottom line of socio-cultural analysis. One of the reasons why questionnaires or checklists can be only very partially useful is the necessity to go beyond the explicit. Practices should not be selected *a priori*. They often pertain to a deeper meaning which is difficult to understand: secret, invisible, and even unconscious.

Conclusion

Giving a soul to globalisation: which is the way to human freedom?

The present momentum towards globalisation is fuelled by a competitive drive towards economic growth. But the supremacy of the market and the ever-increasing control exercised by the multinational corporations are causing many people to yearn for societies that are inspired by different values.

The millionaire financier, George Soros, aptly points out that 'markets are eminently suitable for the pursuit of private interests, but they are not designed to take care of the common interest'.²⁵ It follows that market mechanisms should not be considered an end in themselves, but merely a means towards a higher goal. Amartya Sen powerfully suggests that this goal could be called freedom.²⁶ But it would seem that today we are witnessing a clash between human freedom and market freedom, which all too often ends in the steamroller of profit-maximisation crushing human efforts to flourish, create, and develop autonomously.

In this essay, we have tried to point out that the idea of 'progress' as a purely material goal is alien to most people of the world. Because of this, 'development' processes that are planned and implemented with only this in mind will fail, even on their own terms. They will be resisted

by people who find life's meaning in an awareness of their innermost spiritual being, which for some signifies the spark of the divine. And they will be resisted by people who see life as an integrated whole, in which the relationships of compassion and respect among human beings, and between them and their natural environment, are decisive, if humanity is to achieve true fulfilment.

'True economics are economics of justice', wrote Mahatma Gandhi. Firmly rooted in all religious belief is the notion that the pursuit of power and wealth, particularly at the expense of others, can never lead to contentment. For Buddhists, greed and the dependence on material gain is a prime cause of suffering. The Jewish, Muslim, and Christian traditions of sharing wealth are at the centre of their approach to economics. Social justice, environmental balance, and spiritual depth must be the measuring rods of a humane world system. To engage in the creation of the 'economics of justice' requires the inner strength to swim against the tide.

Faced with urgent social and ecological issues, it is imperative that we should find more sustainable ways to organise life on our planet, ways which enable genuine human freedom and cultural diversity to thrive. Development strategies and projects still have a role to play. But even more important than these specific inputs are efforts to transform the global trends which are hindering the autonomous development of people according to their own cultural norms and practices. Corporate support and initiative in the direction of such a world order already exist and should be encouraged.²⁷ We must give a soul to globalisation.

How can globalisation foster diversity in unity?

The consequences of globalisation may be experienced by many people as largely negative, but increased communications do offer us a unique occasion to learn from each other. Never before have young people, for instance, been given so many opportunities to meet their counterparts from other continents; nor, in the past, have followers of various religions had the chance to discover what they hold in common, in the way that is possible today. The perspective of the Bahá'í faith is relevant here, emphasising as it does the idea that meaningful development requires the harmonisation of the seemingly antithetical processes of globalisation and decentralisation, of the promotion of universal standards and the fostering of cultural diversity.

Globalisation has been used as a force towards homogeneity and uniformity, but at the same time it can offer an opportunity for the

careful tending of our diversity in unity – a task which, as this essay has tried to show, calls for our unrelenting commitment. Just as forests are sustainable thanks to biodiversity, so humankind needs cultural diversity for its survival. Each culture, each civilisation, is called upon to relate to others in a spirit of joyful interest and compassionate love, lest we fall into the deadly war-games of Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’.²⁸

We have noted, we hope with due realism and understanding, that relating to the strangeness and newness of ‘the other’ and entering into dialogue may be a difficult exercise and at times a painful one. But it is one of the highest callings of the human being. The Qur’an suggests that the Muslim faithful should go to remote places in order to learn and enrich themselves. Relationship is the difficult yet life-enhancing path between the extremes of separation and fusion. This is a key tenet of modern psychology. It also constitutes a fundamental paradigm in Christianity and plays an important part in other world faiths. Relating to ‘the other’ is a matter of opening up, while remaining true to oneself. Experience shows that those who manage to do this invariably enrich their own lives in ways that cannot be foreseen.

Neither cultural apartheid based upon indifference or enmity, nor total merger into a universal monoculture, is a sustainable proposition. The sustainability of the world lies in multiplicity in unity. Each religious and spiritual tradition will express this unity in diversity in its own words, referring either to the energy of love or to the search for cosmic harmony and beauty. The Russian novelist Dostoyevski wrote that Beauty could save the world. ‘*We are meant to shine*’, said Nelson Mandela. ‘*We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us. It is in Everyone.*’

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Notes

- 1 The term 'development' is used in this essay for want of a better one, but we are aware that it is a term which many people associate with an imposition of the values and rationality of the industrialised countries and their particular view of 'progress', none of which is universally accepted. Some people therefore speak now of 'alternatives to development'.
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- 26 Amartya Sen (see note 4).
- 27 Two examples are Business for Social Responsibility in the USA (www.bsr.org/) and the Ethical Trading Initiative in the UK (www.ethicaltrade.org)
- 28 See note 14.

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Culture, liberation, and 'development'

Shubi L. Ishemo

Introduction

It has become a fetish to talk about traditions when referring to socio-economic processes in Africa. This is common not only among Western 'development experts', but also among some African intellectuals. 'Tradition' carries with it meanings of timelessness, of stasis, of being fossilised. For the society so described, the notion of 'tradition' denies it a history. The implications for such an approach are manifest in the economistic ideology of 'developmentalism', which, as Shivji (1986:1) has shown, has been 'the dominant ideological formation in post-independence Africa'. The basis for this ideology, he further notes, is as follows:

We are economically backward and we need to develop and develop very fast. In this task of development we cannot afford the luxury of politics. Therefore politics are relegated to the background, while economics come to occupy the central place on the ideological terrain.

We might also add that, in this ideological formation, culture, like politics, is seen as an obstacle and therefore relegated to the background. This obsession with economistic developmentalism is not new. It has historically, and in various forms, served to legitimise domination over working people in every society. Historically, too, in the relationship between the West and the South, it has been based on the belief that the processes of Western socio-economic and political development are universal and that these, and these alone, constitute progress. It has been the dominant view since the age of European 'Enlightenment' in the eighteenth century and was popularised during colonial times. It has, in various guises, dominated the policies not only of the Western 'donor' governments, some NGOs, and international financial institutions, but also of some Southern governments. That

dominant view is Eurocentric, in that it assumes that the Western model is superior. It carries with it biases and lack of concern for the cultures and history of African and other Southern societies.

National liberation as an 'act of culture'

It is important to remind ourselves of the historical dimension. Colonialism, in Africa in particular and the South in general, served the need of the highly industrialised countries in Europe and North America for capital accumulation. In spite of political independence, this has not changed; in fact it has been consolidated, as capital restructures itself to resolve the crisis and to ensure continued accumulation through a variety of mechanisms. I shall come to this later. The colonialists started from the premise that Africa had no history; their mission was to bring the continent into history. Those ideas therefore denied Africa a culture and served as an ideological licensing of exploitation.

In the struggle for national liberation, the issue of history and culture became central. Amilcar Cabral, a revolutionary theorist and leader of the PAIGC liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau and Cabo Verde, wrote:

Our countries are economically backward. Our peoples are at a specific historical stage, characterized by this backward condition of our economy. We must be conscious of this. We are African peoples, we have not invented many things ... we have no big factories ... but we do have our own hearts, our own heads and our own history. It is this history which the colonialists have taken from us. The colonialists usually say that it is they who brought us into history: today we say that this is not so. They made us leave history, our history, to follow them, right at the back, to follow the progress of their history.

Cabral argued that the national liberation struggle was a way 'to return to our history, on our own feet, by our own means and through our own sacrifices' (1974:63). Imperialist and colonial domination was therefore 'the negation of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violently usurping the free operation of the process of development of the productive forces' (1973:41). By 'productive forces', Cabral meant the means of production (such as tools, premises, instrumental materials and raw materials) and labour power. He emphasised that every society is an 'evolving entity', and that the stage of its development can be seen in the level of its productive forces.

Each of these reacts to nature. Groups enter material relationships, relationships with nature and the environment, and relationships among individuals or collectives. To him, these components constitute not only history, but also culture. In usurping all these, imperialism practises cultural oppression. Therefore, national liberation aims at the 'liberation of the process of development of national productive forces' and consequently the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution of the liberated people. It necessarily opens up new prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress. National liberation, therefore, is 'necessarily an act of culture' (1973:43).

Cabral warned (1973:52) against naturalising culture and linking it to supposed racial characteristics.

It is important to be conscious of the value of African culture in the framework of universal civilisation, but to compare this value with that of other cultures, not with a view of deciding its superiority or inferiority, but in order to determine, in the general framework of the struggle for progress, what contribution African culture has made and can make, and what are the contributions it can or must receive from elsewhere.

Cabral saw culture as a 'fruit of history', an integral part of historical processes. The most fundamental element for progress was the regaining of people's creative capacity and potential, which imperialism had usurped. This creative capacity has a democratic content, in that people determine what is best for themselves, and adapt new techniques and knowledge to their concrete reality. So when we speak about culture, we are referring not just to customs, beliefs, attitudes, values, art, etc., but to the whole way of life of a people, which also embraces a complex web of economic and political activities, science, and technology. These are not exclusive attributes of any single race or people. He referred to a scientific culture, a universal culture free from domination (1973:55).

I have dwelt on Cabral's work at length, because his analysis of the positive role of culture is relevant in the struggle against the most pressing problems of our time. His profound work has been shamefully ignored, especially by those in positions to exert a positive influence on policy and strategies that meet the needs and interests of the working people.

'Development' policies and cultural dependency

Much of the debate about 'development' has been conducted from differing and contending perspectives. It is not my intention to consider that here, but I wish to dwell briefly on how some of these perspectives have dealt with the cultural dimension in 'development' policies.

Modernisation theories regard cultures of non-industrialised societies in the South as obstacles to development. Those societies are seen as being characterised by kinship (which apparently hinders individual enterprise), religious obscurantism and fatalism, stagnation and resignation. In short, they are 'traditional'. The opposite of this is a 'modern' capitalist sector.

From a different source, another perspective, associated with Warren (1980), sees underdevelopment as being internal to poor societies of the South, and argues for a 'progressive' mission of capitalist imperialism. With specific reference to Africa, this position is unrelentingly restated in the words of John Sender and Sheila Smith (1987). They see capitalist imperialism as having led to the development of the productive forces and a rise in living standards. Both perspectives share the superficial nature of the dichotomy between tradition and modernity; both dwell purely on economic factors, and see the causes of the crisis in Africa as internal.

Recently, as Samir Amin (1990:96) has pointed out, the cultural dimension has been embraced by researchers as an important element in socio-economic processes. To my mind, however, this is not new. For working people in poor countries of the South, it has always been at the heart of any initiative that affects their lives. Central to the cultural dimension of socio-economic processes is the question of identity. Samir Amin further draws contrasts between the development of capitalism in Western Europe and Japan, on the one hand, and in Africa on the other. In the former he sees a longer process of social transformation with 'no break but a complex process of selective repossession of former cultural components within the context of technological and economic development'. This explains the dynamism of economic and technological creativity of those societies. By contrast, capitalist development in Africa was imposed from the outside and confronted local cultures in a violent manner, with the result that 'Identity ..., rather than being gradually broken down and rebuilt to productive effect, is more or less ferociously destroyed,

without putting in place compensatory processes of production of new cultural components, capable in turn of supporting accumulation and innovation' (1990: 98-9).

The origins of Africa's problems lie in the specificity of capitalist development and its long-term effects on African societies. It is fair to state that the European model was forced down their throats. African people had no say in this, because that was the nature of the Eurocentric project. It precluded all positive knowledge that African societies had generated.

Colonial institutions inculcated Euro-centric values unremittingly. European intellectuals served to legitimate the Eurocentric project. As George Joseph (1990:3) and his colleagues have argued,

During the heyday of imperialism, the scholar was useful, not only in constructing a conceptual framework within which colonial ideology could be defended and extended, but in helping to select problems for investigation which highlighted the beneficial effects of colonial rule.

The purpose of colonial research institutes like the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute in the then Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) is too well known to repeat here. In many colonies, ethnicities were invented; in the case of post-colonial Rwanda and Burundi, the cumulative consequences of the invention of ethnic identities by the successive German and Belgian colonial administrations are all too painfully apparent. The study of African cultures served the needs of colonial occupiers, particularly in the creation of labour reservoirs and the segmentation of labour along ethnic lines. It was not meant to invigorate and energise those societies to absorb and adapt new positive elements to their own realities. This was reinforced by the colonial education system. African intellectuals were colonised. The medium of instruction became European languages, whose cultural influences cannot be underestimated. Cultural dependency has been the consequence of that process.

It is in this context that socio-economic, political, cultural, and intellectual processes in post-colonial Africa must be understood. The penetrating analysis of Amilcar Cabral of the role of culture in the processes of change is very relevant, not only in contemporary Africa, but also throughout the South. He made a distinction between

the situation of the masses, who preserve their culture, and that of the social groups who are assimilated or partially so, who are cut off and culturally alienated. Even though the indigenous colonial elite who

emerged during the process of colonization still continue to pass on some element of indigenous culture, yet they live both materially and spiritually according to the foreign culture. They seek to identify themselves increasingly with this culture both in their social behaviours and even in their appreciation of its values. (1973:61)

In identifying the latter group, Cabral made a further distinction between those who vacillated and those who identified themselves with the masses. Post-colonial Africa has by and large been dominated by the vacillators. They have collaborated with imperialism in determining the strategies for 'development', by failing to challenge models that do not address people's needs. Their strategies reflect an unthinking and uncritical imitation of the West. They are intellectual and cultural captives of imperialism. This is not to say that this model has not been challenged in post-colonial Africa. Some of the liberation movements were a source of great inspiration for many. There were, in those movements, some 'organic' intellectuals like Amilcar Cabral who studied the reality of their societies meticulously. From such study they identified themselves with the aspirations of the masses and created popular structures in which the people participated in devising strategies for economic, social, political, and cultural advancement. In some countries, progressive strategies, designed to meet the people's needs, were initiated — even if sometimes frustrated by a lack of clear reference to the cultural dimension, by bureaucratism, and by populism. 'Organic' or politically engaged intellectuals played an important part in opening up avenues for real advancement. (There are some excellent essays on this subject in Diouf and Mamdani, eds., 1994.) We know what happened to those strategies and those intellectuals. External intervention and local reaction stifled them and continue to frustrate them.

Corporate profits and the quality of life

The current structural adjustment policies (SAPs), though they have their origins in the period dating from the early 1980s, are not new. What is new is the bold and shameless assertion of their neo-liberal ideological underpinnings and the intensity and viciousness of their implementation. SAPs have had devastating effects on the living standards of working people, including unprecedented increases in the levels of unemployment and a decline in levels of pay. Emphasis on export-led commodity production to service an ever-increasing debt

to the international financial institutions (IFIs) has resulted in low productive capacity for the internal market and an increase in dependency on (often subsidised) Western agro-industrial conglomerates. As Samir Amin (1994:38) has noted, IFIs like the World Bank have 'focused on destroying the autonomy of the peasant world, breaking the subsistence economy by supporting forms of credit designed to this end, and promoting the differentiation of the rural world through the famous "green revolution"'. The conditionalities imposed by the IFIs have led to a decrease in social expenditure and the deterioration of health-care and education systems (Chossudovsky, 1991 and Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa, 1992). Many studies show a correlation between debt, SAPs, and ecological deterioration. For the World Bank, pollution is a sign of progress. In a famous observation, Lawrence Summers, the Bank's vice-president, recommended the transfer of 'dirty' industries to the Third World:

I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that ... I have always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly under-polluted, their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently high compared to Los Angeles or Mexico City. (Dore, 1992:85)

It is clear that, as Samir Amin (1994:38) has argued, 'The Bank has never seen itself as a "public institution" competing or potentially clashing with private capital (transnationals). On the contrary, it has viewed itself as an agent whose task is to support their penetration of the Third World.' The SAPs are economistic. They are more concerned with corporate profits than enabling the working people to improve the quality of their lives. In ignoring environmental issues, they downplay the cultural dimension; for, as Cabral (1973:42) noted, when we speak of culture, we refer to 'relationships between (humanity) and nature, between (humanity) and his (her) environment'. Thus, as Dore (1992:84) has observed, it is not surprising that, in the Third World, contemporary struggles of the working people have reflected the 'fusion of ecological, economic and cultural struggles'.

SAPs have engendered a culture of unbridled consumerism, with sections of the cities bristling with luxury commodities which are well beyond the means of working people. Far from inaugurating a new epoch of progress, they have exacerbated inequalities and weakened social bonds and solidarity through emphasis on the individual, rather than on society or communities.

Under empty slogans of a compressed world and a globalised economy, the sovereignty of the fragile nation states has been weakened. Decisions that affect millions are made in the boardrooms of the IMF and the World Bank, fully supported by the Western governments. 'Democracy' is imposed and regulated from the outside. The fall of authoritarian regimes has been a welcome development, but the popular content of that change has been hijacked by those committed to the neo-liberal project. The implications for people's participation in determining their strategies for advancement have been negative. Initiatives from below have been constantly frustrated by obsession with the laws of the market.

Acknowledging 'people as a living presence'

In 1979, Adrian Adams wrote an excellent account of a peasant cooperative in Senegal. It is one of the most moving and inspiring accounts that I have ever read. There is every reason to believe that there have been and continue to be similar experiences throughout the South. It is necessary reading for anyone who is serious about real 'development'. Adams details the development of a peasant farmers' initiative to improve their food production and to 'base rural development on existing communities and values'. The peasants' appeal for help to Western NGOs to adapt irrigation technical inputs to their farming methods attracted an array of NGOs, the Senegalese State bureaucracy, and USAID, all vying to control and direct what the peasants had initiated. What emerged was a predetermined Eurocentric approach, which ignored the peasants and brushed them aside as ignorant of 'development'. Technical 'assistance' was conditional on the peasants dismantling collective forms of production and parcelling out land into individual family plots, growing rice instead of millet, having production targets imposed on them by the State, purchasing fertilisers beyond their needs, and virtually surrendering control of their bank accounts to the State. The peasants rejected this paternalism, clearly recognising the peril that has befallen many poor countries: 'You go into debt, and then you have to sell them your whole harvest to pay off your debt. We don't want debts. We just want freedom' (Adams 1979:458). The people wanted 'peasant development' with 'a common fund, to give us strength. We, ourselves, decide what we want to do. We, ourselves, decide how many hectares we want to plant. We are working for our own people' (p.463). They rejected top-down 'administrative development'. The issue then was: what constitutes 'development'? Those so-called 'experts', as

Adams correctly noted, were unable to 'acknowledge the existence of a people here and now, having a past and a future' or 'to acknowledge the people as a living presence'. Indeed, that 'living presence' is the culture of a people.

What emerges from Adams' account of the struggle of the people in one Senegalese village is the sheer arrogance on the part of the self-appointed 'aid experts', compounded by the complicity of the State bureaucracy. Such arrogance in some 'donors', some political leaders and bureaucrats, transnational corporations and their local agents has been pervasive throughout the South. A catalogue of misconceived projects would be of biblical length. Those who initiate major infrastructural projects — dams, for example — neither consult the local population nor take into account their way of life, which includes, above all, accumulated knowledge of the ecological balance, their beliefs, and their sacred sites. This amounts to what Saleth (1992) has termed 'bypassing and alienating economic development', which reinforces existing inequalities of access to land and the displacement of the most vulnerable sections of the peasantry. Examples of these, and the opposition they have generated, can be found in India, where peasants have struggled courageously to halt a dam project sponsored by the World Bank and supported by the Indian Government; or in Namibia, where a government-proposed dam project which would have long-term effects on the Himba pastoral people has created controversy and led some officials into scathing condemnation of those who defend 'bare breasted' and 'primitive' people (*The Observer*, 29 January 1995) standing in the way of modernisation. And recently the activities of Michelin, the giant Western rubber conglomerate operating in Nigeria, have similarly shown the top-down approach to 'development'. There, the company expanded a rubber plantation into the protected Okomu forest without concern for the environment and the culture of the local people. It destroyed medicinal trees, shrines, and other symbols dear to the inhabitants. In reply to protests, the company pleaded ignorance and added, 'But we know the impact on the community can only be positive. We are providing employment, schools, clinics, electricity and water supplies' (*Financial Times*, 8 March 1995).

Of course, no local inhabitant objects to schools or clinics. But the company has a different conception of 'development', which involves destroying the symbols of the people's identity. The company, probably with the complicity of State bureaucrats, does not involve the local people in decision-making or incorporate their world-view into projects.

Some NGOs operate on the same basis. The case of their operations in Mozambique is well documented in Hanlon's study (1991). A number of African academics (such as Ayesha Imam and Amina Mama, 1994, and Abdel Gadir Ali, 1994) have noted that some NGOs and other 'donors' deliberately ignore locally funded research and wheel in 'experts' (from Europe and North America) whose recommendations carry more weight than the work of the local intelligentsia. In an example from Sudan, Abdel Gadir Ali (1994) notes how Sudanese economists who were critical of structural adjustment policies were deliberately excluded from an ILO mission requested by the Sudanese government to study the economic situation and advise on long-term strategies. Ali (1994:112) details the ensuing struggle which the local intelligentsia waged, and how 'a donor community with substantial resources waging a media war on local research efforts expressing reservations on the results of an established donor community's wisdom on how an African economy should be managed'. Consequently, as Mama and Imam (1994:86) have noted, African intellectuals are 'forced to take on board [Eurocentric] norms and waste time tilting at windmills to find out why we deviate from these patterns, instead of finding out what our own patterns and realities are'.

Making cultural sense of technology

Technology which is imposed on the people can be ill-suited to local needs. Bina Agarwal's study (1986:79-80) of wood-fuel crisis in the South shows how new cooking-stove technology, designed to save wood fuel, ended by doing exactly the opposite. In Guatemala, one important function of the 'traditional' stove was to emit smoke, which killed mosquitoes and pests in corn ears hung from rafters. This benefit was lost when the new stoves were introduced. When a new stove was introduced in Ghana, women found it technically cumbersome and ill-suited to using many pots at once. Local artisans and women had not been consulted in the design of the stoves. These projects claimed to employ 'appropriate technology', but they wholly failed to consider local needs and cultures. They assumed peasants in their ignorance to be responsible for the depletion of wood fuel, and presumed to import European science and technology to resolve their problems. As a consequence of not being consulted and involved in the development of new techniques, local artisans have become de-skilled. Such technologies are useless, because they are not specific to local techniques and they are not culturally familiar. The starting point for

the introduction of new technology must be to recognise, as Vandana Shiva (1991) has noted, that all societies have 'ways of knowing' and 'ways of doing' and that

all societies, in all their diversity, have had science and technology systems on which their distinct and diverse development have been based. Technologies or systems of technologies bridge the gap between nature's resources and human needs. Systems of knowledge and culture provide the framework for the perception and utilisation of natural resources.

Technology is therefore not culture-free. It is central to the question of identity. Since it constitutes 'ways of doing', it is one of the principal elements of a people's identity. You can have science and technology, but with no 'development'. The two must make cultural sense, to achieve true development. In their campaign to establish a just international economic order, non-industrialised countries, through the South Commission [1990:45-46, 80, 132], chaired by former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, strongly argued for the centrality of culture in economic processes:

Capital formation and technical progress are essential elements of development, but the broad environment for their effectiveness is a society's culture; it is only by the affirmation and enrichment of cultural identities through mass participation that development can be given strong roots and made a sustained process. For only on secure cultural foundations can a society maintain its cohesion and security during the profound changes that are the concomitants of development and economic modernisation.

The South Commission recommended that strategies must be sensitive to cultural roots, that is values, attitudes, and beliefs, and that cultural advancement itself depends on people-centred strategies. It warned that strategies which ignore the cultural dimension could result in indifference, alienation, social discord, and obscurantist responses.

These warnings have not been heeded. Economistic approaches that are central to the neo-liberal agenda have unleashed social instability. Ethnic rivalries and religious fundamentalism are a consequence of a profound sense of deprivation unleashed by 'structural adjustment'. As Samir Amin (1990:98) argued, 'fundamentalism emerged as a cultural protest against economics', and 'its growth [is] largely conditioned by the forms of social and economic change'.

The obstinate reluctance of the donors and Western governments to understand the atomising tendencies of 'structural adjustment' is mirrored in new concepts such as 'global culture'. These are based on the restructuring of capital on a global scale; the proliferation of consumerism, propagated by new communication technologies; and the supposed irrelevance of national frontiers. Western governments, transnationals, and their intellectual underlings harp on 'globalisation' without asking who gains and who loses (in economic, political, and cultural terms). 'Global culture' is a Western construct (particularly dear to the Western media). It is a piece of ideological baggage designed to legitimate 'structural adjustment'. It is an expression of cultural imperialism which particularly affects young people in poor countries.

Cultural penetration is linked to economic exploitation and ultimately to political and military domination. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Third World countries waged a struggle within the framework of UNESCO to establish a New World Communication and Information Order. The principal issue of the debate was the ever-increasing unidirectional flow of cultural products and 'news' from the advanced capitalist countries to the South, and the distorting effect on the cultures of Southern societies. The West condemned the Third World moves as politically motivated, claiming that they amounted to an infringement of the freedom of information. The United States and Britain withdrew from UNESCO in protest. It is clear that the monopoly over the news media and the distribution of cultural products was linked to the Western monopoly over information and communication technology. Third World attempts to link culture to the wider issue of a more just world economic order led to the West's campaign to weaken UN structures. These had been effective channels in a collective struggle for a more just international order. Their replacement, through the strong-arm tactics of the Western governments and the transnationals, by the 'unholy trinity' of the IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organisation has implications of an economic, political and culture nature for Africa and the rest of the South. It amounts to recolonisation.

Traditional cultures and knowledge have also attracted attention from the pharmaceutical and cosmetics transnationals. Some are well known for operating under hollow slogans of 'fair trade' and 'empowerment' of poor peoples. At the same time, the West demands 'rights' of intellectual property over Southern flora, fauna, and (increasingly) human achievement. This is the civilisation, the

globalisation, the 'development' that apparently will bestow benefits of the 'market' on working people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America! That there has been a peasant uprising in Chiapas is not surprising. If more rebellions break out, they will, under the circumstances, be justified. Maybe NGOs should look carefully at whose side they are on.

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Globalism and nationalism: which one is bad?

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Zygmunt Bauman (1998:60) points out that ‘globalisation is not about what we all, or at least the most resourceful and enterprising among us, wish or hope to do. It is about what is happening to us all.’ Bauman is, of course, right. The development of new technologies and ways and means to communicate and exchange information has a direct impact on global changes in the fields of economy, politics, and culture that affects all of us. Fast production and distribution of information and goods influence the quick and relatively painless dislocations of companies from one part of the globe to another, in search of a cheaper labour force. Global economies are also characterised by the almost daily mergers of already huge conglomerates and companies that seek to establish new, this time world-scale, monopolies. The need for and existence of common markets give rise to regional, continental, and global political integrations whose aim is, among other things, to preserve the benefits of globally oriented economies. Economic and political integration both demand, and ultimately lead to, unification and homogenisation of individual needs, lifestyles, languages, and cultures. This unification of different ways of life leads in turn to the universalisation of social problems that are now for the first time perceived as problems that are common to the entire human race, such as ecological disasters, abuse of human rights, gender inequality, and so on. All these issues and problems certainly do influence all of us. In this sense, there is really no escape from globalisation.

However, this paper addresses not the process of globalisation as such, which certainly affects us all, but rather the ideology behind this process—*globalism*. The actual and highly irreversible process of globalisation is often indistinguishable from the ideology of globalism. While globalisation itself is a historical, cultural, and political artefact—a structural force that one can like or dislike but can hardly influence significantly—globalism is an ideology, a set of ideas, values, and

principles promoted by a particular group of people. Like any other ideology, it seeks to establish its own hegemony and as such can be analysed, dissected and, if necessary, opposed. Unlike globalisation, which is a *historical process*, globalism (just like nationalism or socialism) is a *normative ideal* of how societies should be organised.

We are faced with the two dominant ideologies in the contemporary world: globalism and nationalism in all their forms. What I would like to do here is to sketch the main features of these ideologies and to single out their potentially positive and negative characteristics, using examples from Eastern Europe, where the struggle between the two ideologies is most apparent. Globalism and nationalism are usually thought of as being opposing and mutually exclusive ideologies. Globalism is generally seen as integrative, liberating, and progressive, whereas nationalism is widely viewed as regressive, disintegrative, oppressive, and a relic of the past. In other words, globalism is good, while nationalism is bad. I shall argue that these two ideologies show more similarities than differences when their structure and content are analysed. For not only are the two ideologies deeply related and often complementary, but they also share the same aim, which is to explain and interpret the nature of the social reality in which we all live. By presenting their interpretation of that reality, they both equally aim to monopolise their knowledge about it. In other words, just as all ideologies do, they seek to establish their hegemony by presenting themselves as the only right way to look at social reality. Both of these ideologies are modern and are in fact a response to the radical change that the process of globalisation has brought upon us all. As ideologies, they amalgamate positive and negative features.

Globalism tells us that we are first and foremost individuals with our own personal needs and liberties. Individual freedom has priority over authority, equality, and justice. Globalism firmly believes in progress and rationality; it proposes the removal of all state borders and the free flow of goods, services, and people. It strongly encourages spatial mobility and cultural exchange as a means of reducing stereotyping and prejudice. It stands against the idea of the nation-state, and supports continental and other global integrations. Globalism also has a firm trust in technology and sees technological development as being liberating for the global individual. Technology makes our lives easier by making us independent from space and time.

Nationalism, on the other hand, tells us that we are primarily members of the particular group into which we were born, whose

culture we share and to whom we thus have responsibilities. The loyalty towards the culture of the particular group has precedence over the wishes of its individual members. The group, a nation, cherishes the idea of equality among its members where the nation itself is perceived, as Anderson (1983) calls it, as 'deep horizontal comradeship'. However, the authority of the group does not rest only in each individual's duty towards it, but also in his/her affection and love for and from the group. Nationalism promotes solidarity among the group's members and their need to preserve their cultural uniqueness. Nationalism believes that the continuity of the individual lives through the eternity of the group. In a nationalist view, common memories, shared ancestry, and family ties make our life unique and meaningful.

These two ideologies do oppose each other, but they are also complementary. First, they are both reactions to the process of globalisation: globalism hails this process, whereas nationalism uses its means (i.e. technology) to condemn it strongly.¹ Second, to have any influence on the general public, they are dependent on each other. Without globalist-integrationist ideas there cannot be a retreat into nationalism, and vice versa. Third, and most important, the two ideologies share the same form, if not the same content: whereas globalism supports the right to be different at the individual level, nationalism defends this right at the level of the group. Globalism supports individualisation within the (world) society (every individual has the right to be different), but opposes individualisation outside society (the existence of nation-states). Nationalism supports individualisation outside society (the existence of nation-states), but it suppresses individualisation within society (the nation is more important than the individual).

Globalism argues convincingly that technological developments in fields such as transport and information have brought about greater liberation for individuals and societies, who can now travel longer distances rapidly and receive information more quickly from all over the world, from many and various sources, and can thus more directly see and understand the problems that people face in other parts of the globe. In the era of information technology, one cannot have total control over the mass media. While in the 1950s, Soviet and other East European establishments could easily jam the signals of Radio Free Europe if they so wished, in the late 1980s it was impossible and senseless to forbid hundreds of thousands of satellite and cable dishes and other transmitters that were receiving news and programmes

from the West. The attractions of consumerism—Levi's, Pepsi, and Hollywood films—were another globalist element which undermined and finally brought down the ascetic communist ideology. The Internet creates even more difficulties for authoritarian regimes world-wide. The proliferation of information has also given us more freedom of choice in organising our own lives. Because of globalisation, we may now eat Japanese or Mexican food in Prague, wear Italian or French clothes in Warsaw, or watch an American film in Sofia.

However, the response of nationalism to this change also has its merits. By liberating us as individuals, globalisation also cuts away our roots, making us all alike. As soon as our cities become globalised, they also become very similar, if not the same. The magic of difference and unpredictability disappears when we know that we will find Chinatown, Marks and Spencer, and Cineplex just as easily in London and Paris as in New York—and tomorrow perhaps in globalised Tirana.

Nationalism attacks—with every right—the uniform standardisation of human needs and forms of expression. Weber's (1948) well-known 'iron cage' truly becomes reality with globalisation. Instrumental rationalism and the worship of the consumerist values of globalisation lead to routinisation and eventually to disenchantment. In a McDonaldised world (Ritzer 1993) of mass and globalised society, human activities as well as needs become standardised, mechanical, identical, and thus meaningless. The cold, precise, and punctual rationalisation turns us all into icy machines, whereas consumerism makes us lazy and superficial sensation-seekers. As Bauman (1998:83) puts it:

[n]ot so much the greed to acquire and possess, not the gathering of wealth in its material, tangible sense, as the excitement of a new and unprecedented sensation is the name of the consumer game.

Consumers are first and foremost gatherers of sensations.

Nationalist ideology defends our right to collective difference. It seeks to provide us with the meanings, souls, and positive emotions of solidarity, affection, and love. Group membership is a precondition for solidarity. However, too much affection towards group members very often leads to animosity and hostility towards those who do not belong to it.

And this is the crucial problem of nationalist ideology. Inclusiveness and love for 'us' often turn into exclusion and hatred of 'them'. The protection and preservation of 'our way of life' often lead to autarky,

populism, and uncritical evaluation of everything which is 'ours' as glorious and divine. The collective worship of the nation, especially in its ethnic form, can make us distrustful of other cultures and societies, of anything that differs from our tradition. This can lead us to racism and ethnic hostility and, in its more radical form, can make us accomplices to genocide. Loyalty to their ethnic nation led the peoples of former Yugoslavia to remain silent in the 1990s when their next-door neighbours were taken into exile, ethnically 'cleansed', raped, or killed.

The interdependence of globalism and nationalism is perhaps most clearly visible in the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe. The new Eastern European regimes legitimise their right to rule through the ideology of nationalism. The message is that for the first time in 'our' history, 'our people' rule 'our' country. Some of the regimes in these societies see the ideology of globalism (represented by actors such as the EU and the USA) as a direct threat to their rule. For that reason they interpret the ideology of globalism as nothing more than world hegemony on the part of the West. It is claimed that although technologically and economically superior, the West is egotistic, soulless, perverted, and thus morally inferior. However, as a response to the world hegemony of Western globalism, nationalism has been used to create an internal hegemony in these societies. Hence, all globalist ideas are opposed as being foreign, imperialist, and 'not ours', while at the same time a similar if not greater level of ideological monopolisation has been achieved. Who can know what the authentic values of 'our society' are? Of course, it is the regime alone that knows how to articulate these values properly. In practical terms, nationalist policies benefit only the rulers – and even then only for a very short time. Nationalism leads to isolation in a globalising world where isolation, autarky, and localism mean permanent dependence, economic backwardness, and, in the long run, certain annihilation.

At the same time, the promoters of the ideology of globalism in the West have been given an excellent argument against the authoritarian nationalistic autarkies of the East. The message is simple: if 'we' do not accept the values and ideas of globalism, we will end up in similarly nationalistic, authoritarian, and backward societies. In this way, the ideologues of globalism gain popular support at home. However, the major problem with globalism is its intentional or unintentional blindness towards the stratifying nature of globalisation itself. What is currently happening is, as Bauman (1998:3) rightly points out,

[a] breakdown in communication between extraterritorial elites and the ever more 'localised' rest. The centres of meaning-and-value production are today extraterritorial and emancipated from local constraints—this does not apply, though, to the human condition which such values and meanings are to inform and make sense of.

Mobility has become a central stratifying element, and to be local in a globalised world means to be disadvantaged and degraded. The new situation that Bauman (1998) calls 'absentee landlordship' is producing new global elites that are for the first time independent from economic, political, and cultural constraints, whereas the majority of the world population are still largely immobile and confined to their place or country of birth. In other words, the truly globalised are the few, while the rest are stretched between officially promoted globalist ideals and everyday nationalist reality.

To conclude, nationalism and globalism are neither good nor bad *per se*. Each has features and potentialities of the other. The ideas and values of globalism can help us more efficiently and rationally to deal with the enormous changes that are happening in the world. Globalism rightly emphasises the advantages that new technologies bring us and how we can use them to transcend time and space in developing our own individual potentials. It also promotes the ideas that help us to leave the prejudices, collective pressures, and conformity of closed communities, traditionalism, and patriarchy behind us. Nationalism for its part also reminds us that we are first of all emotional beings who need to belong to a particular group, to love and be loved, and to share rituals and patterns of an individual culture. It is the irrationality and deviation from the routine and rationally constructed plans and programmes that produce creativity and change, and give meanings to our lives. Nationalism and globalism are very much two sides of the same coin, and in a globalising world we need the constant presence of both to avoid the hegemony of either.

Note

1 As Guibernau (1996:137) points out, Islamic fundamentalism, for example, has many features of nationalist ideology, and presents itself as a radical alternative to Western

ideologies, 'but at the same time it takes advantage of Western technology to reproduce and expand its message' to one billion potential Internet users worldwide.

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Faith and economics in 'development': a bridge across the chasm?

Wendy Tyndale

Where there is no bread, there is no Torah, and where there is no Torah, there is no bread. (Jewish 'Ethics of the Fathers' 3.21)

The belief that there can be no true development without spiritual advancement, or, as the Hindus put it, that 'all human activities are part of the sacred pattern of the universe' (ICOREC 1998) is, in one form or another, still the belief of the majority of people in the world today. The collective wisdom of the world's major religions makes quite clear that unless more than a mere improvement of people's material conditions is aspired to, even that goal will fail. Human beings cannot, as the Christians teach, 'live by bread alone'.

Yet people's beliefs about the origin and nature of the universe and the place of humanity within it have seldom been considered of relevance for economic theory and practice. 'Development', widely defined as the process by which the non-industrialised countries would catch up with the more 'advanced' nations, has not traditionally been understood in the context of the spirituality, values, and cultural heritage of either the developers or those supposedly being developed.

It sometimes seems as though a yawning chasm has opened up between the values of secular, technology-driven rationality, which is the driving force behind globalisation, and the interpretations of the meaning and purpose of life made by people of religious faith all over the world. Without engaging in a reductionist exercise which would lose the richness of the very varied insights that the individual faiths have to offer, the World Faiths Development Dialogue has taken on the task of identifying the most essential things that the faiths want to say about development. A parallel task is to study the real depth and nature of the apparent abyss lying between the faiths and secular development organisations and then to see, specifically with the World Bank, whether and how it might be bridged.

Visions of development

The starting point in discussions about development criteria and policies must be what goals we want to reach. For most government and multilateral development agencies this means primarily identifying what must be eradicated and setting numerical targets: by the year 2015, for example, to eradicate the abject poverty of at least half of the 1.6 billion people who at the moment have no access even to a sufficient supply of food. But the faiths are pressing for more attention to be paid to our very understanding of the meaning of the concepts of poverty and development, how we define poverty and progress, and what our vision of a truly 'developed' society might be. 'Where there is no vision, there is no people' (*Proverbs* 29.18).

For the Bahá'ís, development means 'laying the foundations for a new social order that can cultivate the limitless potentialities latent in human consciousness' (ICOREC 1998). The Bahá'ís emphasise the oneness of humankind and the need for global justice administered by a world government, which would watch for the needs of all. The Hindus see development as the process of enabling a sustainable livelihood in harmony with natural resources, as a foundation for spiritual progress. For the Taoists, too, harmony or a right balance must be the key ingredient of any development goals, the balance between rich and poor, and between human society and the whole universe.

Such faith-based views of what development must be about present the World Bank and similar organisations with probably one of the most difficult challenges they have to face in this age of globalisation—to recognise that most people, and particularly the poorest people of the world, perceive the way that life is ordered and understand the role of economic activities very differently from the way that most development technicians understand these things.

All too often people's beliefs and the priorities arising from them, their religious celebrations, their sacred sites, their way of organising their communities and taking decisions, are seen as peripheral to development issues or even as standing in the way of 'efficiency' in producing economic profit. But how will Guatemalan Mayan women regard a chicken-rearing project, if their hens are wrenched from them before they have had time to bless them on their way to market? What will motivate Indian villagers to get together to create self-help programmes, if they are told that their religious celebrations are

outside the remit of the project? Will Taoists in China ever be happy with a tourist plan to build hotels on their most sacred mountains?

Already James Wolfensohn, the present President of the World Bank, has integrated periods of living with local communities into the Bank's staff-training programmes, in the recognition that more intimate knowledge of the people whose poverty it wishes to eradicate is essential for the Bank's success. However, if the Bank were really to accept that Western secular rationality, founded on science and technology, can at least be complemented by other equally valid ways of understanding the world as an ordered whole, the implications for its work would be revolutionary.

But the challenges arising from the issue of culture as an element of development are faced not only by the World Bank. As the foundations and perpetuators of most cultures, the faiths have a key role to play. If they are not to be perceived as 'anti-development' forces, having little of relevance to contribute amid the rapid process of change today, the faiths will have to sort out for themselves what can be jettisoned from inside and absorbed from outside, without jeopardising the integrity of their communities and the physical, spiritual, social, and political well-being of their people.

They also have the task of showing how their visions might be carried out in practice. In this world, where people are tending to adopt attitudes of competitiveness rather than solidarity, and to fall for the immediate pleasures brought by individualistic consumerism rather than valuing community support, the faiths must offer alternatives which are not only attractive but practically viable, alternatives which will enable people really to 'live life in all its abundance', overcoming material poverty by fostering harmony within societies and keeping the right balance between human beings and the universe.

There are many examples of small-scale attempts by people of religious faiths (and none) to live according to different values. These may have their own particular flaws, but they do provide at least elements of a paradigm which is different from that of the prevailing economic model. Examples which come to mind are community micro-credit schemes, where often, in the absence of any collateral, other members of the group stand as guarantors. Very often, too, the income-generating activities made possible with the loan give an advantage to the rest of the village—milk for the children made available at a reasonable price, for instance. The ethos is not to make the maximum profit, but to ensure the survival of the whole

community. The satisfaction arising from the successes shared among all those involved is a source of joy; and, of course, success is not measured only in monetary terms, but in terms of learning, increased dignity and independence, a sense of freedom, and so on.

It is, above all, in this area of 'empowerment' that the religions, in the best of cases, may have something qualitatively different to offer from secular development agencies. It is not, after all, only a question of becoming empowered by having more income, or by acquiring skills which enable you to compete in the market, or even of learning how to organise and thus to increase your social status and political bargaining power. For the faiths, 'empowerment' involves the concept of personal dignity, of self-worth, of a kind of contentedness, which does not depend either on the opinion of others or on fulfilling immediate desires. This sort of empowerment brings hope and vision with it.

The Christian Base Communities in Latin America have brought such empowerment to many people, especially women. When they say things such as 'Now we know where we are going', or 'I was silent before, but now I know I have ideas to share', women in Brazil, Peru, and Central America indicate how a deeply felt knowledge of the love of God has liberated them and given them a new-found self-confidence which has dispelled the feeling, shared by many poor people, that they have nothing of worth to contribute. It is this inner freedom which enables people to reach out to others. 'Baptism isn't just about entering the church', said a woman from a poverty-stricken village in north-east Brazil. 'It is about giving a person power to go out and change the world.'

Right relationships between people: sharing wealth

None of the religions is likely to come up with a blueprint for an alternative development model, but they all have ideas about what the elements of such a model, or models, should be. The notion of right human relationships is at the heart of many of these ideas. The dignity of each human being will be realised only when humanity begins to function as a family and take into account that, as the Bahá'ís put it, 'since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the race is born into the world as a trust of the whole' (ICOREC 1998).

All the faiths denounce greed, hoarding, and the exploitation of some individuals by others as being against the laws of God and the Universe. This leads to the condemnation of the tendency inherent in the present capitalist model to put more and more power and wealth

into the hands of fewer and fewer people, at the expense of the majority. 'God loveth not such as are proud and boastful, who are avaricious and enjoin avarice on others, and conceal that which God has bestowed upon them of his bounty' (*Qur'an* 4.36b–37).

Mahatma Gandhi was calling upon Hindu ethics when he wrote: 'It is a fundamental law of nature that nature produces enough for our wants from day to day; and if only everybody took enough for their own needs and nothing more, there would be no poverty in this world' (Natesan 1933, cited in ICOREC 1998). One of the central tenets of the Buddhist faith is generosity and compassion between people. The Scripture of the Great Peace of the Taoists (*Tai Ping Ching*) says that, since all social wealth belongs to heaven, the earth, and human society, it should not be possessed by a small number of people. Taoism upholds the principle of letting wealth circulate fully to meet the essential needs of everyone. The social teachings of the Abrahamic faiths too (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) are underpinned by the central rule that the rich have the responsibility to share their wealth with the poor.

And these rules are not just personal rules, which can be fulfilled through privately determined acts of charity. The Muslim institution of *zakat*, a tithe or tax payable by everyone for the poor and needy and for communal expenses, has as its aim to set poor people back on their feet, so that they recover their dignity and their hope. A similar idea is found with the Jains, for whom charity is not an act of grace, but the acceptance of the right of the poor to share in the bounty of the earth. This is the teaching of the Jewish faith as well. The meaning of the Hebrew word *tzedakah*, which is often translated as 'charity', is in fact much closer to 'righteousness' or 'justice'. The highest form of charity is seen by Jewish people as giving a poor family the means to earn their own living.

So how does all this translate into recommendations for an alternative development model? First, it means that social welfare schemes to save the poor from the worst consequences of capitalism cannot be more than an emergency solution. If the relationship between the rich and the poor is to be brought into harmony, the rich will have to make some sacrifices, exercise some restraint, and share their wealth with the less privileged on a long-lasting basis.

There will be no long-lasting improvement for the poor as long as the need for a just distribution of wealth through appropriate levels of taxation of the richest people in many countries remains unaddressed.

The ethical management of goods also involves ensuring the socially responsible use of assets such as land, whose owners, in the eyes of the faiths, are merely temporary stewards, with an obligation to use what they possess for the well-being of society as a whole. Christian teaching, probably most articulately formulated on this issue by the Roman Catholic Church, insists that, since God created the world for the good of everyone, each person must use what they own in a responsible way. A world of great inequalities is not in accordance with God's plan.

In nearly all the faith-traditions there is a strong emphasis on self-sacrifice and renunciation. For the Buddhists, this refers to the precept of not taking what is not given and recognising our responsibility to other people and the environment in the choices we make about consumption, lending and borrowing, and making a profit. Economists warn that a move towards self-sacrifice—the reduction of consumption—in the rich countries would slow down global growth and lead to more hardship for the poor; but, even if one accepts that growth is the prerequisite for poverty eradication, the *way* we consume should be scrutinised.

For a long time now, Christian groups in the North have joined others in campaigning for a fair deal for workers in the South who produce the goods which the North consumes. In Britain, the ten largest supermarket chains have been pushed into taking steps to draw up ethical codes of conduct, which would give some protection to their suppliers' workers. Companies selling clothes have also been targeted, since the goods that they sell are made by some of the most exploited people in the world, most of them women and even children. Globalisation may bring with it the opportunity for companies to move around and pay their labour the lowest wages possible, but it also provides the opportunity for those who wish to know what injustices are being committed to find out what is going on and to act together to change unjust practices.

Right relationships between people go far beyond the merely contractual relationships of economics. Right relationships are based on compassion, generosity to unknown guests, and love of one's neighbour. In practice, of course, to insert a paradigm of sharing profits and of solidarity instead of competition into a world run on very different rules is difficult, but efforts are constantly being made. Small enterprises all over the world are being run by faith-based groups with solidarity as well as efficiency in mind; and, when things become difficult, creative alternatives are sought. A Nicaraguan co-operative,

for instance, which found itself unable to make a livelihood because it was supporting too many widows and children, did not merely turn out the people it could no longer keep, but created brick-making projects for them and then bought back the bricks for its own construction needs. In Burundi, a group of women displaced by war sell the mats that they make – not to the highest bidder, but to agencies which distribute them to other displaced people who need them (ICOREC 1998). They are making no more money than they need, on the basis that if they went for maximum profit for themselves, they would be depriving other people. These are small-scale examples, but are there really valid reasons for which the ethics behind them should not underlie economic practices at the national and international levels?

Right relationships between people: equity and inclusion

Deeply rooted in many faiths is the belief that all human beings, having been created by God, have something of the Godhead within them, and are thus worthy of respect. Whether we talk of the ‘divine spark’ within us all or of people made in the image of God, the concept is there. Thus, all the world’s religions speak in terms of everyone being included.

The *Qur’an* states that humankind has been created from a single soul, as male and female, communities and nations, so that people may know one another. The divine spark that bestows individuality also bonds individuals in a common humanity (ICOREC 1998).

The Sikhs teach that God loves all, without distinction of place, creed, or the social or economic standing of individuals or groups, and they put their principles into practice through the institution of the *langar*, through which they distribute meals to all who come: visitors, the needy, men and women of all social levels, and the congregation of the Gudwara, the place of worship. The inner philosophy of the *langar* is to live in a casteless fashion of egalitarian grouping, where no one is superior or inferior to others (ICOREC 1998).

‘Equality and Affection’ is the social ideal put forward in the Taoist Scripture of Redeeming the Dead (*Du Ren Ching*). In order to achieve the ideal state where all people live in harmony, ‘Those with intellectual gifts should teach those without; the strong should help the weak; the young should support the old’ (ICOREC 1998). If some are left out, there will be an imbalance, and the peaceful world of benefit to the whole of society will remain out of reach. Judeo-Christian teaching, too, emphasises the inclusion of all in God’s mercy. ‘The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercy is over all his works’ (Psalm 145).

However, there are aspects of equitable sharing to which the faiths have in practice, if not in principle, found difficulty in subscribing: in particular, the matter of power sharing and, within that, the sharing of power between men and women. In the development model that the faiths would like to propose for the next millennium, what will they have to say about the role of women? In the present context of globalisation, the world's religions face the challenge of clarifying how much of the male domination which is practised within many of their communities is based on their vision of the divine order and how much has to do with cultural traditions which could now be considered out of date. And they face the challenge too of defining what place women—who, with their children, are among the poorest people of the world—would have in a truly 'developed' society.

More recently founded religions, such as the Bahá'í faith, are outspoken in their challenge to the faiths to 'free themselves from their obsessions of the past' (ICOREC 1998). For them, the equality of women is as necessary for the satisfactory working of society as two wings are necessary for the flight of a bird, and they see the subservient role of women as a relic of survival requirements of the past which are today no longer appropriate. But they are not alone. For the Sikhs, too, the equality of women is an important characteristic of their identity as a people of faith, and they strive to put it into practice. However, no religion has yet been able to break the universal institutional model in which men hold the highest positions of power.

Gender considerations are very high on the agenda of organisations such as the World Bank which have come to realise that the participation of women is essential for the success of development and even for optimal overall economic growth. A recent study by the World Bank's Special Program of Assistance for Africa shows, for example, how discrimination against women in Africa has been one of the factors contributing to the low level of growth in that region (World Bank 1998). It is therefore inconceivable that a dialogue between the World Bank and the world religions will not have to tackle the issue of gender inequality.

Maybe one of the key contributions that the faiths could make is to practise ways of achieving equality for women which include creative measures and safeguards to prevent the break-up of families and communities in the industrialised nations, upon which many religious people from other parts of the world look with horror. Greater flexibility within the family and more support for women to fulfil their potential

through access to education and leadership roles in their communities is already being seen as one way forward. The challenge is to link this, in the minds of men as well as women, to a perception of balance and harmony rather than of a power struggle between the sexes, to raise awareness that the full participation of women in different spheres of life leads to a situation in which men as well as women are immeasurably enriched.

Right relationships between people and the environment

Care of the environment is high on the faiths' agenda. In the case of the Abrahamic faiths, this concern is underpinned by the belief that the whole of creation belongs to God and that human beings are merely *khalifah*, or stewards, whose responsibility it is to take care of the world with which they have been entrusted, and to leave it in a healthy state for the benefit of generations to come.

Many of the other faiths tend not to believe that human beings have been placed in a position of dominance over the rest of creation. People are merely creatures of the whole of creation, with whose other creatures they must live in a relationship of harmony and respect. In the case of the Jains, who do not believe in a creator God, the way towards enlightenment and salvation, through personal dedication and spiritual purification, involves avoiding harm to all living beings (*ahimsa*). To honour the *Te*—the Virtue—is the most essential part of Taoist teachings, and the *Te* means the law and order to maintain the harmony of the whole universe.

The World Bank has for some time been stipulating that the programmes that it funds should not be environmentally damaging. But how do the World Bank and other agencies address the contradictions which arise between the quest for ever-greater economic growth and the inability of the planet to sustain it? All around us we see the rapid destruction on a vast scale of forests, animals, plants, insects, sea life, and the very earth itself, as a result of an economic model which tends to show little respect for anything which stands in the way of maximising profits.

Organisations linked to the world's religions can provide examples of very varied types of programmes which have helped some of the poorest communities in the world to generate income and to progress without jeopardising the future of the earth. They are also working hard on restoration programmes, such as reforestation and organic farming, to try to bring back life in areas where it has been destroyed. There is

now a need to see how these usually local projects can be replicated or multiplied at a regional or even national level, as without this there is a danger of their having a largely symbolic character.

But it is not only examples of development programmes on the ground which constitute the faiths' contribution on this issue. They have an important role to play in public education programmes, pointing to the role of commercial advertising, for example, in persuading people what sorts of things they should consume. Development education is an essential part of any development programme and is an area in which the faiths and the World Bank might well co-operate in the future.

The faiths will also enter the debate on a different level. They will raise the question of the conservation or restoration of sites which have been held sacred through the ages and have particular significance as places of worship or remembering the dead. For the faiths, the earth and everything in and beyond it has not been given to us merely as a means of survival, but as God's creation to be wondered at, respected, enjoyed, and cherished.

Bridging the chasm to bring about change

Personal transformation

Any strategy for change must be based on an analysis of the causes of the ills that we want to change. For the faiths, these causes lie first and foremost within each individual human being. They are then to be found structurally within the societies which human beings construct.

The Buddhist understanding of the origin of suffering lies in the delusion of perceiving oneself as an isolated independent being, existing in a world of isolated independent things. This sense of separation of oneself from the rest of the world leads to the false belief that by amassing quantities of things which one associates with pleasure, one will eventually secure a lasting and stable happiness. The aim of human life is thus the transformation of the individual from a self-centred, greed-driven way of being to one that is other-centred and greed-free (ICOREC 1998).

This view is deeply rooted in the Hindu faith as well. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, only when we have mastered our own urge to dominate, and learned to live without the need to control what is outside us, can we find happiness. For the Abrahamic faiths, personal transformation is an equally central aim of the spiritual life of each

individual. 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul and with all your strength' is the first Jewish commandment, and only then is it possible to 'love your neighbour as yourself'.

There are, of course, plenty of religious people within the World Bank; but, as an institution, the Bank is unlikely to adopt personal spiritual transformation as the key to combating poverty in the world. It is, however, very likely to be willing to work together with the religions in the broader area of personal transformation which is the task of education—an area of work that is high on the Bank's agenda.

Education and leadership

In some countries of the world—Tanzania is an example—the education system would be almost non-existent if it were not for schools run by religious bodies. However, it is not only the quantity of the education offered which is interesting to development agencies, but the quality as well.

As with all human institutions, many examples can be found of mediocre or even bad schools run by religious faiths; but, on the whole, religion-based schools have a good record. Even a recent survey in the UK showed that church-run primary schools, for instance, produced significantly better results than their secular counterparts, in spite of the fact that they receive exactly the same funding from the State. The questions are: what 'value added' does a spiritual dimension bring to the field of education, and is that 'value added' transferable to secular schools?

However, it is not only in the formal sector that religions have played a key role in education. The training programmes in literacy, leadership, community organisation, and primary health care, run by Hindu organisations in India, Muslim development networks in Pakistan and many African countries, and the Catholic Church in Latin America, have transformed the lives of thousands of adults, who claim that through such courses they have 'woken up' or 'opened their eyes' and gained a level of self-reliance hitherto unavailable to them. If the World Bank is interested in change, it must also be interested in focusing its attention on the agents of change who emerge from such programmes to become community leaders.

The whole matter of leadership has always been of great importance to the faiths. Exasperated as the World Bank is by the corruption that it encounters among many of the leaders who are entrusted with its

money, should it look to the faiths which lay so much emphasis on the responsibility of teachers and leaders to conduct their own lives in accordance with the moral principles that they use for the guidance of others? Could the Bank incorporate into its own training programmes something of the ethic of the Hindu guru who refused to tell a child to stop eating sweets, until he had stopped eating them himself? (ICOREC 1998).

Setting criteria for development

Another area of possible collaboration between the World Bank and the faiths is the setting of development criteria. It is now widely agreed that poverty is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, and that economic indicators are not sufficient on their own to measure it. In its *World Development Report 2001*, for the first time, the World Bank will be examining the relationship between equity and poverty, as well as such elements as vulnerability to risk, exclusion, and lack of power, as dimensions all with a close relationship to economic poverty. From their standpoint as organisations which are probably more closely in touch with poor communities than any others, the faiths must surely have many insights to offer on the causal, dynamic relations between these elements of poverty, as well as on the spiritual elements of 'development', such as hope and dignity, which for them are of paramount importance.

If poverty itself is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, then the solutions to it must also be multi-dimensional, and it is here that the faiths can make a contribution by demonstrating through their own experience the importance of some of the ingredients of dignity and hope, such as self-esteem and a sense of purpose, in achieving any kind of long-lasting development. There are already participatory research programmes going on, for example in the south of Chile, which are developing indicators to measure values such as solidarity and empowerment on the basis of local people's experience. The influence of these values on the degree to which people benefit from development programmes will then be taken into account when the people themselves set their criteria for their plans for future community action.

A convergence of interests? The wisdom of serpents and the gentleness of doves

Although these examples show some of the practical ways in which the World Bank and the faiths can cross the chasm which divides them and work to build a better world together, the question remains about the nature of the 'better world' which they hope to achieve. Does it matter that the long-term vision of the secular world of economics is different from those of the faiths, if their goals in the short and medium term are the same?

If all are agreed that the poor must be included in society, that they must be given the possibility of earning a livelihood and access to education and health services, is it important whether the aim is primarily to build up broader-based and more stable economies or whether it is to increase the overall well-being, including the dignity and hope, of the people themselves? And is it even possible to say that the two ultimate aims are mutually exclusive? If it is true that the World Bank wants to raise the overall levels of prosperity based on consumer capitalism, it is true too that it wants to eradicate the misery caused by poverty.

It is not, of course, only the faiths that experience the problem that, while wanting to propose a new paradigm for development, which would rate values such as solidarity above profit-making, they are constrained by the context in which they are working. Maybe the most important contribution that the faiths can make at the moment is to highlight the values which are the necessary prerequisite for social harmony, such as justice, compassion, and respect for every individual, and demonstrate that, if these are overridden, not even the most basic economic development will be achieved.

Whether one speaks in terms of *karma* or of fruits of the spirit or the consequences of sin, a notion basic to all the faiths is that actions (including the motivation for them) bring with them ethical consequences arising from the nature of the action. Let us take, for instance, speculation, in the sense of socially irresponsible investment with the sole aim of quick profits. With greed as its main motivation, speculation must be considered contrary to basic ethical laws. Speculation may lead to the short-term enrichment of a few, but its consequences in the long run are usually uncertainty and the impoverishment of many, and it can, as in the case of the Asian crisis, lead to large-scale disaster.

It is demonstrable, too, that societies in which there is a greater degree of tolerance, participation, justice, respect for human rights and provision for the most vulnerable provide greater well-being for their people as a whole. Again and again it has been shown how a lack of equity and compassion leads to violence, crime, and divisions, whereas solidarity with the poorest people leads, in the end, to an improved quality of life for the better-off as well.

As we find ourselves increasingly in danger of falling prey to the few who benefit from the poverty and disempowerment of the majority, there must be a growing convergence of interests on all sides. Economists are talking increasingly of the importance of 'interdependence'. Moreover, the threats arising from poverty, such as the proliferation of the drugs trade and the spread of disease, have made many people realise that it is in their 'enlightened self-interest' to return at least pragmatically to the laws of ethics and to ensure more protection for those who suffer most.

The faiths have their own agenda, which will always be different in many respects from that of secular powers; but they, too, as human institutions, constantly fail, of course, in their attempts to achieve the visions that they strive to reach. In this initiative to work together with the World Bank in thinking through and putting into practice some fundamental criteria for 'development', the faiths have a lot to learn as well as to impart. And who can tell what forces might be unleashed, which work in unexpected ways for long-term changes? The hope which lies at the heart of the Christian, Jewish, and many other faiths is founded precisely on the knowledge that human beings can never either foresee or control everything that happens.

If the chasm is left to yawn and no attempt is made to bridge it, the world will be the poorer. The religions are called upon to be 'as wise as serpents' in their dealing with the secular powers, but they are also called upon to be 'as gentle as doves', showing by example, in the tradition of the Hindu gurus, that the best way to run the world is on the basis of values such as generosity, integrity, compassion, and justice.

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Spirituality: a development taboo

Kurt Alan Ver Beek

If it weren't for those of us who listen to the Word and do the composturas, there wouldn't be any maize or beans. (Isaías Vásquez, Lenca indian, Honduras)

CARE does not have a 'policy' on spirituality... We concentrate on the physical and social well-being of communities. (H. Rourke, CARE Canada)

For most people of the 'South',¹ spirituality is integral to their understanding of the world and their place in it, and so is central to the decisions that they make about their own and their communities' development. Their spirituality affects decisions about who should treat their sick children, when and how they will plant their fields, and whether or not to participate in risky but potentially beneficial social action. Despite the evident centrality of spirituality to such decisions, the subject is conspicuously under-represented in the development discourse. Development journals are replete with analyses of the need for effective development practice to integrate those factors that influence people's world-view, such as gender, indigenous knowledge, and social structure. However, a content analysis of three leading development journals over the last 15 years found only scant reference to the topics of spirituality or religion. In fact, during this period two of these journals contained not one article in which the relationship between development and religion or spirituality was the central theme. A policy review of three influential development organisations also demonstrated not only that these have no policy on how to treat the issue of spirituality, but that they consciously seek to avoid the topic in their programmes. The result of this silence is a failure to explore and understand an integral aspect of how Southern people understand the world, make decisions, and take action. This failure reduces the effectiveness of development research and interventions. Ultimately it

robs the poor of opportunities to tap into whatever strength, power, and hope that this dimension gives them; and it deprives them of opportunities to reflect on and control how their development and spirituality shape each other.

Before proceeding, definitions of spirituality and development are in order. I will define *spirituality* as a relationship with the supernatural or spiritual realm which provides meaning and a basis for personal and communal reflection, decisions, and action. While *religion* is generally considered an institutionalised set of beliefs and practices regarding the spiritual realm, spirituality describes the personal and relational side of those beliefs, which shape daily life. So while one could be spiritual without being religious or vice versa, in practice the two are commonly intertwined, as people experience and describe their spirituality from a religious perspective.

Eade and Williams (1995) describe development as 'strengthening people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to organise themselves to act on these'. Spirituality is a powerful factor in shaping many people's decisions and actions and often gives them a sense of power and hope. The failure to provide spaces for people to understand, explore, and ultimately to determine how development programmes should affect their spirituality, and in turn their society, is anti-developmental. It reduces people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, it silences a part of their identity, and it deprives them of opportunities to decide how their spirituality will shape their future.

Addressing the issue of spirituality and development is not without its risks. Spirituality and religion have often been sources of conflict and oppression, rather than development and liberation. But just as social scientists and practitioners have recognised that gender, class, and ethnicity, while sources of conflict, are integral components of people's identity and must be taken fully into account in development efforts, so spirituality and religion, because they are so central in the lives of people living in poverty, must also be addressed. To ignore any of these issues will not eliminate potential conflict, but only contribute to a lack of understanding, a lack of voice, and a strengthening of those who believe themselves wiser or more 'developed'.

Spirituality and development for the Lenca

The Lenca indigenous indians, living in western Honduras, are descendants of the more familiar Mayans. While some vestiges of the Lenca culture remain, the people have largely adopted the language,

dress, and culture of the dominant Hispanic society. The Lenca are one of the poorest and most isolated groups in Honduras today. The village of Monteverde, in which I lived with my family for over six months, was an eight-hour hike from the nearest road. I moved there to try to understand how such a poor and isolated group was able to mobilise nearly 4,000 people to demand improvements in government services. What I found was that, for most participants, their spirituality was a significant mobilising factor.

While nearly all Lenca consider themselves Christian and Catholic, the Lenca spirituality is a synthesis between Catholicism and their traditional religion. Each rural community has several Catholic lay-leaders who conduct weekly religious services in a rustic chapel. The parish priest visits several times a year to perform weddings and christenings, and to celebrate mass. In addition, each community has several traditional religious leaders who lead rituals and diagnose and treat illnesses and other problems. Some tension exists between the leadership of the two traditions, each believing that it is better at following God's prescripts. Some spiritual observances such as pilgrimages, house shrines, and healing practices are accepted by both traditions; however, the Catholic Church condemns other ceremonies, such as the *compostura* (described below), as drunken, satanic rituals.

The spiritual leaders, both Catholic and traditional, gain their positions not through election or inheritance, but by earning the trust and respect of at least one sector of the community, based on their past actions and sound counsel. Neither tradition distinguishes between the sacred and the secular. A sick child, dying livestock, or the question of whether to participate in risky social action are spiritual as well as physical problems, requiring both prayer and action. As one Catholic lay-leader says, 'God inspires us. Sometimes we don't know what to do or where to turn; then we ask God to help us, and suddenly the decision is clear.'

I will cite briefly three areas that are central to current development efforts among the Lenca and highly influenced by this people's spirituality.

Agriculture

The traditional Lenca creation story asserts that when the first man started to clear the land for his first maize plot, the weeds and trees began to bleed and cry out. As a result, God told him to carry out a ceremony called the *compostura*, during which the man should sacrifice

domestic animals to God and the earth, to ask forgiveness for the violence he was about to do (Chapman 1992). In the contemporary *compostura*, the hosts invite all villagers to help to plant their maize, after which they serve the workers a meal prepared from the sacrificed animals and provide *chicha* (a fermented maize drink) and dance music. This ceremony demonstrates not only how Lenca spirituality shapes local agricultural beliefs and practices, but also how these in turn strengthen their respect for the earth and their social ties of cooperation and community.

The *compostura* has survived and adapted to centuries of religious and economic pressures. However, in recent years these pressures have been increased by 'scientists' in the form of government and NGO agronomists. According to those whom I interviewed, none of the 'professionals' working in the area has reflected with the villagers on the social, economic, and spiritual costs or benefits of abandoning the *compostura*. Nevertheless, through inattention and at times open derision, they are hastening the demise of this spiritual and communal tradition. Some villagers have adopted a modern scientific perspective regarding the *compostura*, stating that 'the agronomists have shown us that [those who practise it] are wasting their time and money, and it makes no difference, we get the same harvest in the end'. However, another village elder, Isaías Vásquez, argues for a spiritual and communal perspective, rather than a scientific and individualistic one. He contends that God does not respond to test plots, but that 'if it weren't for those of us who listen to the Word and do the *composturas*, there would be no maize or beans. I hope to God we never quit.' It is clear that the changes which the agronomists are promoting affect not only agricultural practices but also the role of spirituality in the production of food, villagers' respect for the earth, and the maintenance of social ties. Because the impact of 'modern' agricultural methods on traditional agriculture and spirituality has not been discussed openly, neither the agronomists nor the villagers can reflect on the wisdom of these changes or develop a synthesis of the two perspectives.

Health

The traditional health-care system of the Lenca relies on midwife healers, most of whom are women, who use treatments which they believe were given to their people by God. The healers are often spiritual leaders in the village, and their treatments include prayer, traditional/herbal medicines, and treatments such as sweating, massages,

and purges. While modern medicine deems some of the treatments, such as purging a child who has diarrhoea, to be dangerous, other treatments such as massages and herbal medicines are considered harmless or even helpful. The connection between health and spirituality is clear for villagers like Bernardo Bejarano, who states that 'the healer treats us with massages and prayers, but it is God who heals'. Each village's healers are available day and night and will often stay with their patients until they are well. They are compensated with goods and favours such as a chicken, fruits, vegetables, or help in their fields. The traditional health-care system demonstrates not only the powerful connection between spirituality and health for the Lenca, but also how their spiritual and health system reinforces social ties of interdependence and trust, and creates space for women in leadership.

When the first government medical doctor arrived in 1994 in the Lenca region of San Francisco de Opalaca, he immediately began the task of setting up the region's first health centre, with a wall full of medicines. This medical professional never met with the traditional healers and within days began to disparage the Lenca for mixing 'modern' medicine with visits to their traditional healers. He criticised the healers for advising patients to abandon their antibiotics or for administering other treatments which he claimed would interact dangerously with 'modern' medicine. As a result, villagers began to feel that they must choose between their traditional healers, with whom they had strong spiritual and social connections, and the newly arrived health professional and his 'modern' medicine. Santana Gómez, a Lenca villager, argued that 'God and the elders have been healing us for years; these doctors with their modern medicines are here today and gone tomorrow'. The changes that the doctor promoted required not only a change in health practices but also a suppression of the role of spirituality and spiritual leaders, many of them women, in a key area of village life. It was a change that had serious spiritual, social, gender-related, and health consequences. Once again, villagers felt that they must choose, but were not given the space to discuss and reflect on the effects of change, or on how the two systems might be integrated.

Social action

On 10 July 1994, more than 4,000 Lenca men, women, and children marched into the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa, camped out under the Congress building, and announced that they would not leave until the government granted their demands. They called this event the

Pilgrimage for Life, Justice, and Liberty. After six days of pressure, the government signed a 52-point plan which granted the Lenca the majority of their requests, including a road into their region, three health centres, and several schools.

One of the principal means for mobilising this number of ‘pilgrims’, some of whom had never before left their village, was the spiritual characterisation of the event. The Lenca were participating not in a march or protest, but in a pilgrimage, a practice common both to Lenca traditional religion and Catholicism. The pilgrims marched into Tegucigalpa, not chanting slogans, but singing religious songs, shooting *cohetes* (similar to bottle rockets), and blowing on their conch shells—all traditional means of calling villagers to worship. The organisers had gained the support of a large group of priests, as well as the local Catholic and traditional spiritual leaders of the region. These leaders used scripture, tradition, and their ‘pulpits’ to frame the pilgrimage as a spiritual responsibility. A counter-movement, including the parish priest and a handful of local leaders, also used religious themes in an attempt to dissuade villagers, but their argument that this ‘pilgrimage’ for a road, schools, and health care was Communist, anti-church, and anti-Christian failed to resonate with the spiritual beliefs of the majority. In this way, spiritual symbols, practices, and leaders served to mobilise social action. Nearly all villagers agreed with Bernardo Bejarano that ‘the fact that we returned home not only safely but also so successfully was because God was with us, he was protecting us and helping us’. This case demonstrates that, for the Lenca, spiritual themes are potentially powerful mobilisers for social change. It also clarifies that they see little or no dichotomy between the sacred and secular: their spirituality clearly influenced their decisions about whether or not to take part in this risky social action.

Spirituality and development

For the Lenca, then, a powerful connection exists between spirituality and development themes. But do these same connections exist for other groups? In order to answer this, I will turn to the small number of published articles which have discussed the connection between spirituality and development.²

Health

Recent research clearly demonstrates the link between Southern people's spirituality and their health decisions. Kirby (1993) illustrates the strong influence of Islam and traditional religion on health practices, such as divinations in Ghana. He calls for 'adaptation and dialogue between African traditional beliefs and Western medical institutions'. Omorodion (1993) outlines the powerful relationship between traditional religion, Christianity, and health-belief systems in Nigeria. Rasul (1993) establishes the strong connection between religion and fertility in Bangladesh, and Van Woudenberg (1994) describes how Zimbabwean women's spirituality shapes their coping behaviours and support for those with AIDs.

Interestingly, within the 'North' there is a growing body of literature which argues not only that people's spirituality affects their decisions regarding health, but that spirituality and spiritual practices have a positive effect on health problems such as blood pressure, infertility, and heart disease. Byrd (1988), in a double-blind study of 393 coronary patients, found that those who were prayed for (though they were unaware of it) were five times less likely to require antibiotics and three times less likely to develop fluid on the lungs. Oxman et al. (1995) found that 'deeply religious' subjects were more likely to be alive six months after elective open-heart surgery. Benor (1990) reviewed 131 studies of spiritual healing involving human and non-human subjects and found that 77 of them had statistically significant results. This research calls into question the Western materialistic and scientific perspective on health and strongly suggests that not only should traditional spiritual health practices be respected, but that they may have much to teach 'modern' medicine as well.

Agriculture

Several researchers have described the link between people's spirituality and their agricultural practices. Puntasen (1992) argues that Buddhist spirituality and its conception of the nature of human beings profoundly shapes Thai farmers' agricultural practices. Seur (1992) relates the role of traditional and new religions in Zambia to the people's acceptance of agricultural innovation. Dei (1993) describes the spiritual importance attached by Ghanaian people to the forest, and the impact of this on sustainable forestry. Golding and Saenz de Tejada (1993) argue that three factors, one of them religion, explain the uneven development between towns in western Guatemala.

Social action

It is not difficult to recognise the integral link between spirituality and social action in contemporary social movements around the globe. The Catholic Church, both clergy and laity, has been a leader in social-justice movements in many countries, including El Salvador (Martín-Baró and Sloan 1990) and Brazil (Medina 1991; Maciotti 1986; Jacobi 1984; Adriance 1985). Haynes (1995) reviews six recent books which clearly demonstrate how the religious and spiritual beliefs of leaders and citizens shape their national politics in various African nations. Hunt (1992) and Youngblood (1990) argue that Protestant churches in the Philippines were highly influential in the movement to oust Ferdinand Marcos.

This connection is not limited to 'Southern' countries. During the US civil-rights campaign, African-American churches were a source of strength, power, and hope; and they remain important in more recent efforts for community and economic development (Hill 1994). Zald and McCarthy (1994) as well as Yarnold (1991) argue that religious organisations and individuals are central to many political and social movements, including the US sanctuary movement and the Central American peace process. The role of religion and spirituality is not limited to social movements. In nearly every newspaper one will find references to clergy, lay-leaders, and churches feeding the homeless, cleaning up neighbourhoods, and running after-school programmes. The conflicts in Northern Ireland, Palestine, and the Balkans demonstrate that spirituality and religion can be powerful mobilising forces, not only for social movements of justice and healing but also for hatred and violence. All of these studies demonstrate the integral connection between spirituality and social action.

These examples demonstrate that the power of people's spirituality to influence their development-related decisions and actions is not limited to the Lenca. We cannot assume from this limited research that spirituality will be equally influential for all peoples or in all situations, but clearly it is an issue that deserves increased attention. First, spirituality often powerfully shapes development-related decisions and actions both for and against change and, consequently, the failure to explore spirituality's role will result in faulty scholarship and less effective interventions. Second, spirituality is often ignored by development practitioners working for social action or changes in agricultural or health practices. Third, interventions which ignore spirituality, intentionally or unintentionally, affect not only people's

spirituality but also matters such as environment, gender relations, and community interdependence. And, finally, the failure to reflect with people on the role of spirituality in their lives robs them of the opportunity to determine their own values and priorities and is, therefore, anti-developmental.

Development theory and practice avoid spirituality

Given the apparently integral link between spirituality and issues central to development, it would seem reasonable that spirituality should occupy a relatively prominent place in development theory and practice. However, the subject is conspicuously under-represented in development literature and in the policies and programmes of development organisations. Table 1 was created by searching the titles, abstracts, identifiers, subject headings, and class headings for three journals for the years 1982–1998, using the *First Search* bibliographic database.

Table 1: Number of articles with references to the listed keywords, by journal

Journals: 1982–1998	Keywords				
	Environment	Gender	Population	Spiritual & spirituality	Religion & religious
World Development	83	85	89	0	5
Journal of Development Studies	19	46	38	0	1
Journal of Developing Areas	18	32	43	0	10

Development theory

These well-respected development journals have published dozens of articles and dedicated entire issues to the study of topics such as gender, population, and the environment—matters considered essential to the construction of sound development theory and practice. However, these same journals make only rare reference to the role of spirituality or religion in development. In fact, a search over the last 15 years of articles in *World Development* and *Journal of Development Studies* shows that the rare reference to religion is limited to its role as one of several descriptive categories. In not one of these articles is the relationship between development and religion or spirituality the central theme.³

Gender, class, and ethnicity have gained recent legitimacy as influential factors in the decisions and actions of participants in development efforts. Theorists and practitioners have recognised that women, the poorest of the poor, and indigenous or other minority populations have a different perspective on development from those of men, the wealthy, or majority groups, and they have begun to analyse how development efforts can take into account those differences. However, despite the fact that poor populations are often deeply spiritual, and that their spirituality clearly shapes their decisions and actions, development theorists have ignored the topic of spirituality.

In addition to its absence from influential development journals, spirituality is missing in the sub-fields of development literature. Of two such sub-fields in which the absence of spirituality seems most glaring, the first is the Integrated Rural Development literature. In their classic text, Bryant and White state that integrated rural development is founded on the observation that 'rural poverty is a seamless web of interrelated problems, and that projects that address only a single aspect of development are less successful than integrated projects ...' (1982:158). Bunch's *Two Ears of Corn* (1982) also dedicates a chapter to integrated programmes and argues that 'because needs are usually interrelated, efforts to fulfil the needs must be integrated'. Despite the fact that the goal of integrated rural development was (and is) to address the 'seamless web' of rural development, the role of spirituality, whether as a hindrance or as a support, has been ignored.

Second, given the intimate connection demonstrated between indigenous agriculture and health practices and spirituality, the literature about indigenous knowledge would also seem a logical place to find discussions relating to the connection between spirituality and development. Indigenous knowledge has been defined by Chandler as 'the accumulated experience of traditional people' (1991:60). Brokensha et al. state that to incorporate indigenous knowledge in developmental planning 'is a courtesy to the people concerned; [...] an essential first step to successful development; emphasises human needs and resources [and] preserves valuable local knowledge' (1980:8). Chambers (1983) argues eloquently as follows:

For originators and bearers of modern scientific knowledge, it requires a major effort to recognise that rural people's knowledge exists at all, let alone to see that it is often superior. The arrogance of ignorant educated outsiders is part of the problem. (p. 98)

Chambers, the Brokensha volume, and the indigenous-knowledge literature which followed in their wake make a persuasive argument for recognising the power and wisdom of indigenous knowledge. However, despite the power of spirituality in shaping indigenous agriculture, health, and environmental beliefs and practices, and its centrality to many people's decisions and actions, the topic receives little more than fleeting attention. As a result, little is known about the role of spirituality in the development process, and little or no guidance is given to development practitioners on how to address spiritual issues, which results in less effective and even damaging development efforts.

Development practice

Whether for lack of theory and models or as a result of other limitations, development practitioners have also avoided addressing the issue of spirituality and development in their policies and programmes. I surveyed several of the largest development organisations to determine their policies toward spirituality and other issues. While all of the agencies cited below had extensive policies and programme guidelines for dealing with sensitive topics such as gender, indigenous peoples, and the environment, none had developed any written policy regarding religion and spirituality. In fact, for reasons that I will explore briefly in the next section, it was very difficult to extract any written statement from these organisations which conveyed their treatment of these issues. While they were quite candid informally, I believe their more carefully worded official statements convey the fact that these organisations make a concerted effort to avoid the topic of spirituality in their programmes.

The US Agency for International Development (USAID), one of the world's most influential donors, states that 'it is USAID policy not to finance activities with a significant religious/proselytising purpose or content. USAID will not finance the costs of an activity which involves the propagation of religious beliefs or opinions.'⁴ CARE, one of the largest US development NGOs, declares that 'CARE is non-sectarian, and discussing spiritual or religious beliefs is not part of its programmes'.⁵ CARE's Canadian office stated that 'CARE does not have a "policy" on spirituality. We respect the importance of spirituality for the people with whom we work in the developing world, but it does not form part of our programming. We concentrate on the physical and social well-being of communities.'⁶ Catholic Relief Services (CRS), an NGO directly controlled by the US Catholic Church, states that ' ...

discussions about the religious beliefs and practices of staff or programme participants are not part of CRS' programming efforts'.⁷

While many may applaud the restraint shown by these organisations in avoiding a potentially divisive topic and refusing to impose their beliefs through their programmes, the reality is more complex. First, these organisations demonstrate no fear of discussing equally sensitive topics, such as land reform or violence against women, when they believe that to do so is necessary for the development process. In fact, many organisations *require* their programme staff to address potentially conflictual topics such as gender, class, and environment. Their avoidance of spirituality also results in a failure to explore the 'seamless web' of community problems and potential solutions – a failure which ultimately results in less open dialogue and inferior programmes. Finally, such spirituality-avoiding programmes weaken the capacity of individuals and communities to determine their own values and priorities. They fail fully to understand the people whom they wish to help and they also devalue the very thing which may give people the strength and hope they need to participate in risky development activities.

Why is spirituality absent from development theory and practice?

The following section is an attempt to explain the avoidance, in theory and in practice, of a topic which powerfully shapes and is shaped by development efforts. While these explanations are neither inclusive nor definitive, they provide a starting point for further research and discussion. Until it is clear why the topic is avoided, spirituality will not receive the attention it merits.

One possible explanation is the fear of imposing or appearing to impose an outsider's perspective (religious or scientific/materialistic). Many examples exist of religious organisations that have used 'development' programmes in an attempt to manipulate and impose their perspective on their 'beneficiaries'. As a result, both non-religious and religious researchers and practitioners may avoid the topic entirely, so as to avoid any perceived imposition.

Individuals with a 'scientific/materialistic' perspective may be equally wary of openly discussing spirituality. Social-science literature historically has tended to refer to spirituality and religions as belief systems based on myths, whose overall negative effect on society would be replaced eventually by sound scientific thinking. Marx, in 1844,

argued that religion was ‘the opium of the people’ (1959: 263). Freud (1949: 42, 74) believed religion to be nothing more than an ‘infantile’ response and ‘the adult’s reaction to his own sense of helplessness’. Weber argued that religion and ideology could give birth to, or at least shape, broad development trends such as the growth of capitalism; however, these remained largely *post hoc* descriptive variables which allowed for very little intervention.

While many contemporary development theorists and practitioners continue to hold this ‘scientific/materialistic bias’, they may avoid the topic of spirituality more from a ‘respect’ for local culture and out of an awareness of the dangers of imposing their view. Although these concerns are valid, there is a certain degree of condescension implicit in withholding what one believes to be a superior understanding of reality so as not to offend or impose. People’s spirituality is viewed as weak and to be protected, in the way that quaint traditions should be protected, but with the silent conviction that science and development ultimately will allow people to leave behind their spiritual and ‘unscientific’ beliefs.

This perspective creates at least two problems. First, these biases clearly influence the researcher’s and practitioner’s attitude toward practices such as the *compostura* or prayers for healing. However, because these biases are seldom verbalised, they can be neither discussed nor evaluated by those who are being ‘respected’. As a result, neither the scientific nor the spiritual thinker has an opportunity to reflect on and learn from their own and the other’s perspectives. Second, as demonstrated above, the fact that development practitioners ‘respectfully avoid’ people’s spirituality does not leave it unchanged, but instead can result in the blind adoption of a more scientific/materialistic perspective in such areas as agriculture, health, and social action. If the participants were given space to reflect on their spirituality and the ‘science of development’, they could explore how these conflict, co-exist, and complement each other and could thus determine for themselves what beliefs to accept. In summary, the practitioner’s scientific/materialistic bias, coupled with a ‘respect’ for religion which effectively sidelines the topic, results in an imposition of values just as serious as that of men over women or the wealthy over the poor. To ignore that effect is not development.

The failure to engage with the issue of spirituality may also be the result of a mostly Northern perspective which dichotomises the sacred and the secular. This dichotomising perspective views decisions about

who should treat a sick child, when and how to plant fields, and whether or not to participate in risky but potentially beneficial social action as secular and not spiritual matters. People's beliefs about the sacred, such as a belief in the 'Divine', or in the power of prayer, are private and personal matters which make many 'Northerners' uncomfortable when aired publicly. The dichotomising of the sacred and secular in Northern society may contribute to the avoidance of spirituality in development theory and practice, not only because of personal discomfort but because researchers and development agencies wish to avoid any charge that they have improperly used funds for the promotion of religion.

A third motivation for avoiding the topic of spirituality, which is inherent in the first two, is the fear of conflict. The continuing conflicts in Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and the Balkans are daily reminders of how the manipulation of spiritual and religious themes and symbols can kindle distrust and hatred. The attempts by individuals and groups throughout history to impose their spiritual beliefs or standards on others have resulted in cruel conflicts. One apparently safe response is to avoid the sensitive topic. Unfortunately, such a response does not allow us to avoid the conflict. In academic or practical discourse regarding gender, the environment, and ethnicity, difference of opinion and conflict are viewed not only as acceptable but as necessary and healthy; however, the taboo against discussing religious perspectives effectively removes spirituality from such a dialogue. In the context of this pervasive silence, academics and practitioners can precipitate changes in people's spirituality and subsequently in their whole way of life without the participants' awareness or consent. In some cases these changes will lead to conflict, which may be heightened by the failure to inform or consult those affected by the change. It is only through dialogue that people can come to a better understanding of how spirituality shapes their lives and decisions, how it can affect and be affected by different development paths, and how they can make informed decisions about which path will best serve them.

The lack of precedent and of models for addressing spirituality may be one final reason why the topic is ignored in development literature and practice. While some academics may be interested in pursuing the issue, its absence in the literature may convince some that spirituality is not a legitimate research topic, or that they will risk professional disfavour by pursuing it. Similarly, the lack of models and theory may

persuade practitioners that the topic is either inappropriate or that their attempts to address the topic might cause conflict with supervisors, funders, or participants. Given its pervasiveness, power, and influence, increased attention to spirituality will result in more insightful research and more effective programmes.

The continued avoidance of this topic—whether due to a fear of imposing foreign perspectives, a dichotomising Northern perspective, a fear of conflict, or the lack of precedent or models—is unacceptable. Without increased attention to spirituality, development efforts will fail in their attempts to sidestep an issue which permeates life in the South, will fail to avoid the conflicts which result, and will fail to learn about and encourage people to tap into a potentially powerful source of strength and hope.

Conclusion

I have tried to show, first, that people's spirituality is integrally interconnected with the decisions that they make regarding their development, and that development interventions often change people's spirituality and society without encouraging reflection upon or gaining consent to those changes. Second, I have tried to show that development literature and development practices have systematically avoided the topic of spirituality, despite its significance. Third, I have proffered possible explanations for an avoidance that must be recognised and overcome before spirituality will be accepted as a legitimate topic for research and practice. In conclusion, I would like to offer some suggestions on how spirituality can be addressed in development theory and practice. They do not comprise a full research or development methodology, but may prompt further reflection.

Perhaps the indigenous-knowledge literature has done the most to legitimatise local knowledge about agriculture, health, and the environment. Development academics and practitioners now recognise that, while they may have information that is valuable to local people, the 'experts' also have much to learn from indigenous knowledge. This mutuality manifests itself as respect and must form the basis of discussions of spirituality. The purpose of integrating 'indigenous' spirituality into development is neither to impose outside 'knowledge' nor to manipulate it as a means to the outsider's ends, but rather for mutual reflection and learning.

The indigenous-knowledge process includes three steps which seem appropriate for exploring spiritual as well as agricultural topics.

First, the outsider attempts to learn and understand the local knowledge system as best s/he can. This is done through discussion of local beliefs, observation, and participation in local practices. Second, opportunities must be created for local residents to reflect on their individual and communal goals, and how their practices and beliefs as well as new alternatives may hinder or assist in accomplishing them. Finally, the people themselves must decide on their goals, how they are going to achieve them, what outside assistance they may need, and the role of their traditions in the process.

Applying this process to the role of spirituality in development may appear more ethically hazardous than applying it to agricultural beliefs and practices. The role of the outsider seems especially sensitive. First of all, just as researching and working with indigenous knowledge in agriculture requires training, expertise, and a true respect for local knowledge, the same would be expected in the area of spirituality. However, the question remains as to what sort of training and expertise would be appropriate for this topic, and how true respect is to be tested.

Second, I would argue that both researchers and practitioners need to disclose their biases regarding the topics on which they are working, whether scientific, political, or spiritual. This must be done in a manner which opens and invites discussion; only then can others make truly informed decisions about the findings and suggestions offered. The beliefs of the outsiders, including those which are implicit, shape and change participants' views on topics such as the effectiveness of prayer to heal, or of *composturas* to bring good harvests. Development practitioners are usually willing to impose or strongly advocate a more 'scientific' belief system instead of a more 'spiritual' one, but are seldom willing to use those terms or explain why they believe as they do. Finally, researchers and practitioners must remind themselves of the integral connection between spirituality and all of life for many participants in development programmes. Changes in their farming or their health-care system change their spiritual beliefs and practices. In conclusion, if development is truly about strengthening people's capacity to determine their own values and priorities, and to organise themselves to act on these, then researchers and practitioners must recognise the importance of spirituality in people's lives, seek to understand it better, address it openly, and give people the opportunity and the power to decide how both their development and their spirituality will and should shape each other.

Notes

- 1 I have placed 'South' in quotation marks in this first reference, because I recognise the term is contested on many fronts. While I am sympathetic to many of the arguments, I employ it here, since I believe it is the least confusing of several options.
- 2 It is important to note, however, that there is very little published on this subject, and hardly any of the following citations come from development journals.
- 3 Between 1982 and 1996, the only article in the three journals surveyed that might fit this category was on the role of magic and witchcraft in development, and was published in *World Development*. In 1980, *World Development* dedicated an entire issue to the topic of religion and development, but this did not translate into sustained attention to the topic.
- 4 M. Q. Newton, Registrar, Office of Private and Voluntary Cooperation, USAID, 24 March 1997 (personal communication).
- 5 S. Ross, Deputy Regional Director for Latin America, CARE USA, 19 April 1997 (personal communication).
- 6 H. Rourke, Communications Department, CARE Canada, 25 February 1997 (personal communication).
- 7 D. Rogers, Executive Public Policy Liaison, Catholic Relief Services, 9 May 1997 (personal communication).

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Communal conflict, NGOs, and the power of religious symbols¹

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It is one of the worst dreams of development workers. In the course of a major development initiative, conflict erupts and seemingly destroys the fruits of years of intense effort. Chris Roche describes such a situation as a transition from a process which tends to be 'smooth, linear, ordered, and predictable' into 'rapid, discontinuous, turbulent change' (1994). He argues that we must develop a better understanding of how to prevent and respond to such 'wicked' oscillations and that we must articulate a clear picture, using a systems perspective, so that we can better understand patterns of change and feedback mechanisms.

This paper attempts to shed light on communal tension among those with differing religious identities which results in violence.² While considerable attention has been paid to intervention by humanitarian agencies and questions of State sovereignty and NGO-military relations in responding to conflict,³ there has been less of a focus on the role of indigenous NGOs which are attempting to avert incipient conflict, and their relationships with international NGOs.

Communal conflict with religious overtones constitutes a substantial proportion of intra-national violence. According to one quantitative study, 'groups defined wholly or in part along lines of religious cleavage accounted for one-quarter of the magnitude of rebellions in the 1980s' (Gurr 1993). In a more traditional analysis, David Little (1994) argues that 'religion is frequently not incidental as a contributing factor to communal conflict, including conflict related to religious nationalism'. But in analysing communal conflict, it is important to make the distinction between violence among different religious groups about secular issues and violence among such groups regarding explicitly religious matters. It is the latter type of conflict which is considered here to be violence induced by religious symbols.

The manipulation of religious symbols for violent ends can take various forms. It might include, for instance, alleging that adherents

of one religion blasphemed another faith, perhaps with reference to a holy book; claiming that the destruction of a sacred space (such as a temple, mosque, or church) of one religion was carried out by a conspiracy of adherents of another religion; and infringing upon a religious festival of another religious group in a disrespectful, destructive way. Conversely, religious symbols can help to bring about peace and transform conflict. Examples of this might include making reference to a passage of a holy book which emphasises forgiveness; using sacred space as an area of sanctuary during a violent or potentially violent outbreak; or conducting a religious festival in a fashion that accentuates communal harmony rather than division.

The case of Ahmedabad⁴

India is a particularly challenging place to undertake the transformation of conflict which is laden with religious symbolism. As one observer put it, riots in India are often 'incited through religious discourses' (Lobo 1995). Or, to quote Nandy (1995), in using religious symbols, politicians and land developers make '*dispassionate use of passion*'.

The focus of this case study is the Indian city of Ahmedabad, located in the State of Gujarat north of Bombay. Its population has increased considerably (particularly in the 1970s, when it grew by 50 per cent) as a result of rural–urban migration and high birth rates. About 20 per cent of the city's population is Muslim. Roughly 70 per cent is Hindu. Another 10 per cent is composed of Christian, Jain, Sikh, and other minorities. As of the 1991 census, the city's population was 2.9 million. It is estimated that more than 40 per cent of the population lives in slums. Most of the slum-dwellers work as petty labourers, earning a monthly income of roughly \$40–\$50. Their dwellings generally are very small: about 10 feet by 12 feet for an entire family.

Despite having the honour of being the city where Mahatma Gandhi once lived, Ahmedabad has experienced considerable sectarian rioting. This is partly explained by historical antagonism between the two predominant religions, which is exacerbated by the relatively worse economic condition of Muslims. It also appears that organised crime has had a hand in the riots. Alcohol is banned in Gujarat. Bootleggers operating within Ahmedabad create an undercurrent of illicit activity. They allegedly form alliances with real-estate developers interested in getting slum-dwellers to abandon their properties, hitherto protected by squatters' rights, so that the land can be developed. Finally, sectarian

political parties have combined forces with militant religious groups to foment slum violence, as a means of enhancing their political support by making rival parties appear as if their governance is marked by instability. In the process, Muslim–Hindu bigotry is cultivated in political discourse. This is accentuated by the international acrimony between India, a predominantly Hindu nation, and Pakistan, which broke away from India to provide a separate homeland for Muslims.

Communal conflict is often engineered deliberately by one or more of the groups mentioned above. Even though people of various faiths have co-existed peacefully for years, ‘violence engineers’ find the manipulation of religious symbols to be an effective way of igniting inter-religious antagonism. Their methods include, for instance, hiring people to throw rocks and then getting ‘planted’ bystanders to say that the stones were hurled by people of a different faith; distributing inflammatory propaganda in the form of brochures; spreading baseless rumours; and alleging a religious conspiracy behind random acts of violence.

Riots in Ahmedabad have involved both men and women. Usually, it is men who have become violent during the riots and it is they, generally, who commit murder. Nevertheless, some women participated in the fighting, especially in attacking other women and children. Women also tend to be employed by the ‘riot engineers’ as propagandists, spreading inflammatory messages throughout a slum, either verbally or with brochures.

In some instances, the riots in Ahmedabad have been severe. An estimated 1,000 people, mostly men, were killed during one riot in 1969. Other major riots occurred in 1990 and 1992. The one in 1992 is noteworthy in that two of the slums involved in the riot, Sankaltnagar and Mahajan-no-Vando, were a major focus of development efforts by the Saint Xavier’s Social Services Society (SXSSS, or ‘the Society’ for short), the indigenous NGO which is the focus of this paper.

An indigenous interfaith NGO

SXSSS was formed in 1972 by a Jesuit priest as an agency to reach out to victims of the flooding of the Sabarmati River. Early activities included providing safe havens, often in church-affiliated buildings, for communities of a particular religious identity who were threatened by those with a different religious identity. This meant protecting Muslims from Hindu advances, or vice versa. In 1987, Fr. Cedric Prakash became the director of the Society.

The Society has an annual cash budget of roughly \$100,000–\$125,000 and handles about \$1 million in food commodities received from Catholic Relief Services (CRS, based in the USA), most of which it sends to counterpart agencies in rural areas. It has an interfaith staff of Hindus, Muslims, Jains, and Christians, numbering close to 20. In addition to relief activities, the Society's work in the slums includes community health (with a major emphasis on ante- and post-natal care), non-formal education, human-rights advocacy (especially in protecting poor people from getting evicted from their property and in prosecuting wife-abusers), and the formation of savings societies for women.

There are three flood-prone slum communities on which the Society has focused: Sankalitinagar (with a population of approximately 25,000), Mahajan-no-Vando (roughly 12,000 in number), and Nagori Kabarasthan (with about 18,000 residents). SXSSS started doing community-organising work in Sankalitinagar in 1973 and in the other two slums in 1983. The Sankalitinagar slum was roughly 60 per cent Muslim and 40 per cent Hindu prior to riots in the early 1990s. Since then, it has become almost completely Muslim, with only about one per cent of the population belonging to other religious faiths. The Mahajan-no-Vando slum was almost completely Hindu, with Muslim families who own shops living on the edges. The Nagori Kabarasthan slum was also almost completely Hindu, with some Muslims living in the middle and some on the periphery.

Starting in 1992, SXSSS began reaching out to 20 other slums in Ahmedabad, usually following floods or riots. By providing emergency relief with temporary housing, food, and medical assistance, the Society has used a non-threatening method of entry into these areas.

Cultivating interfaith harmony

The Society became involved in the promotion of interfaith harmony after successive riots had virtually destroyed years of its community-organising efforts. Starting in 1991, the staff began to incorporate explicit measures to cultivate interfaith harmony into their other more traditional relief and development activities.

The approaches used by the Society to cultivate harmony can be divided into roughly two categories: *promotive/preventive* and *pre-emptive*. The former tactics are designed to lay a foundation for harmony by building an appreciation for it, or by creating an organisational infrastructure to respond to community tension. The various methods

used, with an explicit theme of harmony interwoven throughout, have included the following:

- writing and performing street plays;
- sponsoring creative art competitions for children;
- Fr. Prakash's participation in a government-formed civic committee which attempts to avert rioting;
- disseminating messages of peace in their regular programming, such as during health-care training sessions for traditional birth attendants;
- participating in public demonstrations (such as a peace procession) in response to bigotry and violence;
- forming peace committees which meet on an ad hoc, as-needed basis and are composed of the officers of the standing committees (those focused on women, youth, credit, education, and health);
- organising an annual 'people's festival' for slum-dwellers, focusing on a theme of harmony.

The 'people's festival' approach warrants elaboration. It shows vividly how the Society has attempted to use creative methods – in this case, the writing of a jingle – to foster a shift in attitude in the direction of communal harmony. At the people's festival in March 1993, the Society printed one of its jingles on plastic bags which were used in giving out free food. The bags, having intrinsic value to the slum-dwellers, provided an effective mode of dissemination. The jingle, translated into English, loses the rhythm of the version in Gujarati:

Here is the message of communal harmony
Allah and Ishwar are one
Do not fight over a temple or mosque
Politicians fight for power
The huts of the poor are set aflame
The lust for power is the fuel
Look at what has happened to our city
For someone's fault someone else is punished
If we, the people, live in harmony
Nobody will dare to disunite us
This is the message of communal harmony.

Pre-emptive tactics are aimed at nipping incipient violence in the bud. They have included providing safe haven to those besieged by another

religious group, for instance in a church building; and ‘myth busting’ to counter inflammatory propaganda of ‘riot engineers’, usually by holding a meeting of the community’s peace committee.

Results

The Society’s approach to building harmony seems to be effective in most instances. Examples of success are multiple. Pre-emptive tactics helped to prevent the slaughter of Muslims by providing them with a safe haven in a Church-affiliated nursing home after an attack by militant Hindus and police in December 1990 in the Miriyam-Bibi Chawl of Gomtipur. Following the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque in the winter of 1992, some middle-class Muslims planned to attack Hindus in the Mahajan-no-Vando slum, but were talked out of it (at Fr. Prakash’s request) by some influential Muslims in the community, who convinced the group that violence was ill-advised and undesirable. The peace committee in Shahpur, an outreach slum, was successful during the winter of 1991–92 in preventing a group of militant Hindus from attacking Muslims, when Hindus in the slum stood in their way and said ‘You kill us first’. In another outreach slum, after stones had been thrown with intent to harm, both Muslims and Hindus investigated the rumours that people of the other religion had been throwing them, only to find that the culprits had been from outside their community.

Promotive/preventive tactics seem to have resulted in a shift of attitude and in symbolic gestures in the direction of peace. In 1993, Hindu women gave Muslim men *rakhis* (ceremonial bracelets which denote a protective sister–brother relationship) in the Mahajan-no-Vando slum. In various locations, minority Muslims were given food and water by majority Hindus when curfews were imposed by the government in anticipation of a riot.

The efforts of the Society seem to have been most effective when the issues being used to cultivate the violence were of a secular nature. For instance, once, during a cricket match between Pakistan and India, inflammatory brochures were distributed, claiming that the Muslims in the area had been cheering for Pakistan’s team. Staff members of the Society responded to the brochures by asking people if they had actually seen Muslims cheering the Pakistani team and saying that, even if someone did cheer, that there was nothing wrong with being ‘good sports’ and cheering when anyone, including the other team, played well. This myth-busting exercise was successful.

However, the Society's approach seems to have been less successful in instances when religious symbols were involved. The most glaring example occurred in July 1993, when a group of Hindus turned a small shrine near the Shahpur Fire Brigade Station into a large shrine overnight. The people of Nagori Kabarasthan claimed that they would guard the shrine with their lives. Ultimately the police, in a show of force, tore down the shrine. The Society was discouraged by the fact that some of the very people with whom they had sought to cultivate an appreciation for communal harmony for years would clearly have become violent had the police not asserted their authority. Similarly, in Sankalitnagar and Mahajan-no-Vando in December 1992, staff members of the Society were heckled out of the slums – again, those in which they had worked for years – after the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque in northern India created substantial interfaith tension. Rioting in those two slums followed.

The unique challenge of religious symbols

Counteracting violence imbued with religious symbolism may require a different strategy from that employed in a secular context. In the case of Ahmedabad, the solitary instance when a religious symbol was involved and violence was averted was when Fr. Prakash intervened personally and brought the influence of prominent Muslim leaders to bear to prevent Muslims attacking Hindus. He personally met with the potentially belligerent Muslims and then asked influential Muslims to telephone with a plea for peace.

By virtue of his prominence in Ahmedabad and his role as a government appointee on a committee of community leaders designed to prevent and mitigate communal conflict, Fr. Prakash was able to employ a *violence-prevention persuasion tree*. The components of such a tree are as follows:

- a foundation of credibility and respect, complemented by good connections with influential people in the community;
- reliable information about early-warning signs of incipient conflict;
- an active campaign of bringing influence to bear on the people likely to become violent.

The staff of SXSSS and the members of the community organisations with which they work served as Fr. Prakash's eyes and ears in sensing early-warning signs. Their report made reference to specific individuals who seemed to be promoting the incipient attack. Fr. Prakash deemed

it prudent to enlist the help of other people in a process of indirect persuasion. The influential community leaders whom he contacted were successful in persuading the leaders of the incipient violence not to attack the Hindus. In circumstances like this, the use of a religious symbol for peace can be rather potent. For instance, 'You don't need to attack these Hindus for revenge because of what some other Hindus did in Ayodhya. You are right that justice must be done with the belligerents at Ayodhya. But to attack these poor, defenceless Hindu slum-dwellers would be to fight injustice with injustice. That is not what the Koran says we should do.'

This successful instance of preventing incipient violence is in stark contrast to the failure to dispel communal tension regarding the same issue (the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque) with the more general promotive/preventive tactics. In this case, there was no opportunity for implementing pre-emptive tactics, because the staff were heckled out of the two slums involved. This was a bitter failure for the staff members of the Society, causing them to ask themselves: 'What happened to the community organisations which were so carefully nurtured over the years?' (Prakash 1994).

Breaking the cycle of violence

There appears to be an insidious feedback loop at play which makes the use of religious symbols to cultivate violence so potent. Provocative use of religious bigotry – especially during times of religious festivals or the violation of 'sacred space', when passions run high – feeds into fear, insecurity, frustration, and anger. The festivals and violations of 'sacred space' serve to enhance tension, at least in the short term. This creates a greater receptivity to religious bigotry, and the cycle keeps feeding into itself, gathering momentum to the point of a violent frenzy. In the other direction, there is a pull towards communal harmony. If communal good will is maintained, intergroup tension will tend to be handled peacefully. If, on the other hand, it is depleted, intergroup tension can result in violence. The ideal state of communal good will is that of harmony. The difference between harmonious relations and the status of communal good will is the *felt need to invest in peace*. This could be felt by NGO staff members or some other organisation (like a civic or church group); or by residents of the community who feel that something is awry, who have a desire for order and sense that it is in jeopardy, or, if there has been violence already, who feel 'conflict/riot fatigue'. This felt need may yield an

investment in peace, depending on whether the NGO, some other group, or perceptive residents take action. But the investment takes time to become fruitful. People often need time to get their collective emotions under control. So, even though the goal of communal good will is pursued, it is slow in its stabilising effect. The delay in getting collective control of emotions prevents the part of the system which brings equilibrium from engaging effectively when a 'deficit of communal good will' becomes extreme. But if, on the other hand, there is adequate time for people to get their emotions under control, or if the decay in communal good will is not too severe, the system remains relatively stable.

This leads to a troubling question: figuratively speaking, is there parity in the potency of the demon and the dove? 'Violence engineers' have the acute emotions of fear, insecurity, frustration, and anger at their disposal. Those promoting communal harmony, in contrast, attempt to create good will and respect for those of another faith – states of being which can take decades to cultivate.

The critical role of leadership

Compared with the difficulty of maintaining peace, the ease with which 'violence engineers' seem to be able to invoke riots using religious symbols, especially during religious festivals or after 'sacred space' has been violated, might leave one with the discouraging conclusion that religion is more readily used as a tool of hatred and oppression than one of love and liberation. But such a cynical view is ill-founded in the light of many examples of leaders such as Gandhi having success, however imperfect, in minimising violence even when inter-group good will is extremely limited. To the extent that leaders are credible among those of a particular religious identity, enjoy their respect, and are effective in using 'harmony discourse', communal hatred can be averted and collective emotions controlled, apparently just as quickly and powerfully as hatred and violence can be fomented by religious bigots exploiting religious symbols. This is precisely what Fr. Prakash was able to do in collaboration with Muslim community leaders in the instance in which the potentially belligerent Muslims were talked out of attacking Hindu slum-dwellers following the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque. Perhaps this suggests that whereas promotive/preventive and pre-emptive approaches may provide a helpful foundation, they are insufficient in averting communal conflict without the added component of the effective exercise of leadership.

The phenomenon of the role of leadership in defusing violence induced by religious symbols deserves further scrutiny. This case suggests that it is important to understand in what instances leaders can somehow overcome the delay in the collective control of emotions of a community experiencing a significant deficit of communal good will.

Clearly, a number of agencies believe that the effective exercise of leadership in grassroots peacemaking is an important programmatic focus. Various NGOs, especially those with Quaker or Mennonite affiliations, have attempted for years to encourage the peace-making efforts of indigenous leaders. Now, other NGOs with more traditional emphases on relief and development programmes are starting to focus more substantially on leadership training. For instance, CRS sponsored a conflict-transformation seminar for the Catholic Bishops of Africa, in part because the agency was shocked by the genocide in Rwanda, a substantially Catholic country (*African Church as Peacemaker*, 1995).

Lessons learned

There are at least five lessons to be learned from this case.

- 1 *The involvement of 'top-level' leadership is not critical to success.* Fr. Prakash was successful in preventing violence by appealing to influential Muslims in the community. It did not require the Prime Minister of India to intervene. Credibility and respect are the two essential criteria for leadership: qualities which are often possessed by less prominent leaders in their given realm of influence. This lesson is consistent with the contention by John Paul Lederach (1994) that focusing on leaders in the 'middle range' may be the most effective and efficient approach for NGOs to employ in transforming conflict: effective in the sense that mid-level leaders have access to the top, as well as to the grassroots, levels; efficient in the sense that there is no leverage at the grassroots level.
- 2 *Apparently, leaders do not need to share a religious identity with the community in which they are attempting to transform conflict.* It would seem on the face of it that a leader is likely to be most effective in influencing communities with whom they share a religious identity. Fr. Prakash, a Christian, had to appeal to Muslim leaders to talk other Muslims out of attacking Hindus. This suggests that people of a different religion can be effective only to the extent that leaders

with the same identity are also engaged in the process. But this may be an instance when what seems obvious is misleading. During the partition of Pakistan from India, Gandhi, a Hindu, was effective to some degree in convincing the Muslims that fighting with Hindus was demeaning and not in their best interest. As mentioned above, the most important criteria seem to be that a leader should have credibility and respect. Although leadership training by NGOs for conflict-transformation teaches people how to use persuasion trees to engage leaders of the same religious identity when violence seems imminent, it is not essential (though it would probably be desirable) to involve mid-level leaders of all religions in a given target area.

- 3 *NGOs with a faith identity may have unique opportunities for conflict-transformation.* In the preventive/promotive realm, such NGOs can pursue collaborative programming as a means of fostering a climate of interfaith harmony. For instance, Catholic Relief Services and the International Islamic Relief Organisation (based in Saudi Arabia) are attempting to undertake joint programming, especially in countries in which there is tension between Christians and Muslims. Nevertheless, it would be unfortunate if faith-based organisations restricted their participation to joint programming with symbolic overtones. As this case points out, such preventive/promotive tactics are helpful but insufficient in preventing communal conflict. They must be accompanied by pre-emptive measures and leadership intervention. This suggests that faith-based NGOs should consider seriously the possibility of undertaking leadership training for conflict-transformation. Such training could be interfaith or could focus solely on the adherents of the particular faith of the NGO, provided, in the latter case, that there is adequate emphasis on interfaith bridge-building.
- 4 *Religious messages are likely to be more effective than secular messages in preventing or mitigating religion-induced communal conflict.* To the extent that violence has been cultivated by the manipulation of religious symbols, 'missionary zeal' of a violent nature tends to be invoked. It follows that using a secular message to try to cultivate peace is like asking people to abandon their religion precisely when their fidelity is held closest to their hearts. As in the example above, the Muslim leaders did not say: 'You need to stop taking your religion so seriously. Try to get along with those poor Hindu slum-dwellers. So what if they believe in multiple gods!' Instead, the appeal was to the Islamic sense of justice.

- 5 *To the extent that communalism is cultivated either directly or indirectly by a political party, NGOs need to brace themselves for partisan political confrontation if they undertake a prominent programme of conflict-transformation.* It is one thing for NGOs to be political without being viewed as taking sides. It is quite another to be seen as working against a specific political party. Of course, in both cases the NGOs might jeopardise their ability to continue to operate effectively in other programme areas. (Some might, in fact, argue that an agency puts its other, more mundane programmes in jeopardy when taking on a trendy, dubious conflict-transformation role.) When an NGO can reasonably be accused of taking sides against a specific political party, especially if it is an indigenous NGO with foreign support devoted explicitly to fighting communalism, it is particularly vulnerable to a public-relations assault by the accused party. This begs a question regarding the partitioning of strategies. Should explicit, direct efforts at conflict-transformation with partisan political overtones be left to NGOs which specialise in that activity? Should the more traditional relief and development NGOs focus only on indirect approaches (such as having Muslims work together with Hindus on an irrigation project)? If so, how might the two types of NGO most productively co-operate? Would it be best for 'relief and development' NGOs to focus on promotive/preventive approaches and 'peace' NGOs to focus on pre-emptive and leadership approaches? What is the best relationship between international and indigenous NGOs in the pursuit of 'peace' and 'relief and development' roles?

It is in fact difficult to identify an instance in which an international NGO has been accused of partisan political meddling by supporting a politically active indigenous NGO. How real are the risks of an agency's jeopardising its more substantial relief and development activities by supporting an activist, even confrontational, local counterpart? In any case, NGOs need to ask themselves whether it is possible to pursue development without also standing for justice and peace. Even from a public-relations standpoint, if an agency is assaulted with accusations of meddling by a disgruntled political party, as long as the conflict-transformation activities can be defended, what is there to fear? The test which NGOs should use is *can we defend this?* If so, they should not, in my humble opinion, hold back.

Conclusion

NGOs cannot afford to ignore inter-group conflict. It is important that they devise effective strategies of conflict-transformation. The transformation of communal conflict is, of course, no easy task. But we can take heart from the words of Douglas Johnston (1994), who argues that ‘reconciliation born of spiritual conviction can play a critical role by inspiring conflicting parties to move beyond the normal human reaction of responding in kind, of returning violence for violence. And therein lies an extraordinary challenge.’

In the world of communal conflict, where religion seems to be a double-edged sword, sharp on the side of violence, but like a butter-knife on the side of peace, NGOs would do well to engage mid-level leaders in the process of transforming violent passion.

Notes

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- 2 Throughout this paper, the words ‘communal conflict’ will be used as a general reference to what is sometimes called ethnic, sectarian, or religious conflict. Communal conflict is generally a result of violent passions within the context of ‘communalism’. Bipan Chandra defined ‘communalism’ as ‘the belief that because a group of people follow a particular religion, they have, as a result, common social, political and economic interests’ (quoted in Lobo 1995).
- 3 See, for instance, Atwood (1994) and Mawlawi (1993).
- 4 A more elaborate version of this case is presented in ‘The Harmony Project of the St. Xavier’s Social Service Society, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India’, the Local Capacities for Peace Project, Occasional Paper #1 (1995) by Joseph Bock, available from the Collaborative for Development Action, Inc.

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Ethnicity and participatory development methods in Botswana: some participants are to be seen and not heard

Tlamele Mompoti and Gerard Prinsen

As participatory methods are increasingly preferred in the effort to develop communities, and as development initiatives increasingly take place at the grassroots, practitioners are discovering that ethnicity and ethnic identity are among the most important factors influencing the opportunities for change at village level in most African countries. This paper discusses the understanding and practice of participatory development methods in Botswana. In particular, it examines the role that ethnicity plays in determining the involvement of the various ethnic communities in development planning, and in community decision-making processes more generally.

After delineating the concept of ethnicity, the article describes the traditional consultation process in Botswana, with the *kgosi* (chief) as the key player in the process. It will be shown how this process systematically excluded ethnic-minority groups. The implications of ethnicity for present-day village consultation in rural Botswana will then be analysed. In the concluding section, the authors identify five problem areas for participatory development methods and indicate how such methods could possibly address these problems.

To illustrate ethnic prejudice and exclusion, the article uses experiences from a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) project that was commissioned by Botswana's Ministry of Finance and Development Planning in 1995–1996.¹ The general objective of this project was to assess the potential use of PRA in existing development-planning practices. Teams of extension workers in four districts were trained in PRA and subsequently applied it in selected villages. Having produced village-development plans through these exercises, which took about two weeks per village, the project also assessed their implementation after several months (Prinsen *et al.* 1996).

Defining ethnicity

'Ethnicity' is an anthropological term that came into conventional usage in the 1960s to refer to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as culturally distinctive. It is concerned with the sense of belonging or affiliation to a cultural-linguistic group and the uniqueness of such a group. The term denotes a social identity which is both collective and individual, externalised in social interactions, internalised in personal self-awareness, and publicly expressed (Jenkins 1999). A necessary accompaniment of 'ethnicity' is some consciousness of kind among members of an 'ethnic group', which can be defined as a subsection or subsystem more or less distinct from the rest of the population, and is based on membership defined by a sense of common historical origin, shared culture, language, value orientation, shared social norms, and sometimes religion (Schermerhorn 1996; Banks 1996). According to Tonkin *et al.* (1996: 22), the terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' 'seem to have rediscovered, even without intention, the "us" and "them".... In their common employment, the terms have a strong and familiar bias towards "difference" and "otherness".' Therefore, 'ethnicity' is concerned with identity and distinctiveness of an 'ethnic group' (Banks 1996) and is something that inheres in every group that is self-identifying (Tonkin *et al.* 1996).

However, the term 'ethnicity' has undergone a gradual shift as an analytical framework from a term that merely denotes 'ethnic affiliation' to a concept increasingly characterised by negative interactions and competition between ethnic groups (see Nnoli 1995; Clements and Spinks 1994; Braathen *et al.* 2000). Thus, it manifests itself in phenomena such as cultural stereotyping and socio-economic and political discrimination. Stereotyping does not allow people to be judged and treated as individuals in their own right. Instead, 'the other person is labeled as having certain characteristics, weaknesses, laziness, lack of honesty and so on, and these labels obscure all the other thinking about the person' (Clements and Spinks 1994:14). These labels result in prejudice, which encompasses negative assumptions and pre-judgements about other groups, who are believed to be inferior. As such, prejudice is rooted in power—the power of being a member of a primary group and feeling more important than people in 'secondary' groups. Ultimately, the feeling of exclusiveness as a group, and the negative images held about other groups, lead to discrimination, which Clements and Spinks (1994) see as 'prejudice in action'.

Participatory development

Participatory development methods are born out of the recognition of the uniqueness of an individual as an entity who is capable of making unique contributions to decision making. Currently, participatory methods are very much in vogue in development thinking. The entire spectrum of development agencies, from grassroots organisations to the World Bank, seems to have embraced the concept of participation in development planning and implementation (Chambers 1994a, b, c; World Bank 1994). The major actor who is expected to participate is the 'community', an entity that is hardly ever described beyond 'all those living in a certain geographic area'. However, although various authors have pointed out that a community is rarely a homogeneous entity (Butcher *et al.* 1993; Clark 1973; Plant 1974), very little research has been done to determine the precise nature and workings of the heterogeneous rural African village.

PRA is a method that seeks to maximise the equal involvement of all adult members of a community in planning their collective development. It is purported to overcome cultural, political, and economic barriers to meaningful participation in development planning. However, the literature on this popular consultation method focuses almost exclusively on the stakes held by different material interest groups (rich versus poor, pastoralists versus settled farmers) or by men versus women (Mosse 1994). It deals far less with the cultural dichotomy of superior versus subordinate ethnic groups.² This is probably a result of two factors. First, most writers on participatory methods in Africa are of European or North American origin. Even though they may have extensive experience in a particular African country, they are less likely to comprehend the subtle details of ethnic identities in most of these countries. Indeed, the average child in a sub-Saharan African country, having been socialised to ethnic divides from birth, can probably multiply several times over the list of ethnic identities that a European or North American is able to identify.

Second, the minority of sub-Saharan Africans who write on participatory methods may be hesitant to address the matter of ethnicity, because the concept effectively undermines the foundations of their already rather weak 'nation-states' (Davidson 1992). Indeed, recent history in sub-Saharan Africa shows horrifying experiences of what happens when ethnic identity prevails over national identity.

Notwithstanding the above, the issue of ethnicity cannot be ignored when community participation is becoming a cornerstone for

development planning. This is not only because most communities are composed of different ethnic groups, but because if participatory development efforts prioritise the most marginalised areas for intervention, as they often do, then it is likely that it is precisely these areas that are also characterised by strong ethnic divisions.

From the above, it is clear that ethnicity is antagonistic to the basic concepts underlying participatory methods. Ethnicity has exclusiveness, prejudice, and discrimination as core characteristics. Participatory methods, on the other hand, have taken as their cornerstone liberal concepts such as 'one person one vote' and 'the freedom of one should not be to the detriment of another'.

Socio-political realities of ethnicity in Botswana

By custom, the major ethnic groups in Botswana, called *Tswana*, were organised in villages according to distinct sub-groups, such as *Bakwena*, *Bangwaketse*, *Bakgatla*, and *Batlokwa*. However, villages were not necessarily formed of ethnically homogeneous groups of people. They were further divided into specific sub-ethnic groups (*merafe* and *meratshwana*) that were associated with particular wards, according to kinship or common ancestry. In this context, *merafe* refers to people belonging to one of the *Tswana* groups that constitutes the regional majority, and *meratshwana* refers to all other ethnic groups. A ward was made up of a number of family groups or households, most of whom would be related to the ward head, while others would be family groups from other ethnic groups placed under the head's care (Ngcongco 1989).

The arrangement of wards within a village was such that the highly regarded wards were located close to the *Kgosing* ward (the main ward where the *kgosi* lived), and the wards that were poorly regarded on ethnic grounds were situated on the outskirts. Thus, the subordinate ethnic groups were physically relegated from the social, cultural, and political life of the village. The importance attached by villagers to this physical separation extends, at least in some cases, to the deceased. For example, one of the plenary sessions dealing with the village map in Artesia became hotly debated, as one of the villagers complained to the audience that his late aunt, related to the *kgosi*, was buried too close to the graveyard for subordinate ethnic groups. What was contested was whether the two graveyards were or were not too close to each other, not whether there should be two separate graveyards (Botswana Orientation Centre 1996a).

The inhabitants of the subordinate wards were marginalised in many respects. For instance, Datta and Murray (1989:59) note that *Batawana* and *Bayei* tended to have a master–serf relationship, with *Bayei* seemingly ‘... accepting their lower status in that they would refer to themselves as *Makuba* (useless people), the *Batawana* term for *Bayei*’. Similarly, *Bakgalagadi* in the *Bangwaketse* and *Bakwena* areas show acceptance of their lower status by referring to the dominant groups as *Bakhgweni*, which connotes ‘master’.

This pattern, in which the negative ‘image of the other’ of the dominant group is incorporated as the ‘image of the self’ by the subordinate group, completes a cycle of repression to which resistance can develop only with difficulty. If a subordinate group wished to oppose the status quo, it would have to start with the most difficult part of change: reversing its self-perception; that is, thinking of the world upside down (Freire 1972). The situation described above was observed during the PRA project.

The PRA process involved the selection and training of ten people in each village to assist in the proceedings and to lead project implementation when the PRA team was gone. As villagers were ‘free’ to elect their trainees, almost invariably members of the dominant ethnic group were elected. Even subordinate ethnic groups generally tended to vote for a candidate of the dominant group. The well-entrenched belief among the ethnic-minority groups was ‘We cannot speak so eloquently and do not understand things.’ In the case of Kedia, the authors learned that once, owing to external pressure, a member of the subordinate ethnic group of *Basarwa* was appointed supervisor of a construction programme in which most labourers also belonged to the subordinate ethnic group. Soon the labourers requested the *kgosi* to appoint somebody from his own ethnic group, claiming that their supervisor was often absent, could not manage the work, and drank too much. In short, they did not want one of their own group as supervisor (Botswana Orientation Centre 1996b).

As an almost inevitable consequence of these ethnically related imbalances of power, subordinate ethnic groups were systematically impoverished by being denied the right to own cattle and access to land and water. Consequently, their livelihoods were usually relegated to economically and ecologically marginal areas, and some groups, such as the *Basarwa*, were even forced to become hereditary serfs, called *balata*, *balala*, or *batlhanka* (Datta and Murray 1989). This relationship relegated *Basarwa* to the level of personal and private property.

Systematic impoverishment is a major source of concern for the ethnic-minority communities in Botswana. The introduction of the Tribal Grazing Land Policy (TGLP) in 1975 is a case in point. This policy commercialised huge areas of land that were formerly communally owned around the Kalahari desert, resulting in the annexation of land from the indigenous people of the area, particularly *Bakgalagadi* and *Basarwa*, and its re-allocation to the more economically powerful members of the majority ethnic groups from all over Botswana. Large numbers of the indigenous people of the area were forced to work for the new master-landowners (Mogalakwe 1986). In Kedia, for example, the PRA exercise stimulated a discussion about opportunities to develop a rather marginal area of 33,000 ha which was 40 km away from the village but nevertheless belonged to it. The introduction of livestock, wildlife management, and commercial production of veldproducts were suggested options. While the dominant ethnic group considered the ideas with enthusiasm, the suggestions were a source of major discomfort to members of the ethnic minorities. They used the land for hunting and for gathering veldproducts, and were afraid of losing access to it if it was commercialised (Botswana Orientation Centre 1996b).

Stratification of communities according to ethnicity is not only visible in the physical set-up of villages and the social, economic, and political relations among ethnic groups, but is also enshrined and protected in Sections 77 and 78 of the Constitution of Botswana (1965). These Sections of the supreme law of the country legitimise the superiority of the eight so-called major tribes, all belonging to the *Tswana* (*Bakgatla*, *Bakwena*, *Balete*, *Barolong*, *Bangwato*, *Bangwaketse*, *Batlokwa*, and *Batawana*). All other ethnic groups in the country are usually referred to as 'minor', 'subordinate', or 'subject' groups.

Although the Constitution explicitly mentions eight major tribes, the issue of ethnicity is downplayed under the motto 'We are all *Batswana*'. Thus, there is no official government record with data related to ethnicity. For example, population censuses do not contain reference to ethnicity. Therefore, it is difficult to determine how many people belong to a particular ethnic group or know the proportion of the *Tswana* to other ethnic groups in Botswana's 1.5 million population. Consequently, Hitchcock (1992) resorts to extrapolating such figures from the 1946 census dating from the time of the colonial Bechuanaland Protectorate Government, which describes 70 per cent of the population as belonging to the eight *Tswana* sub-groups and the

remaining 30 per cent to minority groups, most of which have their own languages (*Bakgalagadi, Balala, Basarwa, Batswapong, Bayei, Herero, Kalanga, Mbukushu, Nama, Pedi, Subiya, Teti*).

Consultation in traditional society

The understanding and practice of 'consultation' is not much different in Botswana from that in the West. Consultation is a process through which decision makers and planners solicit the views of the people for whom decisions are being made. An important feature of consultation is that the consulting party does not necessarily have to use the views of those consulted.

Botswana had, and still has, an extensive consultation system to inform decisions. Traditionally, the key player in this process was the *kgosi* (chief). The *kgosi* headed the governance system and was the custodian of the custom, culture, and welfare of his people. He ruled over his subjects through ward heads, who were appointed by him. The ward heads connected their own people to the *kgosi* and vice versa (Ngcongco 1989). However, they were more accountable to the *kgosi* than to their subjects. Although the strong convention of consultation played an important role in checking against the risk of absolutism on the part of the chief, nothing compelled him to consult his advisers. Consequently, while the *kgosi* would from time to time meet with his subjects to 'consult', this consultation meant predominantly the imparting of information or issuing of instructions.

The *kgosi* promulgated new laws at the *kgotla*. The *kgotla* is a traditional meeting place found in all *Tswana* communities, which the *kgosi* used 'to advise or admonish his followers as well as to impart information to them' (Ngcongco 1989:44). The persuasive skills and power of the *kgosi* in this regard were critical. So too was the role of the *malope a kgosi* (commoners who do things in order to be loved by the chief or to receive favours from him), who helped to detect and discourage any dissenting views.

The following example from the PRA project illustrates the importance of the continuing role of the *malope a kgosi*. Ethnic conflict was rife in Artesia, and the *kgosi* and the ethnic minorities upheld several conflicts. In order to circumvent the effects of power imbalance, the PRA project team organised separate sessions in the ward of the ethnic minority. This proved to enhance their participation greatly on the first day. However, on the second day the villagers observed that one of the village elders (*lelope*) noted down names of villagers who

spoke out against the established order. Once villagers became aware of this, most of them withdrew from the meeting. In the evening, the conflict expanded, when all the villagers who were elected to be trainees threatened to quit. They informed the project team that the elder was summoned to the *kgosi* every evening to report on 'who said what'. They did not want to get into trouble with the *kgosi*. The problem was solved after extensive talks with all parties involved (Botswana Orientation Centre 1996a).

In practice, there was very little room for debate once the *kgosi* had issued his orders; 'the *kgotla* after all is not a participatory but a consultative institution' (Molutsi 1989:115). Participation in this context denotes people actively taking part in the decision-making process, whereas consultation entails being informed about decisions to be or already taken. In short, the word of the *kgosi* was highly respected and was almost always final. Hence the *Setswana* saying '*Lefoko la kgosi le agelwa mosako*', meaning 'The word of the *kgosi* is to be supported and respected by all'. In this respect, the *kgosi* was regarded almost as an omnipotent being. As will be explained shortly, consultation in modern Botswana differs a little from the way in which it was conceptualised traditionally.

Ethnic exclusionism in the community forum

Theoretically, all adult members of the community have unrestricted right of speech at the *kgotla*. This principle is reflected in the *Tswana* proverb '*Mmua lebe o abo a bua la gagwe*', meaning 'Everybody is free to speak out, and even to make mistakes'. However, practice in traditional communities was very different, as subordinate groups were denied participation. The perpetrators took comfort in this practice by blaming the victim. For example, in the case of the discrimination practised by *Bangwaketse* against *Bakgalagadi*, the usual explanation given was that by nature *Bakgalagadi* are timid and bashful, and find it difficult to stand up and speak at gatherings (Ngcongco 1989).

The agenda of the *kgotla* meeting was the responsibility of the *kgosi*, and only on rare occasions could ordinary members of the *merafe* (not the *meratshwana*) add to the *kgosi*'s agenda through their ward heads. Participation, in the sense of 'having a say' in this kind of decision-making process, was restricted. Only a few people could participate, and these included the chief's uncles and brothers (who were also the chief's advisers) and members of the dominant ethnic groups. In an ethnically heterogeneous community, these restrictions

were rigidly enforced. For instance, in *Bakwena* and *Bangwaketse* areas, *Bakgalagadi* were not, as a rule, expected to speak at the *kgotla*, even though they were free to attend like any other *Motswana*. ‘As children in the home, they were to be seen and not to be heard. ... *Bakgalagadi* were children and their overlords were the ones who could and did speak for them’ (Ngcongco 1989:46).

Even the physical arrangement of the *kgotla* indicated its undemocratic nature. The *kgosi* sat in front, surrounded by his advisers—mostly his male relatives and a few handpicked village elders. Immediately behind the chief’s advisers sat the *merafe*, and behind them the *meratshwana*. This pattern was also observed in all villages where PRA plenary sessions took place at the *kgotla*. The male members of subordinate ethnic groups hardly spoke, and then usually only when directly addressed. Women and youngsters of ethnic minorities almost never spoke. They were seen but not heard. When one of the PRA team members naïvely suggested once that the *kgosi* should also solicit the views of people from the ethnic-minority wards, the *kgosi* looked at them and replied: ‘Ah, these people never come to the *kgotla*, I cannot see them’ (Botswana Orientation Centre 1996a:3).

In this regard, the *kgotla* provides a forum for the dominant ethnic groups to exercise power and authority. It is natural, therefore, that the groups in power will feel threatened when members of the subordinate groups attempt to speak in this forum, as this is viewed as undermining their power-base. This point is illustrated in an interview conducted by Ngcongco (1989:46) with a *Mongwaketse* elder who related an incident that demonstrated the undemocratic nature of the *kgotla*. ‘A member of the *Bakgalagadi* who attempted to speak at a particular *kgotla* meeting was rudely pulled down by *Bangwaketse*, who said: “*Nna hatshe o tla re tlholela.*” This literally meant: “Sit down, you will bring us bad luck.”

The following example shows how a *kgosi* used a police officer to enforce this practice of ethnic exclusionism during the PRA pilot project. In Kedia the authors observed a participatory planning meeting in which one particular woman from a subordinate ethnic group spoke out loudly against discriminatory practices of the dominant group. It was evident that she was helped in breaking gender and ethnic rules by a serious intake of alcohol, but quite a number of other participants were also rather inebriated. The *kgosi* quickly pointed at a policeman, who took the woman by the arm, lifted her off the ground, and brought her to the shade of a tree about 50 metres from the meeting place. Thereafter, the meeting continued as if nothing had happened.

Participatory methods aim to change such practices by involving people directly in the decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods.

Consultation in present-day Botswana

In the opening lines of a paper presented to a conference on Democracy in Botswana, Mpho (1989:133) observed that ‘Democracy appears to exist in Botswana because the majority of the people belonging to the so-called “minority” tribes have remained peaceful and patient about their oppression.’ However, this situation is changing. One reason for this change is the deepening socio-economic inequality in the country. Botswana receives ever-increasing revenues from diamond mining, and the country has risen from being a very low-income country in the 1960s (with a per capita income of US\$22 at independence in 1966) to a middle-income country in 1995 (per capita income of US\$3,082). Nevertheless, this wealth is very unevenly distributed, with the richest 20 per cent of the population receiving 61 per cent of the total national income, while the poorest 40 per cent, many of whom belong to subordinate ethnic groups, receive only 9 per cent (MFDP 1997:3). At the same time, however, the economic boom led to an extensive and well-developed infrastructure, which increased mobility and educational levels. This development empowered ethnic minorities to challenge the status quo. Increasingly, ethnic groups at the lower end of the ladder now organise themselves and voice protests, even though this is still incomprehensible to members of the dominant ethnic groups.³

Against this background of, on the one hand, a rather rigid, ethnically stratified social order and, on the other, an increasingly mobile society in which traditional values are being eroded and in which subordinate ethnic groups question the status quo, the government has built a long-standing practice of ‘consulting’ villagers on development. Since independence in 1966, the government has formulated five-year development plans to inform and guide its path of development. Preceding the making of a new development plan, district-level extension teams visit all villages and hold meetings, in which the villagers put forward the needs and wishes that they would like to see incorporated in the upcoming development plan (Byram *et al.* 1995). This consultation process takes place along lines similar to those used by the chiefs. Every village has elected members of a Village Development Committee (VDC), which is a body charged with leading development programmes at village level. In ethnically heterogeneous

communities, members of the VDC usually belong almost exclusively to the dominant ethnic group, and the *kgosi* is an *ex officio* member. VDCs are similar, therefore, to the traditional union of the *kgosi* and his advisers. The *kgosi* and ward heads manage the community's internal relations, while they gather in the VDC to deal with its relations with government. The exercise in which government officers descend on villagers to 'consult' on development plans always takes place at the *kgotla*. The VDC does the groundwork by informing and consulting villagers beforehand, and as such the actual consultation exercise at the *kgotla* bears resemblance to a ritual—pleasing to those who feel comfortable with the customary social order, but unappreciated by others.

This consultation process is now facing problems and increasing criticism from various sides. The number of villagers attending the *kgotla* is steadily declining. The chiefs complain nationwide that people no longer heed their calls to come to the *kgotla*. This may have two explanations. First, villagers from subordinate groups no longer wish to partake in a ritual in which they have no right to stand up and speak (while the chiefs no longer have the authority to enforce attendance). Second, villagers may feel that their input into government's planning is not taken seriously, because they hardly get any feedback, nor do they see their input really influencing policies and practices. This problem arose during the PRA project, as described below.

A recurrent complaint of every chief involved in the PRA project was that 'villagers no longer come to *kgotla* when I call them'. Indeed, a low and/or declining attendance of villagers at the *kgotla* was a continuous worry for the PRA team (Botswana Orientation Centre 1996a, b, c, d). The matter of low attendance at the *kgotla* has various causes, one of which is the diminishing authority of the chiefs without the void being filled by others. On the other hand, the pilot project revealed extensive proof that villagers do not feel treated respectfully in the established consultation procedures. Group-interviewed respondents in eight of the nine villages researched almost unanimously concluded that they are 'treated like children' in consultations (Prinsen et al. 1996:28).

Another criticism of the consultation process comes from government officers. With an increasing frequency and openness, the government expresses its disappointment with the disappearing 'self-help spirit', one of the nation's leading principles (MFDP 1994:7). It is concluded that *Batswana* have become increasingly dependent upon government to provide them with infrastructure and the commodities

and amenities of life, without making any contribution themselves. Government sees proof of this in the ever-recurring 'shopping lists' that villages produce after the consultations.

The last criticism comes from planners and analysts. In their view, as government has invested heavily in infrastructure over the past two decades, development now needs to shift focus. First, '... the initiative must be seized by those in the private sector', because too few viable economic enterprises have emerged from the citizenry (MFDP 1991:28). Second, the time has come to look at the quality of service provision or the 'poor productivity' of civil servants (MFDP 1994:9). Both these areas need a forum for dialogue between citizens and the state that is qualitatively well beyond the present practice.

Conclusions: problems and opportunities

In view of the problems with the long-practised approach to consultation, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning piloted Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) over 13 months in 1995–1996 in four of the country's ten districts. Besides trying to address the inherent inadequacies of consultation as practised in Botswana, the Ministry also felt, in line with international trends, that 'there is significant evidence that participation can in many circumstances improve the quality, effectiveness and sustainability of projects' (World Bank 1994: i).

In the light of the above discussion, it will be clear that the issue of ethnicity was politically far too sensitive to be addressed explicitly in the PRA project. However, the practical experiences acquired during the project clearly revealed the tensions between various ethnic groups and the traditional consultation structures, on the one hand, and the Western liberal values underlying participatory methods, on the other. These tensions create obstacles for meaningful and effective participatory planning exercises. Sometimes during the project, PRA offered opportunities to surmount or circumvent these obstacles. However, there were also instances where it could not offer workable solutions. A preliminary inventory of the obstacles results in five categories of problems related to ethnicity; these are listed below, with some of the opportunities that PRA offers to address them.

Physical segregation

Subordinate ethnic groups may be invisible at first glance: their houses, their livelihoods, and even their cemeteries may be separated (subtly or otherwise) from those of the dominant groups. Not only can this

apparent invisibility lead to their being overlooked altogether, but when participatory methods deal with the physical planning of a village, ignorance of minorities' physical segregation may further damage their interests. Even assisting in developing their marginal income resources may require scrutiny, as subordinate ethnic groups may lose their access to these resources to dominant groups, once such resources become more attractive.

To overcome these pitfalls, some PRA techniques (transects, random household interviews, farm sketches) take the facilitators (i.e. extension workers, planners, and other professionals) away from its central meeting places. Provided that these outsiders observe well and ask open questions (assuming that their guides feel free to talk in such informal settings), the outcomes of these enquiries may be raised in plenary PRA reporting to the village at large.

Political exclusion

Participatory methods usually require the establishment of a community-based committee to serve as a counterpart or complementary body to external development agents. These committees play a central role in implementing and following up development activities. Generally, the fact that the community has elected the committees satisfies the participatory requirement by external development agents of having empowered the community to be the local partner. However, it may well be that subordinate groups are effectively excluded from these committees. Subsequently, the local partner may use its 'empowerment' to further marginalise subordinate groups under the guise of democratic elections.

Temporary and outsider-initiated interventions can rarely change power balances directly. Participatory programmes are no exception. It can only be hoped that subordinate groups gradually develop a claim-making power through small-group work, careful facilitation, and confidence-building activities. However, this may well require a continued role for the outsiders in monitoring and carefully following up the activities at grassroots level. This continued involvement in events at village level will be legitimised only as long as the outsiders' contribution to development is appreciated or at least tolerated by the ethnically dominant groups.

Prejudice and feelings of inferiority

Even when problems of political and administrative exclusion are overcome through participatory methods, and subordinate ethnic

groups take a seat in the community organisations that join hands with development agents, the ethnic minority's contribution may be limited. Their self-esteem and perception of their skills and capacities may be so low that they are prevented from making a significant contribution. Simultaneously, dominant groups will continuously reproduce negative attitudes towards the subordinate groups in these organisations.

Participatory methods are often based on working in small groups. A repressive atmosphere is less likely to be felt and enforced in such groups, especially if their work takes place outside the symbolic courts of power. If properly facilitated, these small groups offer a learning opportunity for subordinate groups to practise negotiating skills and build self-confidence. It should be noted, however, that often the outsiders (especially government officers) also belong to the dominant ethnic groups. Consequently, they may also display prejudices in their interaction with ethnic minorities. It is, therefore, very important for outsiders to be self-critical.

Reprisals

Even if outsiders succeed in involving subordinate ethnic groups in local development processes, there may be reprisals against these groups for defying the status quo. It is unlikely that the local powers will take such 'corrective' measures while the outsiders are around. But the danger of reprisals is real as soon as the outsiders have left. It is also unlikely that upon their return to the village the outsiders will be made aware of these reprisals. Subordinate ethnic groups are very conscious of the risk of reprisals and will normally withdraw before they expose themselves to such risks.

One of the central objectives of participatory methods is to give people control over procedures, plans, and events. This is especially important when working with subordinate groups. The more these groups feel in control, the less likely they will be to venture into areas where they can expect reprisals. Participatory methods do not offer opportunities to address the problem of reprisals by dominant ethnic groups but, if carefully and properly applied, they can prevent the problem arising.

Risk avoidance

Participatory methods are based on the assumption that people are able and willing to voice their interests and that they mean what they say. However, in ethnically divided communities, subordinated ethnic

groups may be unwilling to voice their views on their medium- and long-term interests, when this could immediately destabilise or endanger their limited certainties and self-image, however feeble these may seem to outsiders. Development projects usually aim to change, i.e. improve, an existing situation. However, for many ethnic minorities living on the brink of survival, avoiding risk and maintaining the status quo are paramount priorities. This attitude is largely the culmination of all the problems elaborated above, and it will not begin to change until the weight of these problems decreases.

The inventory presented above has explicitly been called 'preliminary' because an understanding of the implications of ethnicity for participatory development methods is only beginning to emerge, along with their increased use. This inventory is preliminary also because it is based on experiences in the particular context of Botswana. As explained, the strengthening and expanding state apparatus in Botswana has created tensions between the traditional and ethnically oriented socio-political order and the modern liberal Western order. In this process, traditional systems seem to lose power to the new order, thus potentially creating room for subordinate ethnic groups to exert themselves politically. However, it is unclear whether this space exists, and whether participatory methods can broaden it in those African countries where the state apparatus is crumbling. Nevertheless, at this stage, it is already clear that participatory methods are likely to remain scratches on the surface of the ethnically coloured African rural reality, unless its practitioners are able and willing to address ethnicity and ethnic identity openly.

Glossary

<i>Batswana:</i>	A term officially used to indicate a citizen of Botswana (singular: <i>motswana</i>). However, in an ethnic context it may also refer to members of the dominant eight Tswana sub-groups, sharing at least the same language, even though they may differ in some cultural practices.	<i>Kgotla:</i>	A traditional meeting place, especially for the major ethnic Tswana groups.
<i>Kgosi:</i>	Chief.	<i>Merafe:</i>	A term that refers to villagers belonging to the dominant ethnic group in a particular village.
		<i>Meratshwana:</i>	A term that refers to all villagers who do not belong to the dominant ethnic group in a particular village.

- Tswana:* The majority ethnic group in Botswana, composed of eight sub-groups which have only slightly different cultural practices and share the same language.
- Setswana:* An official language in Botswana (mainly spoken by members of the dominant eight Tswana sub-groups).

professionals, from at least five universities, dedicated studies to the *Basarwa*, a minority of about 40,000 people in Botswana.

- 3 An Assistant Minister is quoted in a newspaper as having said to a *Basarwa* delegation: 'You think these outsiders [donor agencies] will always help you. Well, one of these days they will be gone and then there will only be us, and we own you and we will own you till the end of time' (Good 1996:59).

Notes

- 1 A precise description of what PRA entails is not necessary here. In brief, it is a popular participatory planning technique in which outsiders (i.e. government officers, employees of NGOs and/or donor agency representatives) co-operate with local people in undertaking a number of steps based on special techniques for gathering and analysing information. The various steps assess the features and resources of the community, identify problems and opportunities, and then prioritise actions to address the problems. For further details see Chambers (1983, 1994) and the monthly publications of the International Institute of Environment and Development.
- 2 The major exception in this respect are publications about particular ethnic groups—usually minorities referred to as the 'indigenous people'—whose history, culture, and lifestyle differ strongly from other ethnic groups in a country and have attracted favourable attention from the international community (e.g. Pygmies in Cameroon or Bushmen (*San, Basarwa*) in Botswana and Namibia). Hitchcock's (1986) inventory suggests that in four decades more than 150 academics or

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Women, resistance, and development: a case study of Dang, India

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This paper examines the resistance put up by women in Dang, a tribal tract of western India, to attempts by the state Forest Department to limit their access to forest produce. It is based on the author's experience as a Project Officer with an NGO that supported the development work of a grassroots organisation, the Gram Vikas Mandali Association Trust (henceforth GVMAT).

It opens with an account of the historical background to the area during the British colonial era, when the forests were taken from the Dang communities; and goes on to examine changes during the last 20 years to the present day. A consideration of their moral economy shows how the Dangis never recognised the legitimacy of the takeover of forests by the Department, and how they question the Department's activities and rationale today. A specific act of resistance by village women is analysed, with a view to understanding why they acted in the manner they did. Finally, other acts of resistance by Dangis since then are discussed. This raises a perplexing question: why did women not play as significant a role in these later incidents? The article concludes with an attempt to understand why women were marginalised in popular resistance, and what this tells us both about the nature of resistance to the state, and the nature of women's involvement in it.

Historical background

Situated in south-east Gujarat, the 1,778-square kilometre district of Dang is almost completely covered by forests. The two principal tribes, the Koknis and the Bhils, are almost equal in size, and together account for about 90 per cent of the population of around 152,000 (first reports of the 1991 census).¹ Although there are minor distinctions between them in terms of their specific forms of subsistence, the communities will not be separately described here, for, despite the differences, the Koknis and the Bhils share a broadly common culture, evident in the

similarities in their marriage, birth, and death rituals. Also, while there is increasing stratification within and among the tribes, it is too early to talk of different classes among them.

In the pre-colonial period, Dangs was held by several Bhil chiefs, who had ties with the neighbouring kings of Gujarat and Maharashtra. The Dangis would frequently raid villages on the plains to collect their dues, known as *giras*. In 1818, after taking over neighbouring Khandesh, the British tried to stop the raids. In the process, they undertook three military expeditions into Dangs, in 1823, 1830, and 1839. Formerly, no plains powers had been militarily successful in Dangs, because of its dense forests and malarial climate. British military technology, however, overcame these obstacles and subdued the area. By 1844, the British began leasing Dangs forests from the chiefs. The leases were sought because the teak wood was considered exceptionally good for making warships and for other purposes.

At this time, Dangi agriculture was akin to classic shifting cultivation. A small plot of land would be cleared of undergrowth, which would be piled up along the field, and then fired. Seed would then be scattered, and the crop reaped some months later. Since population density was low, and long fallow periods were allowed before the same plot was re-used, forest cover was not damaged. Similarly, the communities depended on foraging, hunting, and fishing, at various times of the year, when agricultural crops had run out.²

While the British exploited the forests extensively for timber throughout most of the nineteenth century, they did not at that time interfere much with local subsistence agriculture. However, a new colonial ideology, known as scientific forestry, was developing throughout India. This claimed to be ecologically oriented; but, in practice, the concern was to guarantee the extraction of timber while trying to ensure that enough wood survived for extraction in future years. As much (or more) environmental degradation was caused by the operations of the Forest Department as by the tribal communities. But the colonial state steadily translated its ideology into policy.³ In Dangs too, colonial officials demanded that the local communities be excluded from the forests, on the grounds that their cultivation, hunting, and migration did much harm to them, and hindered the production of large timber.

In 1902, the policy was implemented in Dangs. One third of its area was set aside as reserves; and, within a decade, this had been increased to cover half the region. The Dangis were not allowed to cultivate,

collect wood, or graze their cattle within the reserves. More than half of the approximately 635 villages were situated in the reserved area; and people were forcibly evacuated and resettled in the remaining villages. Even here, Dangi subsistence practices were not allowed to remain unchanged. Tracts left outside the reserves were classified as Protected Forests, and Dangis were forced to change their style of cultivation. This involved burning only a small patch of the field, sowing seeds in it, and transplanting them to other parts of the field later. The British, and later the post-independence Forest Department, also sought to stop migration, forcing the Dangis to cultivate on the same spot year after year. This system, which used the thin topsoil very intensively (and that too after concentrating the population on half the area previously available), was eventually to cause serious environmental degradation.

Degradation was also being caused by the introduction of scientific forestry. The British Forest Department extracted enormous amounts of teak. Unlike other parts of India, its re-planting programmes were relatively effective, and so deforestation was avoided. However, the species that were introduced were largely teak and bamboo, which were most useful for colonial purposes. This monoculture destroyed the ecological balance of the region, and made it more difficult for several species of small mammals and flora to maintain themselves.⁴

It is difficult to reconstruct the position of women in the period of 'pure' shifting agriculture before the 1902 demarcation. However, from conversations with older women, we can learn something about their role in subsistence farming before the late 1960s. They appear to have been actively involved in cultivation, performing tasks like transplanting, weeding, and harvesting. But cultivation was only one part of Dangi subsistence. Annual crops were reaped from around October, providing food until February or March the next year. By the time these foodstocks ran low, people were dependent on the mahua tree, which flowered in March and provided means of subsistence for over two months. Women and children were responsible for collecting and processing the mahua seeds. In the summer months, Dangi diets were supplemented by fishing and hunting. Hunting was an almost exclusively male activity. Fishing, however, was undertaken collectively, and entire families would settle by the river banks to catch fish. Before the monsoons began, they would return to the villages to prepare their fields for cultivation. After the monsoons, Dangis subsisted by foraging, or collecting wild roots, tubers, bamboo shoots, and vegetables and leaves from the forests. These tasks were carried out

almost exclusively by women and were crucial to survival until crops were ready. Thus, women traditionally played a vital role in most subsistence activities in Dangs.

The post-colonial decades

India's independence in 1947 did not mean much for the Dangis. The post-independence Forest Department continued with the same policies, although it appears that the major transformation of Dangs did not take hold until the 1960s, and was the consequence of four distinct influences.⁵

First, certain ecological transformations were coming to a head. Game in the region had been getting scarcer from the early twentieth century. The construction of the Ukai dam in neighbouring Surat district in the 1960s created a catchment area that cut across the seasonal paths of migration followed by animals into Dangs. With no replenishment of animal stock taking place, large game became almost impossible to find by the 1970s. Simultaneously, the deeper portions of the rivers and the pools in the region were being filled up through silting. As a result, breeding grounds for fish became fewer, and they were no longer as abundant as before.

Second came the creation of private land-ownership. Between 1967 and 1971, the Government of Gujarat appears to have carried out a survey, as a result of which each cultivator was assigned a fixed plot of land. A consequence was that even the modified shifting cultivation within the Protected Forests, which had been possible before, could no longer be undertaken.

Third came the stepping up of forest exploitation. Forest Department revenue from Dangs increased almost seven-fold between 1970 and 1985.⁶

Fourth was the creation of forest labour co-operatives. These were meant to provide labourers for timber extraction, and were part of a half-hearted state government effort to ensure that some of the resources generated during forest exploitation returned to Dangs. Formerly, exploitation had been carried out through timber contractors who grossly underpaid the Dangi workers.

Together, the increasing rate of Departmental timber extraction and the creation of co-operatives saw the beginning, from the early 1970s, of a phase of rapid commercialisation.⁷ There can be hardly any doubt that the amount of absolute wealth within Dangs increased as a consequence; and that there was possibly a significant trickle-down

effect up to the early 1980s. The period was also marked by a demographic boom. Mortality rates had fallen during the 1970s and 1980s, causing population to shoot up from around 71,567 in 1971⁷ to around 152,000 by 1991. Until the mid-1980s, the demand for a labour-force for timber operations absorbed the effect of this population increase.

However, the period of remarkable economic expansion came to a halt in about 1988, when the state government decided to suspend forest-felling operations. A response to growing worries about environmental degradation, this halt rendered the forest co-operatives entirely superfluous. It also meant a halt to the wages which Dangi labourers had been receiving since the 1970s for employment in timber-extraction operations. Accompanied by the other developments, this resulted in a sudden and huge surplus of labour in Dangs – more than could be supported on the lands on which the Department permitted cultivation. This laid the basis for the transformation of the tribals into a labour force for capitalist agriculture outside Dangs. The agriculturally prosperous belt of South Gujarat around Bulsar and Surat districts had long been a region to which tribals migrated seasonally. Seasonal labour was needed at the time of reaping and processing sugar cane. ⁸For this, tribals were largely employed in the sugar-cane fields and factories, at extremely exploitative wages and conditions. The first trickle of migration started in 1980 and fewer than ten years later had assumed the proportions of a flood. Tentative findings of the ten-yearly census, last conducted in 1991, reported that nearly 45,000 persons per year resorted to seasonal migration. This represents nearly one third of the population, and is in all probability a gross underestimate.

The meagre resources obtained through migrant labour could not offset the combined impact of environmental degradation, demographic expansion, and inadequate agricultural land. Matters have been made worse by the stricter policy adopted by the Forest Department in the name of conservation. The Department was cracking down heavily on hunting, or even the collection of wood for timber or houses.

By the late 1980s, another factor in the changed situation was the emergence of the GVMAT. Founded earlier in the decade by an Australian social worker who was influenced by Gandhian principles, it had initially concentrated on conventional development work, such as land-development programmes. By 1988, however, it had shifted its

emphasis to conscientisation. It was dealing with problems such as those posed by Forest Department irregularities and the right to demand infrastructural facilities from the government. Soon, the non-participation of women in its programmes was recognised as a problem, and female staff were employed to redress the situation. The women workers of GVMAT concentrated all their efforts on conscientisation work – unlike their male colleagues, who were also responsible for those economic activities that continued.

The moral economy of Dangs

Before considering the resistance of Dangi women, it is important briefly to discuss some aspects of the ‘moral economy’ of Dangs. James Scott has defined this as a community’s ‘notion of economic justice and their working definition of exploitation – their view of which claims on their product were tolerable and which intolerable’.⁹ Precisely such notions are found among the Dangis with reference to the state and the Forest Department. Indeed, there is such a high degree of consensus that it is possible to speak of a moral economy shared across ethnic and gender lines.¹⁰ Through oral traditions about how the forests were taken away, we can explore this moral economy. The most common account seeks to explain the loss of the forests in terms of a trick played by the British.

The *gora saheb* (white men) called all the chiefs to Bhavani killa (a fort near Dangs). They put three sacks in front of the *rajas* [chiefs]. They said, ‘*rajasahab*, choose any of these three sacks for yourselves’. The *rajas* went around feeling each of the sacks. They felt the first one, and said, ‘this is *maati*’ [earth]. Then they felt the second one, and said, ‘this is *dhilpa*’ [bark.] Then they felt the third one, and said, ‘this is *Paiha*’ [money.] The *rajas* said among themselves, ‘We already have bark and earth in our forests, what do we need those for? Let us take the money, since we do not have money.’ At that time, there was no money in Dangs. So they told the *gora saheb* that they would take the third sack. Then the *saheb* told the *rajas*, ‘now that you have taken the money, you shall get the money and we shall take away the forests and the land. Had you taken the sack with earth, you would have kept both the earth and the forests. Had you taken the sack with the bark, you would have kept the forests. Now you have lost both, but you will get a pension instead.’

Dangis also sometimes explain the loss of their forests by referring to the technological superiority of the British. Some stories describe the *saheb* as having sought shelter from the *raja* for a night, and then having measured the trees and the forests while the chief was sleeping. The tribals, in fact, often see acts such as measurement or writing as ways in which outsiders and the state gain dominance over them. This perceptive insight is reflected in other stories too.

Even before coming to Dangis, the *saheb* had seen the forests with a *durbin* [telescope]. He said to himself, 'these are forests of gold. I must get them for myself.' He went to the *raja* and asked for one year's permission to move in the forests. He went with the *rajas* for *shikar* [hunting] and studied the forests more closely. While moving in the jungle, he asked for the names of trees, which he wrote down immediately in his book. With the names in his book, he did not need the *rajas* any longer, for he knew everything about the forests himself.

What is most striking about these accounts is their questioning of the legitimacy of state ownership of the forests. Sometimes, of course, in a manner similar to what Scott describes as tolerable claims, the Dangis concede some rights of the state in forests.

Only three jungles were initially given to the *saheb*: those of Kot, Barda ni Khadi and Bhuria Sadada ni Vangan. But they did not stay to these, they took over other forests too.

The specifying of these three areas is significant, since they are the densest surviving tracts in Dangis. But in acknowledging a certain right for the Department in these areas, the state's authority over the rest of the forests is denied.

In addition to the idea that the Forest Department's presence in Dangis is fundamentally illegitimate, Dangi stories and perceptions also focus on the oppressive tactics of the Forest Department. This is most evident in the imagery used to describe forest officials. A forest guard is very often called a *komda chor*, or fowl thief. It is common for a forest guard to demand bribes such as fowls or home-brewed liquor, among the more expensive items that an impoverished Dangi household is likely to possess. These bribes are routinely demanded, even when the particular family has not done anything specifically wrong.

There are two reasons for this. Firstly, forest laws are so comprehensive that in the process of everyday living men and women

are bound to break them. If cattle roam into the reserved forests, small patches of which are scattered between the villages, then it is an offence. If, in the process of collecting firewood, a branch is collected that does not look like deadwood picked off the ground, the gatherer can be taken away for committing an offence. Secondly, the penalties are heavy, making the forest guard a very powerful and much-feared figure. Thus, Dangis have to give the forest guard what he demands. The abusive names that are used for the guards behind their backs are one form of everyday resistance.¹¹ Indeed, given the power of the forest guards, it is usually to such expressions that resistance has to confine itself.

The event

In the latter part of 1989, a man was arrested from the village of Gira-Dabdar, about 8–10 kilometres from the market centre of Vaghai. The charge against him was that he had ‘stolen’ wood from the forests to build a hut. Initial efforts by villagers to get him released did not work. Later, his wife went to the police station with some elders and paid a fine to secure his release. Despite often having to pay such fines, villagers could not very well stop building houses for themselves: after all, shelter is one of the most basic human needs. A month later, forest officials again appear to have heard of timber having been felled for a house in the village. A Range Forest Officer, accompanied by half a dozen policemen, came to the village to confiscate the timber, crossing nearly 3 kilometres of steep tracks to get there. His search party found the house which was being constructed and moved towards it. But the response that the party met with was very different from the fearful manner in which the Dangis usually reacted.

The carpenters who were working on the site saw them approaching, called out to the younger woman of the house to tell her of the impending disaster, and ran away into the forests. The mother-in-law, who was cooking, came out with a sickle and stood at the threshold, waiting for the search party. As soon as it arrived, she took a determined step forward and told the officials to stay where they were, or face the consequences. Meanwhile, the younger woman had been yelling out for other women to join them.

What the search party met, then, was this formidable woman refusing to allow them to enter the house and measure the total quantity of wood stolen. Around the party was a large number of women of all ages, carrying whatever implements they had been able

to lay their hands on. The Range Forest Officer ordered them to move away, but they did not budge. He then told the old woman to shift, but she did not comply either. He then tried to dodge by her, but she moved quickly too, and stood on top of a log, saying, 'Only over my dead body will I allow you to touch this'. Frustrated, the officer threatened to open fire. Some women challenged him, saying 'Yes, go ahead, shoot. Let us see how much courage you have.' Others retorted that the forests did not belong to the Forest Department, while some women appealed to the guards to remember that they too were Dangis.¹² Such exchanges went on for a long while. Finally, exasperated, the search party left the village – but not before uttering threats that punishment would be meted out. This did not daunt the women, who walked them out of the village for a kilometre.¹³

The resistance put up by the women illuminated two striking and closely connected features of popular understanding. First, there was the reiteration that the forests are common-property resources. As the women told the officer, the forests belonged to nature, and the government had no authority to determine who should use what. Second, there was the perception of the government as representing external authority, with no legitimate position in Dangs. In their resistance, the women invoked the identities of us-and-them. As they told the forest guards (who are largely Dangis), the forests belonged to all of them. And if, because they were in uniform, the guards could not oppose the government or *sirkar*, they could still surely see how the women were justified in taking what belonged to all of them. The other side of the coin was the way women responded to the officer and senior members of the party, who were non-tribals from outside Dangs. What right did they have over the forests? Did they water it? Did they plant it? Did their forefathers belong to the area? In raising questions of this sort, the women were casting the Forest Department as outsiders, people from the plains or *desh*, with no claim over the forests.

From this understanding sprang their resistance. But why did the resistance break out when it did? After all, it began in a low key, as part of the usual 'small arms fire in the class war'.¹⁴ Such incidents happen regularly. Forest Department parties swoop on villages, confiscate timber, collect bribes, and go away. While Dangis might protest or argue, usually they do not physically obstruct the Department officials. In this case, matters went beyond that framework, and escalated rapidly into a confrontation in which the Department had to back down. Why?

First, there was the bad economic situation, which we have already examined. In this context, grievances against the Forest Department assumed a magnitude which they usually would not. Second, there was the role of the GVMAT. Gira-Dabdar was one of the villages in which it was very active. Several meetings had been conducted there, where the injustice of Forest Department actions had been emphasised. In this sense, local grievances received both self-legitimation and support from the outside. Third, there was the suppressed anger of the villagers, founded on their specific grievances, as for example the case of the man who had been arrested a month before.

But why did *women* play such a major role in putting up resistance? I had been to the village around two months before the incident happened, and was there again about a month after it had occurred. I recall discussing, with other women activists, the courage of the women who had faced up to the guns of forest officials, while the men had fled. We even laughed at the men's response, and attributed it to the women being more courageous and to their natural capacity to withstand pressure and stress.

In retrospect, there was possibly more to the incident than meets the eye. Is it possible that the women reacted more violently to Department oppression because it was affecting them more than men? This might be true for other areas, but not for Dangs. As we saw earlier, there is no sharp divergence of interests on gender lines in the perception of forests: men are almost as involved in the subsistence economy as women, albeit in different spheres. Could the men have been using the women? Such, for instance, is the argument that Emmanuel Konde makes for the Anlu rebellion of 1958–61. While there might be an element of truth in them, such arguments tend to ignore *women's* perceptions of matters, and deny women the role of actors.¹⁵

Explanations for the role that women played will have to be rooted in historical specificity. Let us begin by gendering, once again, Dangi modes of subsistence. While both men and women are involved with the forests, their relations with it are slightly different. Women do most of the foraging activities, fishing, and the collection of firewood. The latter can be considered illegal if it is suspected that trees have been cut for the purpose; but, on the whole, women's activities are largely within the Department's framework of legality. In contrast, men's activities are more likely to be seen as illegal. When men venture into the forests, it is more usually for hunting, for chopping down wood for buildings, or for lopping for agriculture. Sometimes, they venture in to

cultivate illegally in the reserves. In such cases, women are equally involved in the actual cultivation. But since the state works with male-centred notions, it is men who are held responsible for the act. Thus, in some respects men have more to fear from the Department than do women.

In other ways, of course, women have more to fear. One does not have to stray beyond the bounds of legality to be confronted by the Forest Department, especially its lower cadres. Women can be an easy target, because they are more involved in everyday activities, like the collection of firewood or other forest produce. Forest Department guards often catch them when they are walking through the forests and accuse them of planning to collect forest produce. As women, they also come in for sexual harassment from the guards. Thus, women have reason to feel angry with the Forest Department, although such anger usually has to be suppressed.

The role of GVMAT becomes especially significant in this context. Many of its female activists had spent a good deal of time with women from the village, discussing various aspects of everyday repression. Its role was heightened because of the status of two local woman organisers. The first, who was based in the village as an employee of GVMAT, had experience of Kandhalghodi, a village where women had earlier organised to challenge corruption in a local Primary Health Centre. Her presence and regular meetings with women helped in rousing their anger about what they suffered at the hands of the Department; and in making them aware that it was possible to take explicit action against it. The second, who was not an employee of GVMAT but was one of the most active local women, also played a major role. She was one of the most vociferous members of the local association. Apart from being a charismatic personality, she also happened to be from Gira-Dabdar – unlike most women, who marry into villages different from that in which they grew up, she had married into the same village. As a result, her own relations were there; and she was accepted and respected by the males there much more than a woman who had married into the village would have been.

Thirdly, women are very independent, especially in Gira-Dabdar. This was brought home to me during one meeting, when I observed that all the women had gathered for the meeting, and that the men were standing in the background, holding babies and taking care of the children. Even by the rather different standards of tribal culture, this was very unusual. After the meeting, I asked one of the local GVMAT

women why this was the case. She acknowledged that it was unusual, but explained it simply by saying that the men of Gira-Dabdar were very 'good'. This explanation is obviously inadequate.

More important, possibly, was the fact that a proportion of the population of Gira-Dabdar is Christian. The form that Christianity has taken is very interesting. Although Christian missionaries were in Dangs by the early twentieth century, it was only after the 1970s that they met with success. A significant, if small, proportion of the population is now Christian. Most striking among converts is the prominent role played by women. In fact, it has been women who have been the first in a family to convert to Christianity, and have then brought about the conversion of their husbands and, sometimes, their parents.¹⁶ While these women are usually conservative about the areas in which tribal women conventionally possess comparative freedom (such as premarital sex or the desertion of husbands), they are also very assertive and independent. The weekly prayer meetings, in which women participate, had also made their presence at village meetings a more acceptable matter. This explains the ease with which these women, in comparison with those from other villages, could participate in the GVMAT meetings.

These factors, then, made it possible for the women to respond to the aggression of the search party. But in responding as they did, the women were also using dominant patriarchal values to their own benefit. In the understanding of forest officials and others, women have two opposing identities. As women, especially tribal women, they are objects for sexual exploitation. This is most evidently the case when women are to be dealt with as individuals, when the power of officials over them can be exercised more directly and when they might have most to fear. In addition, there is the more problematic identity of women as a collective group. As such a group, women are more visibly bearers of the patriarchal notion of honour. In patriarchal societies, a community's honour is closely bound up with 'its' women. Public action against 'its' women, especially that which involves physical contact or abuse, is thus liable to be treated by the community as a slur on its collective honour, which requires redress. By physically acting against the women, the search party would have left itself open to charges of sexual harassment, and of violating the 'honour' of women.¹⁷ When the women defied the search party, they were strengthened in their knowledge that these patriarchal values shielded them.¹⁸ There was also the difficulty posed by the unusual nature of the

women's action. Used to assigning women a submissive role, the male search party was not prepared for the possibility of women venturing outside this sphere. This momentary confusion, and the lack of official state or male strategies to deal with such a situation, also helped the women in resisting the Department.

Organised resistance: the marginalisation of women¹⁹

What is most striking about the incident is its spontaneity. It was not planned as a deliberate act of resistance, but arose out of the frictions of a life in which illegality had been made an everyday phenomenon. The event, however, led on directly to more organised and planned resistance. Already by that time, another organisation, the Adivasi Bhumihin Kisan Hak Rakshak Samiti, was active in the region. Its two principal leaders, both from outside Dangs, were promoting a far more radical programme than was GVMAT. After this incident, it appears to have intensified its activity, extending it to villages around Gira Dabdar.

In early 1990, a group composed largely of men moved into a thickly wooded region in the reserved forest. In less than a week, they cleared large portions of bamboo. They claimed the spot was one of their *junigavthad* [old village sites] and that they had the right to cultivate around it. Their principal demand was to be given cultivation rights in the extended forests. The Forest Department was initially at a loss to know how to respond to such an unprecedented situation. Finally, after extensive preparations, and the summoning of reinforcements of police from other districts, it moved into the area. Around 90 people were arrested and taken into custody.

Several other incidents followed in quick succession. In early 1991, a search party visited one of the villages which had been closely associated with the militant movement, as part of its effort to intimidate the villagers. The villagers were, however, in no mood to be frightened. They surrounded the party and threatened its members. They abused the Sub-Divisional Forest Officer (one of the most senior forest officials in Dangs) who was leading the party and forced him to eat grass.²⁰ The party returned some weeks later in greater strength, this time armed with guns. The villagers had been preparing for such an eventuality. As the party approached, children warned the adults, who took up positions in different spots. One large group stayed to meet the party. The men carried with them their bows and arrows, weapons that had not been used much since large game had become extinct, and had not been carried around publicly for several decades. In the course of a

heated conversation, one of the armed policemen made a move which was interpreted by the village men as an indication that he might shoot. Their fears were heightened by their suspicion that he was drunk. Moving quickly, one of the village men knocked the gun out of his hand. From a place of hiding, another fired a stone from his catapult at another armed policeman, striking him on the shoulder. The villagers stirred, moving their bows and arrows. To the police party, this was not only threatening, but frightening. The last thing they had expected was such a show of strength, especially against so many policemen. Abandoning the two rifles that had fallen to the ground, they retreated in confusion.

Shortly after this, the Deputy Collector, the second most senior government official in the district, who believed that all that was needed to placate the villagers was a more sympathetic approach, visited the village. He was accompanied by the Deputy Superintendent of Police, together with a large team. When the Deputy Collector reached the village, he met with a cold reception. Initially, nobody came out of the huts to meet him. This was very unusual for a Dangi village, where outsiders are an unusual phenomenon and tend to attract a large crowd. He asked one of the villagers who happened to be outside to call the others. Slowly, the others drifted in; but nobody brought a *khatla*, or bed, for him to sit on. Usually, for outsiders, a light wooden bed is brought out immediately, and covered with the cleanest rug available. Such a gesture is a sign of respect for the visitor, a statement that he is considered of status high enough to sit on a bed instead of on the floor, as the Dangis do. Finally, after he asked for it, a bed was brought; but no sheet was spread over it. Nor was he given any water, another item that is usually brought to any visitor immediately. Only after he asked for it was muddy water brought in a dirty tumbler. When he asked for cleaner water, he was told that this was the sort of water which the villagers usually had to consume, and he would have to drink it too if he wanted any. The villagers were quite aggressive, listing their grievances against the Forest Department and the government. Needless to say, his visit was a failure as an attempt to dampen the villagers' militancy.

The growing resistance drew on the Dangi moral economy, and their notions of right and wrong. In clearing the bamboo forests and claiming that it was a *junigavthad* or old village site, the Dangis were drawing on collective memories of how their ancestors had been driven out of the forests; and were making it clear that they had still not accepted the legitimacy of that act.²¹

After that, many other acts of resistance followed: the Dangis, it seems, would not submit to the oppressive acts of the Forest Department. This may be a very welcome development. But there is one curious and worrying feature: women do not now play a prominent role in the resistance. Why did women have such a low profile in the later stages? One important factor is the orientation of the Adivasi Bhumihin Kisan Hak Rakshak Samiti. While its leaders are not in any sense opposed to women's participation, they had established contacts largely with Dangi males. The involvement of women in their organisation has been rather low. Nor had there been a concerted and deliberate effort to involve women, despite the recognition of the fact that women must play a role. So even when women have participated, their action has not been adequately recognised, nor has it led to their playing a significant role in the local leadership. Women too have been cautious about getting involved, because those who had led the action at Gira-Dabdar were facing sexual harassment from the Forest Department.²²

The most crucial reason, however, appears to be the different nature of resistance involved in each case. The resistance at Gira-Dabdar was relatively spontaneous and unplanned. In contrast, the act of clearing forests was premeditated. Even the confrontations with officials such as the Deputy Collector were events for which the villagers had been prepared. In this, the actions moved into the Dangi 'public' sphere, an area which had traditionally been the domain of Dangi males. While both men and women practise quiet, everyday resistance against the state, women are more likely to remain confined exclusively to that sort of resistance. For them, the step involved in moving from passive to organised and premeditated collective resistance is a great one, for in doing so they move into a sphere in which men have long been dominant. This is reinforced by the fact that, in practice, most activist organisations ascribe to women a limited role. This has been the case over and over again in GVMAT too. While women workers and women leaders have often been involved in challenging oppressive situations at a local level, the male leadership and male workers take over once it becomes an organised action.

Even when women do take part in public action, their role is often not to transform the movement, but rather a case of strategic deployment which might even reinforce patriarchal values. From the point of view of the patriarchal leadership of many movements of oppressed communities in the Indian subcontinent, the participation of women in resistance helps to underscore the gravity of the situation.

This is because of the predominant image of women and children as passive and non-violent. Given this understanding, if women are driven to action, the situation must be grave indeed. And, if action is taken against this group of 'non-violent' participants, then it is a transgression of patriarchal norms, and gives a moral advantage to the resisters. This is a strategy which has been used by many activist groups in areas around Dangs.

In cases where women have acted together in organised political movements and played a dominant role, this seems to have been linked to the diverging interests of men and women. The most striking example is that of the Chipko movement, in which women have played a leading role. In the Tehri-Garhwal region, where the movement took place, men were migrant labourers, much more involved in the market economy, while women were involved with cultivation and the subsistence economy.²³ In this, men did not share the same interest in stopping forest exploitation, or preserving their rights in the forest, that women did.²⁴

One lesson comes across very clearly. Radical organisations working with oppressed groups need to pay conscious attention to involving women actively – and to recognising accurately women's existing involvement – if they are not merely to reproduce patriarchal structures. Otherwise, even in areas where men and women are fighting for common interests, it is all too easy for women to be assigned an unimportant, peripheral role. Organisations seeking to enhance 'development' must ensure that their own actions and structures do not become an additional constraint on women seeking justice for themselves and the wider community.

Notes

- 1 Data for this account are drawn principally from Government of Gujarat (1971). This paper has benefited from discussions with Ajay Skaria. I also thank him for permitting me to use some of the material he has collected, especially in the section on the moral economy of Dangs. I am grateful to Renee Pittin and Mona Mehta for their comments on an earlier draft.
- 2 My account of colonial Dangs is drawn from David Hardiman (1989), and Ajay Skaria (1992).
- 3 My understanding of scientific forestry and colonial forest policy is drawn from Ramchandra Guha and Madhav Gadgil (1989) and Ramchandra Guha (1985, 1983, 1990).
- 4 It is now being increasingly realised that ecological transformations need

- not take place only through denudation or deforestation. Alfred Crosby (1985) reports on the ecological reconstitution of the Americas and Australia, among other places. As the case of Dangs indicates, we must look closely at how ecological balance in such a region was affected by the colonial introduction of indigenous flora as monocultures. In west, central, and south India, teak was to be monocropped, while pine was made a monoculture in north India.
- 5 I also draw for my understanding of the postcolonial decades from Ajay Skaria (1990).
 - 6 Revenue increased from about Rs.12.5-15m to Rs.9.8.6m over this period (Government of Gujarat 1971:23); S.P. Punalekar (1989) also has useful information on Dangs.
 - 7 Government of Gujarat (1971:1).
 - 8 See Jan Breman (1978-79, 1985). For Dangs specifically, see D. Mehta (1982).
 - 9 James Scott (1976:3).
 - 10 I am not suggesting that there are no differences in the broader moral economy of men and women, or of Koknis and Bhils. Dangi women often operate with something similar to a 'moral economy'. There is a set of beliefs about the actions they could legitimately resort to under certain circumstances, such as deserting their husband, having premarital relations, etc. These beliefs are very crucial in their defence of their rights against male encroachments. But the moral economy that informs perceptions of the state, which is seen as outside Dangi society, is coherent, and not divided along gender or ethnic lines.
 - 11 For a similar account of name-calling, see Scott (1985:13-22).
 - 12 Many Dangi men are employed by the Forest Department in lower-level positions such as forest guards. These jobs carry enormous power within the Dangi context, and they are therefore much coveted. At the same time, the jobs are considered undesirable, because, as forest guards, they are often in conflict with relatives and fellow Dangis. It was this Dangi identity to which the women were appealing.
 - 13 The Forest Department and the Police did react, though a month later. A large party of police and forest officials descended on the village, including a policewoman this time. They arrested a man, the husband of one of the women who had played a major role the last time, on the charge that he ran away when he saw the party, the assumption being that it was guilt which made him flee. Though some women were present and actively resisted this, no attempt was made to arrest them. This seems to be connected to the patriarchal values of the state, as a result of which the role of women was not officially recognised: it was their husbands who had to be held responsible.
 - 14 James Scott (1985:1). In Dangs, of course, the war was not with an oppressive class but with an oppressive state.
 - 15 Emmanuel Konde (1990). In the Indian context, similar arguments have been used by elite historians to deny a role to peasant and tribal groups in their uprisings. Like colonial officials before them, these historians have described the uprisings as the result of manipulation by upper-caste communities. For sharp critiques of such approaches, see many of the

- articles in Ranajit Guha (ed.), (1981-89). Tanika Sarkar (1986:140) specifically criticises the elitist assumption that when tribals revolted they had been instigated by others to do so.
- 16 In general, women appear to have been more involved in messianic and evangelising movements within Dangs. Thus, for instance, the Pir movement, which cuts across conventional religious barriers, also has women among its principal adherents. Nor does this seem to be an entirely new phenomenon. David Hardiman (1987) also notes the participation of women in the Devi movement, which took place in Dangs and surrounding regions around 1917-20.
- 17 This was why the second search party was accompanied by a woman constable. She could act physically against women without inviting the charge of having violated their 'honour'. Other women, even when they are part of a repressive state apparatus, cannot in patriarchal ideology violate a woman's honour. Such patriarchal ideology will not, of course, always protect women. In December 1991, a woman was killed when police opened fire on a demonstration that Dangi villagers had organised to demand their land rights and to protest against Forest Department atrocities.
- 18 In the perception of male Forest Department officials, women 'use' their gender identity to protect themselves. As one Sub-Divisional Forest Officer complained, women, when caught illegally carrying away freshly lopped timber, would challenge the forest guards if they were in groups. And the guards, he complained, could do nothing, since
- it was so difficult to act physically against women without inviting complaints. This is possibly the case on some occasions, but it is much more usual for women to be harassed by guards.
- 19 I was not directly involved in the villages where the events narrated in this section took place. I have drawn therefore on conversations with other villagers, with one of the leaders of the Adivasi Hak Rakshak Samiti, and with other activists. I cannot be certain, therefore, of some of the details. I believe, however, that my account does not seriously distort any of the processes described.
- 20 The act was an inversion of the Forest Department's dominance. Often, forest officials abuse Dangs by calling them savages, people without intelligence – like cattle. When making the forest official eat grass, the villagers told him, 'You call us cattle. Now see how it feels to be like one yourself.' A similar incident had occurred around the same time in the neighbouring Pindival region of Bulsar district. Here a forest official who had committed atrocities in the village was waylaid when he was moving around alone one day, and was forced to eat human faeces.
- 21 The responses to the Deputy Collector were almost classic forms of the everyday resistance that Scott discusses. For other examples, see Scott and Tria Kerkvliet (1986).
- 22 The two women prominent in the action at Giradabdar have been victims of harassment even after the incident. Once, when one was travelling in a bus, lewd suggestions were made to her, and one person tried to sit in her lap. When she tried to avoid the group and moved to a vacant seat, she was beaten up. On

another occasion, she was subject to verbal abuse on her way to her daughter's school. Both times, the attackers mentioned her involvement in the Gira-Dabdar action. Similarly, the other woman was harassed several times by the lower cadres of the Forest Department.

- 23 See Henrietta Moore (1988) for a critical discussion of the assumption that capitalist development in rural areas leads to men taking to market- and cash-oriented activities while women take up non-remunerative subsistence production. In organising women, other gender-related conflicts also played a role. Thus, one element of the Chipko movement was women organising against the liquor shops in which men spent their earnings and got drunk, subsequently beating up their wives (Gopa Joshi and Sunderlal Bahaguna, 1984:125-33). In Dhulia district, which lies beside Dangs, the issue of men squandering their resources on liquor was again taken up by an activist organisation, the Shramik Sanghatana, and later led to women playing a role in organised political protest as well (Savara and Gothoskar, 1984:135).
- 24 See Joshi and Bahaguna (1984:125-33) for a discussion that brings out the differing interests of men and women in the Chipko movement.

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Gendering the millennium: globalising women

Haleh Afshar

Introduction

As the twentieth century came to a close in the West, the Muslims were three-quarters of the way into their fourteenth solar and in the first decade of their fifteenth lunar century. The ancient Persians would have been three-quarters of the way through their second millennium, and the ancient Chinese and Egyptians well into their third. Thus, as the differing conceptions of time move on in different places, it is worth looking at the vast distances that divide women across the globe, even as they are coming ever closer together in the global workforce.

The West is of course mesmerised by the proximity of the global village and the expanding links through the airways and networks that make communication a matter of an instant and help to create an almost unified world vision. But that vision is one that is firmly rooted in the West, and dominated by the Anglophones and their values. It has less and less time and space for those who fall outside its embrace. Hence, paradoxically, the ability to communicate may well have opened more avenues for misunderstandings, over-simplifications, and stereotypical conceptions of 'others'. Yet global communication could have created the global vision which would have shown the way forward for feminised employment. There were reasons to hope for the emergence of solidarity among industrial workers; the experiences of women working in the factories of transnational corporations mirrored the fragmented labour processes that had dominated the work patterns of the industrialised countries. But the relocation of some production processes to the home (Mitter 1986), and of other industrial processes to the Free Trade Zones (FTZs), created divides and competition rather than unity. Yet it would have been easy to see that, even for those who have been integrated into the global market, the twenty-first century does not seem to be laden with hope and peace. There is a continuous

erosion of rights and entitlements at the margins of the global economy; and an ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor that has not been helped by the relentless penetration of capitalism all over the world. The failure of modernisation and subsequently of globalisation has in turn helped to create a backlash and a return towards imaginary pasts that are extremely problematic – not least for women, who are both an important sector of workers in the global economy and also number significantly among the supporters of those who are returning to alternative views of the world, faith, and eternity (Afshar and Barrientos 1999).

To understand the ideological as well as the economic gap, and the reaction to its impact, we must move away from the blanket assumption that by the end of the twentieth century the world was no more than a global village with a considerable degree of homogeneity and integration. What requires analysis is not so much the premise, but the method of assessment, which uses the same tools and the same calculations in the hope of obtaining similar results. Many Third World feminists have long argued that it would be preferable to consider the specificities of situations (Afshar 1985). What I wish to address, however, is the interactions between the global and the local, and the divisions and counter-actions that have arisen directly as a reaction against the globalisation of cultures, values, moralities, and economies. Islamism in general and Iranian Islamification in particular are located very much at this juncture. Despite rising prosperity, undeniable economic growth, and rapid modernisation in the 1960s and 1970s, there has since been what may be called a ‘backlash’ in much of the Muslim world. This was seen by its participants as a ‘return’ to their roots and a ‘rejection’ of global capitalism and consumerism. This rejection has had the unequivocal support of a number of intellectual women who, in the knowledge of what feminism had to offer, chose the Islamic alternative (Afshar 1998; Karam 1998).

Globalisation

Globalisation is occurring in a complex world which has undergone rapid changes over the past decades. The entire concept of production has moved away from the ‘just in case’ model to the ‘just in time’ one (Mitter 1986), with women regarded as a flexible, mobile, and cheap resource, increasingly pulled into production lines that stretch from the smallest agricultural producers to the largest of world factories – all producing for a global market. The various analyses of this process

reflect the difficulties of coming to terms with its multidimensional nature and of containing it within the formal boundaries of theory and grand narratives. From a development perspective, much of the analysis of globalisation has been built on the overarching influence of the expansion of transnational corporations (TNCs) and the new international division of labour.

From an economic perspective, globalisation needs to be seen in the context of structural adjustment and stabilisation, which, through the policy of conditionality adopted by the IMF and the World Bank, have affected most developing countries over the past decade. These policies forced many countries into an economic and political straightjacket that would integrate them into the global process. The effect of these policies on women has been profound. As the consequences of structural adjustment have become institutionalised in the global development process, the coping strategies developed by women in times of crisis have now become embedded in their daily lives. These measures are far from simple, and the analysis must separate out the layers that make up the contradictory ways in which globalisation has affected women at different levels and in different countries.

Discussions of the advance of globalisation have on the whole concentrated on the industrial dimension, and the inability of capitalism to 'develop' equally. The main focus has tended to be on the specific localities where TNCs have operated, and on the specific effects of industrialisation and the increase of industrial employment for certain groups of women in developing countries. But the all-embracing tendencies within the process of globalisation must not be accepted without analysing its effects on non-industrial employment and economic activity, as well as on different political ideologies in different countries. Some analyses of global commodity chains have moved beyond industry as the main focus, and feminist writers have begun disaggregating the specificities of women's experiences (Afshar and Barrientos 1999). Globalisation has also been analysed from the political, spatial, and physical standpoint of uneven development. One view is to see it as a necklace connecting centres of consumer affluence to localities of production that are strung around the world, acting as links in the global chain (Amin 1997). This approach also takes a global view of the process of uneven development: a process in which the winners and losers are now distributed across the world, where the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, and the gendered wage gap is yet to close. Thus globalisation links 'world managers' to those whom

they manage and permits instant contact and immediate response to market needs (Frobel *et al.* 1980). It also creates both tele-communicative and electronic interactions that keep a permanently open window through which the élites may observe one another. The proliferation of satellite and cable communications also provides the masses with the voyeuristic opportunity to watch the rich at play on the large and small screens. The only benefits that result for the poor are more colourful dreams and aspirations, and moments of oblivion to ease their long days of work.

Revivalism

But the global peep-show has not resulted in universal enchantment with the West and its values. In many ways, the globalisation of work and poverty and the failure of paid employment to liberate women have accelerated disillusionment with industrialisation and modernisation, and helped to create a backlash against the West and its values. This is particularly evident in the Middle East. Women have been among the high-profile supporters of what has been called 'fundamentalism'; a word that was coined to explain a Christian phenomenon and which does not translate into Arabic or Persian. For Muslims, the movement is understood to be a radical revivalist phenomenon, returning to the sources to regain a better understanding of morality and probity, and to secure a return to a more human way of life.

There are large numbers of women who feel that Islam is inherently pro-women. They claim that much of what Islamic teaching is about is similar, though preferable, to what feminists have been asking for and not getting for more than a century, the world over.

It is such women who in countries like Iran, Egypt, and Turkey actively support Islamification (Afshar 1998; Gole 1996; Karam 1998). These are not ignorant or 'backward' so-called 'traditionalists'. Often they are intelligent, Western-educated intellectuals who have thought the problems through and have come to the conclusion that Islam may deliver what feminism has not, despite appearances to the contrary (Franks, forthcoming). They have engaged critically with Western feminist analyses of women and their positions within society and the family and they may reject some of the solutions offered by white, middle-class, Western women. They argue that a different and preferable form of liberation can be found by returning to the sources of Islam. In the post-modern deconstructing phase of feminisms, at the threshold of the next Christian millennium, it is possible to look

more closely at the arguments that these women present and without the blinkers of prejudice, whether male or Western or both. This is not an easy task when all too often women from both the East and the West tend to think of each other in the prejudiced, oversimplified terms popularised by the mass media.

Islamist women began expressing their concern about what they saw as the failure of Western feminism, which, after all the years of continuous struggle, has offered women the opportunity to be more like men. While academia ponders on the problems of masculinity, the workplace in much of the West continues to a large extent to work 'man-hours' and employ 'manpower' to 'man' the desks and the factories. But the labour market is no panacea. To succeed, women must be better than men, work longer hours, and be wedded to their jobs. Even then they cannot go far (Rahnavard, n.d.). Most women get drafted into badly paid, part-time, dead-end jobs. After all, they should think themselves lucky to get any pay at all for doing the same jobs that they do at home for nothing. The assumption is that their first priority is and should be their unpaid domestic work. In any case, sooner or later even those women who do succeed hit the glass ceiling. Taking this simplistic perspective, Islamist women argue that feminists fail as quasi-men and also fail as women. Much of this failure is because most women, world wide, choose to become mothers at some point, and most employers and governments brand them as mothers forever.

Islamist women have taken a position that can now be contextualised within the wider post-modern feminist analysis. They contend that the quest for equality has failed because it has not recognised the differences that exist between men and women, and the differences that exist between women of different classes, creeds, and cultures. They prefer the Islamic alternative that recognises that women are sometimes young, married, and mothers – and often old, freed of domesticity, and potential participants in the public domain (Afkhani 1995; Afshar 1994 and 1998; Ahmed 1992; Karam 1998). They argue that in their struggles to extract equal rights from men, feminists have fallen into the trap of becoming failed men.

Muslims, it is contended, need no such struggle, since the laws of Islam as stated in the Koran are God-given. Women are recognised as different and valued as such. They have non-negotiable rights to be paid as wives and mothers and to be respected as women. Since the inception of the faith, marriage in Islam has been a contractual agreement between consenting partners. No marriage can be

consummated without the payment of an agreed fee, *mehrieh*, to the bride. What is more, marriage does not have to be a life-sentence and an eternal prison. It is a contract that provides a way out for those who find it difficult, by making divorce legitimate. Of course, men do better when it comes to divorce. They have the unilateral right to initiate divorce. After all, even Islam is a patriarchal faith. Nevertheless, once marriage becomes a matter of formal contract, then women can stipulate conditions that make divorce far from easy. And it is not only elite women who can safeguard their marriages through the contract. Many years ago, when I was working in an Iranian village, a sad old peasant came to me for advice. He had married a difficult wife and was desperate to divorce her. But to do so he had to repay her *mehrieh*. Like many Iranian women, she had agreed the consummation sum but had deferred the payment until such time that the husband wished to divorce her. His difficulty was that she had stipulated that he should pay her a pillowcase full of flies' wings. The old man had been killing flies for nearly 40 years and was yet to fill the pillow!

A Muslim husband is also duty-bound to keep his wife in the style to which she is accustomed. Although 'kept', Muslim women do not lose their identity on marriage, nor have they ever lost their independent economic rights and entitlements. They have never become legal chattel and have always retained what is theirs. Although they inherit half as much as their brothers, Islamist women argue that what is theirs is theirs alone and that they are also entitled to have half of what is the man's.

Muslim women have for 14 centuries been legally entitled to inherit as daughters and as sisters. In addition, Muslims do not regard motherhood as an unpaid and de-skilling job. Muslim mothers must be 'maintained' and paid for suckling their babies. These are God-given rights that date back 1400 years. So while feminists in the West were fighting for wages for housework, which they are yet to receive, Iranian women instituted parliamentary legislation to ensure that they retain what is theirs: the *ojratolmessle* (Afshar 1998).

Even the much-derided polygamy is not always as terrible as might have been thought (Dennis 1991). The arrival of a second wife who assumes a domestic role may enable a first wife to concentrate on her own commercial activities.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that by the start of the twenty-first century Islamist women are returning to their roots, re-discovering Islam and demanding their rights. They are disillusioned with the

undifferentiated quest for equality. They present a different form of feminism: one that is rooted in a critique of the priorities selected by mainstream Western struggles for women's liberation. They argue that the road to success for women in the West is through their bodies. When something does not sell, when a drink, a car, even a credit card is to be foisted on to the unsuspecting public, the advertisers drape a half-naked woman around it and parade her across the screens, the walls, and the lamp-posts. Women have become part and parcel of the advertising process. But it is only certain women, the ones with the longest legs, the slimmest hips, the sexiest bodies, who can make the grade. Meanwhile, ordinary women the world over compare themselves with these stunning examples and 'fail'. So the liberation process has created an almost universal hunger for the beauty myth. Women are forever dieting, forever painting their faces, forever changing their hair colour, the colour of their clothes, the shapes of their eyebrows. Nor is there any space for them to grow old gracefully. The pursuit of youth and beauty creates generation after generation of anorexic, disillusioned women who punish themselves for not being beautiful enough.

Islamist women believe that there could be an alternative: women could choose to cover themselves. They argue that the veil, which is not an Islamic requirement, can help them become human beings rather than objects. They wear the veil to claim the gaze and to become the ones who observe the world. In a world where men set the fashions and standards, and where men take the photographs and make the films, the only way to subvert the process is to don the veil and become minds rather than bodies.

Of course, Islamification is far more attractive in theory than it is in practice. Women choose Islam because they feel that it liberates them, allows them to have proper life-cycles, and to be rewarded for what they do. Undoubtedly, there is such a thing as Islamist feminism (Afshar 1998; Karam 1998), but it must engage with Islamist patriarchies. All too often, Muslim men in governments fail to oblige. As soon as they come to power, they cover the women up and opt for polygamy (Afshar 1982); neither of which is, strictly speaking, a divinely sanctioned practice. Islamist women argue that the God of Islam was never misogynist, and that the laws of Islam cannot be changed by the wishes of the men. So when Islamist governments come to power, the long journey to gain Islamic rights for Islamist feminists begins.

Islamist feminism in Iran

The case of Iranian women over the past 20 years is a clear example of what the process can mean. Although women were at the forefront of the revolutionary movement, they were the first to be eliminated from all positions of power after the revolution. The preamble to the post-revolutionary Constitution clearly stated that men and women were not equal. The new government 'freed' women of the objectification imposed on them by Western-style liberalisation – by shutting them up in their homes. They were given the 'critical duty' of motherhood, and placed firmly in the bosom of the family. They became guardians of the family, which was declared to be the fundamental basis of the Islamic Republic (Article 10).

Having domesticated them by law, the theocracy began an enforced exclusion of women from the public domain. In March 1979, one month after his return to Iran, Khomeini sacked all female judges and ordered the compulsory veiling of all women. In May that year, co-education was banned. In June, married women were barred from attending school, and the government began closing down workplace nurseries. In July, seaside resorts were sexually segregated, and women were flogged in public for transgression of the new rules. Morality codes were imposed, and for the first time women were executed on charges of prostitution and moral degradation. By October, the government was dismantling the checks placed on men by revising personal laws; men regained the unreciprocated right to polygamy, to unilateral divorce at will, and the right to prevent their wives from entering into paid employment. The official age of marriage for women was reduced from 18 to 13 years, and men regained the automatic custody of their children after divorce.

Universities were closed for years to cleanse them of corrupt Western ideologies. When they were re-opened, women were excluded from most faculties. They were to be herded into appropriate feminine subjects, such as literature – but not art, which meant standing about in the dangerous outdoors and looking too closely at undesirable objects!

The way forward looked dark indeed. But it is at such times that Islamist women are glad to have inalienable rights given to them by the God of Islam. In Islam there are no intermediaries between people and their God. The religious establishment is respected for its knowledge, but is ascribed no sanctity. Thus women can, and do, legitimately set

about discovering the laws of God for themselves, without the help (or rather the hindrance) of male theologians and their teachings. No human being can legislate against God's wishes, and so for the past 20 years Islamist Iranian women have strenuously worked to prove that what men have been imposing in the name of Islam is not what God has decreed.

They have accepted the veil and thus become the public face of Islamification. But they have successfully used their own interpretations of the Koranic laws to regain access to almost all university faculties. They did so by demonstrating that Islam demands of all Muslims to be educated to the best of their ability. They have regained much ground in the judiciary and have made divorce and polygamy subject to rulings by the Family Courts. The reduced age of marriage is now being contested as a misunderstanding of what true Islamic teachings are about.

The successful battle for Islamic rights by women has had unexpected outcomes. Since they are the standard-bearers of the faith and the public face of Islamism in Iran, women demand their Islamic rights absolutely legitimately in the name of the faith and the revolution. It is hard to brand them as subversive oppositional groups. The élite Islamist women have emerged from the very core of the revolution; they are often closely related to leading theologians, and their arguments are always firmly rooted in the Koranic teachings. They are fighting for Islam. Nevertheless, what they are doing is opening up a path towards much greater participation by civil society in Islamic politics. They have created a legitimate form of opposition to draconian measures that cannot be easily denied by the theocracy. The need to gain internal legitimacy and establish an international credibility, particularly in the eyes of the Islamic Middle Eastern countries, has made the State gradually more responsive to women's demands.

Women have managed to demonstrate their centrality in Iranian politics. They are determined to extract a price for becoming the emblem of Islamification. They want to dictate the meaning of the Islam that their veiled presence has upheld: it is something to aspire to and something that accommodates their needs. They have refused to be brow-beaten by the more misogynistic of the religious leaders and have insisted that the revolution should pay them their due for both supporting it from the beginning and for becoming an exemplar to the rest of the Islamic world. Iranian women have constructed a

multifaceted Islam which is increasingly delivering what elsewhere could have been called feminist demands. Elite Islamist women have set up new standards in the light of the lives of the women of Islam at the inception of the faith: standards that the State has had to meet in order to live up to its own slogans and avowals of fairness and revolutionary concerns.

In the absence of organised political parties, Iranian women, both secular and religious, have found common cause and have acted as an important political force in the more recent elections. They have bridged the large gap that divides the believers from the non-believers, by fighting together for the cause of women. The road has been long and hard. But they remain indomitable. Despite Khomeini's opposition to female suffrage in the 1960s, after the revolution he and the post-revolutionary State recognised the valuable contributions that women had made to the cause and rewarded them by lowering the age of suffrage to 16 years. Women have used this right wisely. From the very beginning, the Islamic parliament, *Majlis*, has always had a few female representatives. In the 1990s, however, the women's vote gained momentum, and the women Representatives, who eventually increased to more than a dozen, managed to push through a series of laws that at least firmed up the ground and in some cases opened new opportunities for women. Throughout, the arguments for women's liberation have been couched in the language of Islam, and every demand has been backed by the relevant textual religious evidence. They have created a new, dynamic Islam, specifically suited to their needs. They have accepted that they are different from men, but have contested fiercely that in no way can that difference be interpreted as women's inferiority to men. Their arguments have been both scholarly and politically astute, and they have obliged many of the leading male theologians and politicians to reconsider their views and their politics. It is no longer acceptable publicly to denounce women as inferior. As the presidential elections of 1997 clearly demonstrated, those, like the contender *Nateq Nuri*, who ignored women or denied their rights lost out. Against the expectations of the theoreticians and the political architects of the revolution, Iranian women are now at the centre of the political stage. President *Ayatollah Seyed Mohammad Khatami* recognised this reality and in his inaugural speech, in August 1997, declared his commitment to furthering the cause of women in Iran. Eventually he gave a vice-presidential post to a woman, the first to have reached such heights since the revolution.

The struggle has been long and hard and the religious establishment has done its best to deny women's rights. But there have been some remarkable supporters among the Islamic scholars, such as Hojatoleslam Seyed Mohsen Saeedzadeh. One of the best revolutionary scholars, he teaches in the holy city of Qum. But the religious establishment, unable to silence women, has resorted to arresting Saeedzadeh. At the time of writing, he was under arrest awaiting trial by the religious courts!

So although Islamist women in Iran have managed to extract much from their government, they, in common with most women around the world, have not succeeded in breaking down the patriarchal power structure that rules over them. Even the laws of the God of Islam, who must be obeyed by all Muslims, have all too often been interpreted by men against the interests of women.

Challenges for feminists and development agencies

Nevertheless, Iranian women's relative success in their own country has posed some difficult questions for some feminists and developmentalists who wish to advocate for and facilitate – rather than impose – aid. It is relatively difficult to contextualise these changes within the dominant intellectual and economic frameworks. It could be argued that in the domain of politics the need to legitimise universal positions in terms of particular conditions has enabled women to re-construct the Islamic discourse radically and to carve out not only a place, but actually a central position, within both the theory and practice of Islamic politics in Iran. This specific trajectory, however, does not lend itself easily to mainstream analytical forms and, like much of the more recent fragmented feminist experiences, must be located firmly within its own historical and geographical context. For development agencies who have a commitment to empowerment and respect for diversity (Afshar 1998; Rowlands 1997), it becomes essential to move away from centralised uniform positions to differentiated ones that are formed according to the exigencies of time and place and the perceived needs of different peoples (Afshar 1985).

Thus, although globalisation has linked the world economically and has facilitated easier intellectual exchanges among the international intelligentsia, the gaps between cultures, histories, and millennia have not been bridged. But despite the wide disparities, what allows a degree of optimism is the ability of many women worldwide to recognise and accept their differences, while retaining their solidarity in the struggle against patriarchy – and maybe, even, masculinities.

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Stressed, depressed, or bewitched? A perspective on mental health, culture, and religion

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Mental illness, in its broadest sense, is one of the commonest afflictions affecting humankind. The World Bank report on health and development (1993), though criticised for the unreliability of some of its data, identified 'europsychiatric' disease as the second most important non-communicable cause of disability in the developing world (Blue and Harpham 1994). Of these diseases, depression was the single most important diagnosis. The report emphasises an aspect of health which is intimately related to a community's overall health status and development, and which has been ignored by development agencies and Health Ministries faced with the pressing priorities of communicable diseases and maternal and child health problems. However, it is impossible to separate the mental and spiritual components of health from physical illness, in particular when dealing with chronic illness and maternal and child health problems. It is likely, and desirable, that future health-related development work will, and should, include mental health among its priorities. With this future in mind, we focus in this article on the close relationship between mental health, culture, and religion. We hope to inform those who are involved in mental-health services in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) of the problems in simply translating concepts developed in the very different societies of Western Europe and North America (referred to as 'Euro-American' in this article), whence the bulk of development funds originate. Instead, we will attempt to highlight that community health problems and health-care delivery must involve understanding and assisting those with mental-health problems from within the context of the society in which one is working. Although we focus on SSA nations, owing to our personal experiences in Zimbabwe, we believe that much of what applies to these settings may also apply to other less developed countries.

The article begins with a description of what is meant by the term 'mental illness' and moves on to examining some of the ways in which culture and religion influence mental illness. We end with our views on how culturally appropriate mental-health services should be developed.

What is mental illness?

It is of great importance for all health and development workers to recognise that the term 'mental illness' does not refer to a homogeneous group of problems, but rather to a number of different types of disorders. It is even more important to recognise that although every society has people whom it views as being mentally ill, the use and construction of this concept may vary considerably from one society to another. The group of disorders most often associated with mental illness are the psychotic and affective disorders, such as schizophrenia and mania. There is little doubt that such severe disturbances, which affect virtually all aspects of a person's mental and behavioural life, are recognised in most cultures and societies in SSA (Patel 1994). It is this group of disorders which occupy so much of the time and expense of mental-health services in Euro-American societies, and for which psychiatric drug treatments have proven to be of considerable value. Despite the powerful evidence of a genetic role in the aetiology of these disorders, the environment plays at least as great a role in determining the course and outcome. For instance, schizophrenia seems to have a better outcome in developing countries, despite the fact that mental-health services are underdeveloped in these very settings. In other words, even though Europe and North America have extensive mental-health and social-welfare services, persons in those countries with schizophrenia fare worse than those in India or Nigeria. Recognising that the course of even the most 'medical' of all mental illnesses is so profoundly influenced by socio-environmental factors gives cause for concern for those who wish to recreate a mental-health service modelled on the Euro-American system of health care, without evaluating the possible therapeutic ingredients already existing in some SSA societies, such as the role of the extended family and traditional treatments.

Another group of disorders classified by Euro-American psychiatry as mental illnesses have been historically called 'the neuroses'. This group of disorders may be thought of as exaggerated forms of normal reactions to stressful events. Thus, anxiety, depression, and physical

symptoms in the absence of a physical disease are experienced by many people in response to stressful events; in neuroses these experiences become more intense and often out of proportion to the stressors (Gelder *et al.* 1983). Over time, such problems have been conceptualised as mental illnesses, not least because of the Cartesian dichotomy which has influenced biomedical thinking for over a century. This dichotomy holds that the body and mind are distinct, and although contemporary health practitioners are encouraged to consider the integrated role of both mind and body in their patients, if patients present with symptoms for which there are no corresponding physical signs or findings, many practitioners will conclude that they must be mentally ill. As psychiatry and its allied professions have evolved in the North, such vague and poorly defined illness entities have become reified into precise categories; the latest WHO classification of mental disorders includes no fewer than 60 categories of illnesses previously classified as neuroses, including phobias, anxiety disorders, and mild depressions (World Health Organisation, 1992). Neurotic disorders are the commonest group of mental illnesses and are particularly common in primary care and community settings; recent studies in Zimbabwe suggest that up to a quarter of clinic attenders may be distressed. In this paper, we refer to this group of problems as 'psychosocial distress', because, as we will discuss later, referring to them as a mental illness is fraught with conceptual problems.

There are several other areas of health problems in which psychiatry has claimed an expertise. Childhood problems such as behavioural disorders, abuse, and mental handicap; abuse of substances such as alcohol and drugs; mental disorders associated with HIV infection; and the psychological consequences of violence and trauma are some examples. While each type of disorder has its own unique characteristics, there are a number of common features such as, for example, the influence of adverse socio-economic events on these disorders as well. Thus, many of the general points made in this article would apply to these disorders.

Religion, culture, and mental illness

This is a complex area which has been of great interest to anthropologists, and more recently to mental-health professionals. Within the scope of this article, we will focus on some areas to illustrate how religious and cultural factors are intimately related to mental illness in the community. While we recognise that culture and religion are

complex and dynamic concepts, in focusing in this article on the relationship between mental illness and culture and religion, we have taken a unitary, and perhaps simplistic, view of these concepts.

Concepts of mental illness

The medical speciality of psychiatry has its roots in Euro-American professional views of mental illness. This is vividly demonstrated by WHO classifications of mental illness which, although purporting to be 'international', consign illness types described in non-Euro-American cultures to be regarded as either 'culture-bound' or not even worthy of recognition (Patel and Winston 1994). The commonest neurotic disorders, in this classification, are depression and anxiety. Patients in Euro-American societies increasingly understand that concepts such as 'depression' relate to a state of psychological distress. Over time, both the health worker and the patient acquire a similar explanatory model for the distress state. In many SSA societies, such disorders are recognised as being distress states but are not understood in the same way, i.e. the concepts used to understand and explain their causes and nature may differ widely. Thus, similar states of distress evoke recognition from local community and health workers in Harare, but the causes are closely linked to the interaction of social, economic, and spiritual problems (see later) afflicting the person (Patel *et al.* 1995). The same concept, semantically translated, can be elicited in this and other societies, but may mean something quite different; for example, rather than being viewed as a mental problem, it may reflect the patient's assessment of his or her socio-economic and spiritual state. The difficulties in translating even basic concepts are illustrated by this example. We attempted to translate an apparently simple question, asking patients about any previous history of emotional or mental illness. In Euro-American societies, a substantial proportion of persons would understand this to include depression, anxiety, or indeed many stressful situations which resulted in them consulting a health worker. In the Shona language, it was virtually impossible to translate this adequately without giving the impression that we were dealing either with 'madness' (and thus alienating most of our patients) or with 'stress' (which many of our patients experience, owing to adverse socio-economic circumstances). Although this is a seemingly trivial example, it represents the very heart of the issue of mental health and development. It is for this reason that we refer to neurotic mental disorders as psycho-social distress states. In many societies, then, such

states of distress are not viewed from a medical standpoint. If depression is not considered to be a 'mental illness' (as psychiatry understands it), then should we attempt to change the entire meaning of the term so that it conforms to the dominant Euro-American paradigm? Is there any evidence to suggest that the 'medicalising' of such distress states, as opposed to socio-spiritual models, has produced any significant benefit to patients? While recognising that the fundamental experience of a distress state is universal to all humans, we believe that the contextual meaning of the distress is of singular importance. Such meanings should be respected and understood, rather than referring to an imposed foreign model to explain the problem.

One area which illustrates the complex interaction of personal misfortune, religious beliefs, and cultural values is that of witchcraft. Although witchcraft is outlawed in many African societies, beliefs in its power remain alive, and sociologists have argued that such belief systems play a role in making misfortune understandable (Chavunduka 1994). From a Euro-American perspective, what does feeling bewitched mean? Can it be reduced to a psychiatric 'symptom'? Or is this belief a way that some communities have developed to explain why life has its difficult moments? Should the diverse, and unproven, psycho-theories of the North, such as psychoanalysis and general systems theory, be imposed on other cultures?

Idioms of psychosocial distress

Beyond these broad concepts is the issue of idioms used by people in psychosocial distress. A fundamental difference between mental health and physical health is that in the assessment of mental health one relies almost entirely on what a person tells the health worker. Language becomes the very essence of expressing distress, and emotional terms such as 'sadness' and 'fear' cannot be translated without examining the overall context of the use of these terms in a community (Lutz 1985).

Idioms, for example 'feeling sad', have over a period of time become professionalised by medical personnel into 'symptoms' and then taken one step further into becoming 'criteria' for diagnosing specific types of 'mental illness'. This process is intimately related to the historical evolution of conceptualising human distress in Euro-American culture. However, much mental-health research and development in SSA societies has assumed that the idioms of mental-health problems,

as defined in Euro-American settings, can be applied simply by a semantic translation of terms. The following examples show how this approach may confound the process of interpreting how psychosocial distress is manifested in different cultures.

The idiom of 'hopelessness' is central to the Euro-American model of depression, and questions such as 'Do you have hope for the future?' are often asked of the patient. However, in the context of Buddhist cultures in Sri Lanka, Obeyesekere argues that this deals not with 'a depressive, but a good Buddhist'. Thus, 'hopelessness lies in the nature of the world, and salvation lies in understanding and overcoming that hopelessness' (Obeyesekere 1985). In this context, then, eliciting the idiom of hopelessness would yield positive responses, but the contextual meaning of the term is very different. In the Shona language, the term for sadness is *kusuwa*. This term not only implies personal sorrow and grief but is also used in the context of describing an emotional state which is a prerequisite for sympathy, empathy, and reaching out for help and is, in this context, a positive emotion.

Another example is the spiritual experiential events which occur in many religious movements in African societies. Thus, hearing or feeling the Holy Spirit, feeling that the ancestral spirits wish to come out or express themselves, or sensations of being possessed by such spirits are not only commonplace among members of some religious groups but indeed are highly valued personal experiences. If a mental-health worker was unaware of the contexts of these experiences, she or he may consider them to be symptoms of a mental illness.

Priests, prophets, and psychiatrists: what do people do when in distress?

In Zimbabwe, religion is inseparable from health, and this relationship applies to both traditional and Christian religions. Let us consider the relationship of traditional medicine and religion first. Traditional medical practices of the indigenous people have a religious foundation which is based on the local views on the creation of humankind, the life cycle, concepts of growth and development, and the purpose of life in the Creator's scheme of things. In Zimbabwe, and many other sub-Saharan African societies, there are extensive beliefs in a spiritual world inhabited by ancestral, alien, clan, and evil spirits. These beliefs play an important role in guiding what people can do when they are distressed (Mutambirwa 1989). Traditional healers are recognised by many as being able to heal the sick by virtue of their intimate knowledge

of herbal medicines and their special ability to be possessed by or communicate with spirits. When seen in a Euro-American context, traditional healers assume many roles, including those of priest, legal adviser, social worker, and counsellor (Staugard 1985).

Christianity is the most popular denomination of organised religion in Zimbabwe. The origins of Christianity are historically tied to the colonisation of this region. Christian missionaries believed that traditional religion was pagan, and since beliefs in spiritual causation were inextricably interwoven with misfortune and illness, traditional medicine was also unacceptable. The repression of traditional beliefs by missionaries, in collusion with the colonial administration, led to large numbers of people taking up the Christian faith and being taught to shun traditional healers. Many Zimbabweans today claim Christianity as their main religion, but in practice many such Christians continue to believe in the power of witchcraft and of their ancestral spirits, seeing little conflict between these beliefs and official Church doctrine (Bourdillon 1987). Furthermore, Christianity is practised in this region in diverse ways, with a wide range of 'independent', Pentecostal, and Evangelical churches, some of which syncretise Christianity and indigenous religious beliefs. It is not uncommon to see charismatic pastors, in particular from the Apostolic churches, who assume the role of a spiritual healer and heal the sick with the power of the Holy Spirit, make prophecies for the future, and encourage the congregation to join in spiritual experiences, including trance states and speaking in incomprehensible 'tongues'. Interestingly, some of the Apostolic churches shun both biomedical and traditional medicine, relying instead on the prophets and faith-healers within their church for healing.

The dichotomy between biomedical and traditional approaches is rooted in the frequently held belief that biomedicine is superior when applied to physical and bodily aspects of health, by virtue of prescriptions of scientifically prepared medicines, operative procedures, investigations, and hospitalisations. On the other hand, traditional medicine and faith-healing are often viewed as providing a holistic health-care service. Thus, health problems associated with the physical body as well as the mind-soul and the social and spiritual environments are addressed (Chavunduka 1978). While psychosocial distress states have become medicalised and are increasingly treated by the growing legion of mental-health workers, ranging from counsellors to psychiatrists in Euro-American society, in Zimbabwe and many other SSA societies

these distress states are often inextricably linked to spiritual and social factors. In keeping with these beliefs, a significant number of people suffering from psychosocial problems consult religious leaders such as pastors, priests, prophets, and traditional healers in search of emotional relief.

Helping people with psychosocial problems

In Euro-American society, theories to explain personal distress have moved from the spiritual realms to the psychoanalytical realms and, more recently, to a host of new theories, including cognitive, behavioural, systemic, social, and interpersonal theories. Each of these conceptualises distress states or illness categories according to certain theoretical postulates, which are then extended to actual therapeutic interventions to alleviate the distress. Success with such a therapy is then used as a validator of the theory itself. One example of such a therapy which has gained prominence in Euro-American society is cognitive therapy, in particular for depressive states. Like many other contemporary approaches, it emphasises the personal responsibility of the patient in attaining the cure. Cognitive theory postulates that the fundamental problem in conditions which manifest as depression or anxiety is maladaptive thinking. The treatment is aimed at assisting the individual to recognise the maladaptive nature of their thinking and then to attempt to change this. This theory is firmly rooted in the introspective individualism of the North, and is in sharp contrast to the external models of distress prevalent in communities in SSA. To date, we are not aware of any studies attempting to evaluate the effectiveness of these psychotherapeutic models in SSA. Furthermore, it is well recognised that one of the most powerful predictors of response to psychotherapy is the 'congruence' or sharing of models of illness by therapist and patient, so that those patients who are 'psychologically minded' are the ones most likely to respond. We would argue that the same principle may be applied to other cultures, so that therapies whose theoretical models are congruent for patients and healers are likely to be successful, such as spiritual rituals being effective for spiritual problems. This, of course, would be at odds with trying to change the patients' view of their problems so as to suit an alternative, often imported model used by the therapist.

One example from Shona culture is the behavioural state of *kutanda botso*. This state, which is characterised by a person wandering away from his or her home dressed in rags and begging, may be seen to be

similar to the psychiatric category of 'brief reactive psychosis'. However, it is often a traditionally sanctioned ritual to cleanse a person who has committed a grievous social crime, such as striking one's parents. By adopting such a vagrant role, the perpetrator will absolve his or her misdeeds and correct the spiritual imbalance caused by his or her actions. Is family therapy superior to this form of traditional treatment? Or is the increasing use of 'therapy' as a judicial recommendation for persons who break social codes and laws, such as sexual offenders in the North, in fact an analogy to Shona sanctions?

Many imported models employ techniques which are not culturally acceptable to patients in other societies. For example, many patients expect to be told what to do to alleviate their distress, and the role of the silent facilitator, typical of some Euro-American psychotherapies, may be inappropriate in many counselling situations. This is clearly evoked by the *'guru-chela'* relationship between counsellor and patient described in India, in which the psychotherapeutic relationship mimics that between a teacher and student, with emphasis on the counsellor providing direct advice and guidance to the patient. Indeed, dependence on others in the Indian context is a desirable state of existence and does not have the negative connotation which it carries in Euro-American society (Saxena 1994).

Developing appropriate mental-health services

In the previous section, we have demonstrated some of the ways in which culture and religion are profoundly intertwined with mental health and illness. In this section, we consider how mental-health services may be developed in a manner which is culturally appropriate.

Most development activity in mental health imitates Euro-American models of illness and health-care delivery. These ignore the contextual meaning of such culturally defined terms and categories of illness and the role played by non-'professional' persons in the alleviation of distress. When seeking to fund or provide new services, agencies concentrate their efforts on creating new counselling positions, and on training counsellors in methods that have been developed in altogether different settings. All too often, this is done without examining what was already happening in the particular setting, as if persons with psychosocial problems were previously unattended to. Development activity catering for vulnerable groups of individuals, such as those suffering from HIV infection or refugees, identifies counselling as one of the ways of alleviating their distress. However, it

remains unclear whether this has involved working with the pre-existing network of 'informal' counsellors. In Zimbabwe, it appears that some of the counselling approaches mimic imported methods, such as systematic therapy, and employ counsellors with a professional background modelled on Euro-American health-care approaches. Only rarely does one encounter any published structured evaluation of what impact these counselling techniques have had on the life of the patient. It seems that this issue is often taken for granted, on the assumption that if it works in Euro-American society, then it must do so in other societies.

In this context, we wish to point out that 'cultural spectacles' affect not only Euro-American workers but also growing numbers of people in SSA, who by virtue of education and/or religion modelled on Euro-American societies are equally in conflict with the majority of their kin. For example, professional 'scientific' medicine has taken firm root throughout the world, and its practitioners in Zimbabwe, although themselves coming from a society with rich and extensive beliefs in ancestral spirits, will often suppress these traditional beliefs because of the dismissive attitude taken by what is historically a Euro-American discipline of health care. Such health workers, although integrated within the biomedical approach to health delivery, are not necessarily representative spokespersons for the community at large. An example of this is a recent epidemic of measles which led to the death of several children from a particular Apostolic church whose congregation shun biomedical treatment and immunisation. The bulk of the health-care policy makers and health workers were appalled by this apparent neglect by the parents, quite oblivious of the power of religion and culture in influencing treatment choices in Zimbabwe.

The close bonds between religion, culture, and mental health in many societies in SSA have important lessons for development and health workers involved in mental-health care. In attempting to provide mental-health services, including counselling, to any population, development funds should be targeted at what the culture finds acceptable and workable, rather than trying to recreate a Northern model. The first step must be to form a close understanding of the religious beliefs and social structure of the society and to investigate the pre-existing network of informal counsellors. Research into the nature and cause of psychosocial distress is an essential prerequisite to delivering services. Collaboration with local professionals with professional backgrounds akin to their Euro-American colleagues

must be extended to local priests, traditional healers, village chiefs, community workers selected by the community, and so on. For any mental-health initiative to be successful, it must reach out to the ordinary person and must be sensitive to his world-view. And most important, one must refrain from imposing an invalid foreign category, since this will only alienate the people whom it is meant to help. Thus, questions such as what the community means by mental health and illness, priorities in mental-health care, what the community believes are the ways in which such problems can be tackled, and so on need to be understood. Idioms of distress need to be generated from the language of the people, rather than simple translations from a foreign language. There is little doubt that there are 'universals', i.e. that many themes of distress are universal to humanity; but it is equally important to recognise those characteristics of distress unique to a particular community. Any intervention must be evaluated from the context of the individual and the health-care worker. New measures, such as the Shona version of the WHO Quality of Life instrument (Kuyken *et al.* 1994) and the Shona Symptom Questionnaire (Patel *et al.* 1994), may be used to evaluate counselling and other interventions for psychosocial distress.

The influence of religion and culture on mental health is being recognised in Euro-American society, where increasingly professionals are writing about the importance of recognising the spiritual dimension of a person's health (Cox 1994; Sims 1994). We would go further in stating that this dimension is of importance not just for mental health, but for physical states as well, in particular for severe illnesses (such as AIDS) for which medical treatments remain unaffordable, unavailable, or ineffective. These spiritual issues are rarely accessible to biomedically trained health workers; they should admit to this and allow open access to such patients by religious and traditional healers. This is already taking place in facilities for terminally ill and psychiatric patients in Europe and North America (Stephens 1994). Ironically, in those societies where spirituality and health are inextricably linked, health and development workers seem to resist or ignore this need for their patients.

Conclusions

Mental illness is a significant cause of disability in the developing world and has been largely ignored in health-related development activity. In many SSA societies, the impact of economic structural

adjustment in impoverishing the people, the breakdown of traditional community and family relationships due to urban migration, and the devastating effect of AIDS are likely to cause an even greater impact on the psychosocial health of individuals. There is abundant evidence that most of these problems are not adequately dealt with in government primary health-care settings. In such a situation, our most urgent message is that mental health should be firmly on the agenda of development activity. It is important to recognise that mental illness as defined in Euro-American society does not translate with the same contextual meaning in many African countries. Thus, what is often included as a mental illness is to be found in the broader realms of socio-spiritual problems which we prefer to refer to as psychosocial distress. Such distress is intimately related to a community's overall sense of well-being and development, to its economic strength, to the network of social and spiritual relationships, and to the indigenous health carers and religious leaders in that community. In delivering mental-health services, development activity should recognise these important interactions between mental health, culture, and religion.

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Responding to mental distress in the Third World: cultural imperialism or the struggle for synthesis?

Jane Gilbert

A review of a report from the World Health Organisation published in the *New Scientist* (14 September 1996) asserts that by 2020 mental illness will be the most 'debilitating affliction' in the 'developing' world. Mental illness has come to prominence because WHO is now measuring the disabling effects of diseases using the DALY (disability-adjusted life-year) index, which focuses on loss of health rather than on mortality. A new WHO report usually generates considerable publicity and 'popularises' particular aspects of Third World problems. It is thus highly likely that this will be the consequence of the current report. Increased publicity for any such problem is very likely to generate increased funding. This paper questions the input that the West has already made to psychiatry in developing countries (particularly in Africa), examines some of the complex issues involved in working in the field of mental illness in other cultures, gives some personal observations from individual experience in Africa, and suggests some basic principles which could minimise the likelihood of Western aid in the field of mental distress being yet another example of thoughtless cultural imperialism.

'The idea of Development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Its shadow obscures our vision' (Sachs 1992:1). Many workers in the 'aid business' are now questioning the very bases of the ideas about 'development' that have coloured the West's approach to aid since World War II. Those issues cannot be discussed at any length here, but Sachs (*ibid.*) gives an overview of the main areas of controversy. What seems difficult for Western countries to acknowledge is that, in spite of 'aid', the problems of Africa continue to multiply, and the gap between rich and poor countries is actually greater now than it was 50 years ago. Questions are increasingly being asked about the role of global institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF, and international

business corporations; and the deleterious effects on ordinary people of the imposition of structural adjustment programmes as a prerequisite for the transfer of aid can no longer be ignored.

Given the questioning of even 'straightforward' aid projects, what are the prospects that the West might contribute good work in the field of mental distress? Thoughtless dissemination of Western culture and ideology has caused devastation in both ecological and human terms in many parts of the world. What hope is there that 'help' in the mental-health field will be more sensitive and thoughtful?

Mental illness and ideology

Mental disorder is found and recognised in all societies. However, how it is manifested in individual behaviour, what people believe causes the disorder, and what treatment is considered appropriate vary tremendously among cultures. Although it has been found that some types of psychotic illness appear to have similar symptoms across cultures, other types of problem have been found to be 'culture-bound'. In other words, they are found in one particular culture only, and not in any other (Kirmayer 1989; Munford 1996; Patel *et al.* 1995; Witztum *et al.* 1996).

However, even when symptoms appear similar, *how* they are understood is totally dependent on the particular cultural context. In any culture, the predominant approach to mental illness is inseparable from the particular 'world-view' held by that society, the ways that are acceptable for making sense of human experience. Ideological issues cannot be discussed in depth here, but they are of paramount importance, as it is a particular world-view that is being systematically exported to Third World cultures, not simply value-free 'help'. (For a thorough analysis of the power relations involved in international 'help', see Gronemeyer 1995.) Although there may be dissent among professionals, the predominant Western model in psychiatry is the one used in medicine: the medical model. This has as its basis the classification of symptoms into particular diagnostic entities, the identification and labelling of those conditions, and the application of appropriate treatment, most often in the form of medication. The medical model is directly rooted in the West's emphasis on science as the preferred mode of understanding the world. Stemming from this medical model and scientific framework, a great deal of cross-cultural research in mental illness has been devoted to applying the West's classification system to other cultures in an attempt to validate a world-

wide 'universal' diagnostic system for mental disorder (Ben-Tovim 1985; Kirmayer 1991; Littlewood 1992; Patel and Winston 1994; Rhi *et al.* 1995; Sartorius *et al.* 1993; Weiss *et al.* 1995). In researching the literature, it seems surprising that this endeavour has been so persistent, in spite of increasing awareness of culture-bound syndromes and the reservations of many researchers who have attempted to use standardised classification systems (Edgerton and Cohen 1994; Littlewood 1992; Susser *et al.* 1995; Weiss *et al.* 1995).

'Our' kind of psychiatry: what can it offer?

Does the West's approach to mental illness and mental distress have anything non-damaging to offer 'developing' countries? In Western medicine, there is at least a broad consensus about the causation of physical disease and how it can be treated. Even though there is debate, it is generally agreed that people's bodies contain the same parts and work in the same way. However, there is far less consensus in the West about the treatment of mental distress. Many of its basic tenets, e.g. the biological basis of schizophrenic conditions, are completely rejected by other professional workers in the field (Marshall 1986; Boyle 1996). In mental-health services in Western countries, such fundamental disagreements are part of everyday life, even in the smallest psychiatric unit. Those being 'treated' and who are in distress often remain confused as to how to understand what is the matter, given the lack of a unitary model among professionals. The disagreements among professionals continue unabated and show little sign of resolution.

Given the fragmented and disjointed nature of psychiatry in the West, what seems to have been exported to developing countries so far? What might the contribution of psychiatry be in the future, now that mental health is on the international aid agenda? The literature contains many studies of the incidence of mental illness in developing countries, and of validating measuring tools, but there appears to be very little about specific ways of working and what is actually happening. In considering the question of what the West seems to have exported already, I will draw on my own limited experience in Africa, although I recognise that the situation in countries with which I am unfamiliar may be very different.

Personal observations

The primacy of the Primary Health Care (PHC) team as a model of care in developing countries is now well established. It is generally

recognised that providing health services in the same way as the West is neither practically nor financially possible. Thus it falls to nursing staff to work at village level, dispensing medicines, training village health workers (VHWs), conducting health-education programmes, and in fact operating as the essential foundation for all health services, including mental health. Thus it seems of paramount importance to consider their role and to review what kind of training they are receiving.

The Gambia

While I lived in The Gambia, I was asked to teach the 'psychiatry module' at the School of Nursing in Banjul. At that time (1991–1992), there was no psychiatrist in the country, and the medical input to the psychiatric in-patient unit was given by a general physician with no experience in psychiatry. The curriculum at the School of Nursing was taken directly from the UK, and that was what I was expected to teach. It seemed amazingly inappropriate in Banjul, and I was already aware that the vast majority of people with any kind of mental distress approached a *marabout* (traditional healer) before considering Western medicine. It seemed essential that I attempt to modify the curriculum to maximise the links between traditional approaches to mental illness and the Western model of psychiatry, as well as helping the students to research and integrate the belief systems of their own culture (Gilbert 1994).

Malawi

Perhaps the imposition of an inappropriate curriculum was only limited to The Gambia? In 1994 I visited Malawi. Again there was no psychiatrist in post in the country. The psychiatry module in the curriculum at the Medical School contained no references to traditional beliefs, and the staff at the single national mental hospital (one being most humanely run by nursing staff in very difficult circumstances) focused almost solely on the administration of a limited supply of drugs. Chancellor College offered the only degree course in psychology in Malawi, the content of which has been extensively described elsewhere (Carr and MacLachlan 1993). It seemed to me to be saturated by Western ideology, and arrogant and patronising in its disregard for the local culture.

In 1996 I was contacted for a general discussion by a psychiatrist in Bristol who was volunteering to teach the psychiatry module in the medical school in Malawi for six weeks. He had never been to Africa,

had very little understanding of the role of culture in mental illness, and no knowledge about the cultural beliefs in Malawi; he was intending to teach the curriculum that he was currently teaching in Bristol. It is worth considering how UK citizens would react if someone from another country arrived and proposed to teach psychiatry in that way.

Uganda

Maybe another country would be different! In 1995 I went to Uganda to research a possible innovative mental-health project for Action on Disability and Development (ADD), a UK-based aid agency. While in Kampala, I asked to teach the psychiatric-nursing students for a couple of sessions. In my discussions with them, the same appalling situation was revealed. While the students acknowledged and were fully aware that the vast majority of local people would always consult a traditional healer for any kind of mental distress, and that the causation of mental illness is almost always seen in terms of the supernatural, they were expected to leave all their understanding of their own culture 'outside the door'. There was no direct reference to their own culture throughout their three years of training. The head of the School of Nursing was aware of this anomaly, but stated that he had neither the choice nor the expertise to teach anything other than the required curriculum, i.e. the same as would be taught in the UK. When I asked the students how they would work in the villages when confronted with mental problems, they were uncomfortable and told me they would probably try to persuade people that their traditional views were 'wrong'.

Of course it is not like this in all African countries. In Zimbabwe, which I visited in 1995, great efforts seemed to be being made to acknowledge the place of traditional healers and integrate them into the health-care system (Patel 1995; Patel *et al.* 1995). There is also a somewhat belated recognition that this integration is essential for the newly emerging racially integrated South Africa (Freeman and Motsei 1992; Kale 1994; Straker 1994).

Belief and cure

It is generally accepted that a placebo treatment can make someone feel better if s/he believes it is going to help. In that sense, people's beliefs about what has caused their problem/illness and what is likely to help them get better is absolutely central to cure. Frank and Frank (1991) consider that what is viewed as an appropriate theory of illness and healing and the healing method itself are integral to any culture's

'assumptive world', i.e. the assumptions made by a culture to provide meaning and understanding of phenomena. In relation to mental distress, these fundamental assumptions supply the person with a conceptual framework for making sense out of chaotic and mysterious feelings, and they suggest possible remedies.

For many people in 'developing' countries, the 'assumptive world' of theories of illness and healing involves supernatural powers, their ancestors, or being bewitched in some way. There are mental states that may not have a direct equivalent in other cultures, and mental and bodily illnesses are far less clearly delineated than in the West. If this assumptive world is accepted and understood, then it is clear why the powers of a traditional healer would be considered essential for the treatment of mental problems. Frank and Frank (1991:101) state that 'naming something is the first step towards controlling it', but that that 'name' has to be something which has meaning within someone's underlying assumptive world, otherwise it is actually meaning-*less*. Any understanding of illness is completely embedded within a particular society's ways of making sense of the world. Thus the West's medical-model approach to mental illness will most often be considered as irrelevant in 'developing' countries, as the understanding of mental illness in terms of spirit-possession would be considered irrelevant within a Western scientific framework.

Characteristics of healing

However, in spite of enormous cultural differences, certain characteristics of the process of healing seem to be common to all societies. The elucidation of such parallels would seem to be the foundation of any attempts to formulate non-damaging help. Thus Frank and Frank's (1991) features of the healing relationship are outlined in detail. Any healing relationship within any culture would seem to include the following:

- An emotionally charged, confiding relationship with a helping person (often with the participation of a group).
- A healing setting.
- A rationale, conceptual scheme, or myth that provides a *plausible* (my emphasis) explanation for the patient's symptoms and prescribes a ritual or procedure for resolving them.
- A ritual or procedure that requires the active participation of both patient and therapist, and that is *believed by both* (my emphases) to be the means of restoring the patient's health.

A very clear case study detailing all of the above can be found in Schreiber's (1995) description of attempts to treat an Ethiopian woman who had recently arrived in Israel. He describes her initial somatic presentation of seemingly acute asthma attacks. The woman also described hearing voices telling her 'bad things' and said she had a 'snake in her leg'. She was diagnosed as suffering from an acute psychiatric episode and treated with medication. There was no improvement after a number of weeks, and Schreiber describes how it later became clear, after many discussions with someone in her own language, and his own consultations with an anthropologist, that she was suffering a complex bereavement reaction after the death of her baby during the journey to Israel. As she had been unable to perform the culturally appropriate cleansing ritual after having had contact with a corpse, the woman and her family considered her to be 'unclean'. After considerable research into what would be appropriate, healing finally took place through an Ethiopian traditional healer who, in conjunction with her family, organised a traditional purification ritual in the River Jordan.

This illustrates how the woman's physical symptoms were initially misunderstood through using a Western model which was not appropriate for making sense of her emotional distress. Schreiber's own capacity to put aside his initial diagnosis, and his struggle to discover a more appropriate cultural paradigm with which to understand, are crucial. Healing eventually took place because the treatment made sense within the Ethiopian woman's 'assumptive world'. She *believed*, because of her own cultural belief system, that she was 'unclean' and that the correct purification ritual would help her. It was administered by someone whom she trusted and who shared her belief in such a treatment. Thus, healing finally took place.

Principles of good practice

'Development aid is not an exact science: to date it has been riddled with misunderstandings, failed experiments and discarded theories ... one of the most damaging aspects of the aid industry has been the tendency of donors to impose their own theories of what constitutes development on the recipients' (Slim and Thompson 1993: 10). What principles could guide Western 'aid' in the sphere of mental health so that it could be constructive, sensitive, and relevant, rather than simply another exercise in cultural imperialism?

Listening

Although 'listening' may sound an obvious principle with which to begin, it does not seem to happen automatically before 'aid' is 'delivered'. 'The act of listening demands respect for the speaker ... It needs the human skills of patience, humility, willingness to learn from others and to respect views and values that you may not share' (Slim and Thompson: 3). Bennett (1996) describes 'oral testimonies', for example, gained by listening to Sudanese mothers' beliefs when attempting to implement an immunisation programme for their children. Unsurprisingly, aid workers who spent time listening discovered that the mothers' beliefs about what caused disease directly affected their understanding and acceptance of the programme. Thus, in mental health it would seem essential as a first step in any kind of intervention to understand local beliefs about the causation of mental illness.

The role of indigenous language is crucial to this process. Not only is there a central commitment to accept the idiom of the speaker, but it has also been found (Gilbert 1990, 1995, 1996; Munford 1996; Patel *et al.* 1995) that some words describing mental distress in other languages are literally untranslatable into English, and that some English words describing common mental states in the West—for example 'stress', 'anxiety'—have no equivalent in other languages. A person's 'sense of self' has also been shown to be radically different in different cultures, and this has profound effects on cognition, motivation, and the expression of emotion (Markus and Kitayama 1991). However, through a very careful and thorough listening process, it could be possible to understand how mental distress is seen within a particular culture.

If listening were considered the fundamental guiding principle, then devising ways of integrating traditional and Western approaches becomes the next task, given that each can learn from the other.

Integration in training

Workers who have taken the trouble to listen carefully to the diagnostic systems of traditional healers have discovered far more common ground than would at first appear (Eisenbruch 1990, 1994; Gilbert 1995; Patel *et al.* 1995). Traditional healers make clear distinctions between drug- or alcohol-related conditions, family problems, psychotic conditions, neurotic problems, and epilepsy. The aetiology and treatments may be completely different, but the differential diagnosis is almost identical. It seems to me that this kind of

understanding could form the essential bridge between Western psychiatry and the psychiatric student's own cultural background, thus preventing the systematic abandonment of indigenous knowledge and practices.

Integration within the health-care system

There is no doubt that some traditional practices, such as cutting the skin, are dangerous to the patient and increase the risk of other infections. In addition, traditional healers also sometimes interpret symptoms as resulting from personal or collective wrong-doing; thus some of their treatments may contain elements of personal punishment. I consider that there are Western practices, such as excessive use of drugs or ECT, that are also harmful to patients. If one took the view that any help within the field of mental distress needs to maximise what is helpful and minimise what is harmful, then perhaps the beginnings of a working synthesis might be established.

In many 'developing' countries, people who are suffering from a psychotic disorder are often kept in chains because of the fear of their uncontrolled behaviour. (I have seen this in both The Gambia and Uganda.) Such psychotic conditions are often responsive to Western medication. In the Mbabara Mental Health Programme in Uganda (Van Duyl 1995), collaborative working with traditional healers has progressed to such an extent that it has been generally agreed that if the traditional healers cannot cure someone with a psychotic illness within two weeks, then the person will be brought to the psychiatric ward. The psychiatrist has also agreed that those who present as out-patients and seem most in need of 'psychotherapeutic' approaches will be referred to a traditional healer. Regular meetings with traditional healers are now established, although unfortunately the continued funding of this project is uncertain. This close and mutually respectful way of working recognises the suitability of Western drug treatments for some types of mental distress, but this treatment takes place within the context of appropriate cultural understanding, and in conjunction with traditional types of support.

This would seem to form the basis of an excellent way of working, but obviously can occur only if sufficient mutual trust, respect, and support can be established. This programme was set up by a particular psychiatrist, but traditional healers are not yet officially integrated into Uganda's health services.

Concluding comments

McCulloch's (1995) review of the history of Western psychiatry in Africa clearly reveals how it was completely entwined with the ideology of colonialism, i.e. the supposed superiority of Europeans over indigenous African peoples. Psychiatry in Africa reinforced and supported the colonial enterprise and was developed using the model of asylum already established in Europe. Thus there are still many asylums in African countries which were built in the early twentieth century and which are still often the mainstay of psychiatric services, for instance the Zomba mental hospital in Malawi, and Butabika hospital in Uganda.

However, even though African countries are now politically independent, colonial attitudes are still often pervasive, albeit more subtly, through the dominance of the Western market-economy ideology and the influence of global corporations on local politics. Traditional ways of living have often been undermined and devalued, as the ethos of Western materialism and economic growth is promulgated as the only way for countries to 'develop'. Thus, millions of people have left the land and their traditional ways of life to seek work in the cities, resulting in the disintegration of existing family and community structures. Harpham (1994) and Harpham and Blue (1995) outline clearly how increased exposure to Western influence and the adoption of urban lifestyles results in an increasing incidence of mental illness. Interestingly, this association had already been documented back in the 1950s (McCulloch 1995).

The content of the psychiatric nursing curricula in the African countries I have visited seems to suggest that cultural imperialism is still operating within the teaching and application of psychiatry. By presenting the Western medical model as the only approach to psychiatric problems, local beliefs and traditions are implicitly devalued. Thus, people (such as the student nurses) sometimes become 'ashamed' of their own cultural beliefs and reluctant to admit to the role that these play in their lives. Understandably, nurses may then experience great conflict when working in villages where traditional beliefs are completely accepted and the traditional healers are considered the major source of healing.

The incidence of mental illness in Third World countries is likely to continue to rise as exposure to Western ideology increases, and traditional social structures gradually disintegrate. If 'help' for mental

distress in 'developing' countries is to be relevant and sensitive to local cultures, it is imperative that greater efforts be made to achieve working syntheses across very different 'assumptive worlds'. My own experience of designing a model for the teaching of psychiatry to student nurses which attempted to integrate both Western and traditional approaches of mental illness, and the close collaboration being achieved by the Mbabara Project in Uganda, show that such working syntheses are possible. It would be tragic if increased funding for mental-health projects simply furthered subtle cultural imperialism, rather than addressing the immense challenges of listening, recognising, and valuing difference and diversity, seeking parallels and similarities across different methods of healing, and actively working to establish co-operative, culturally appropriate, mutually respectful ways of collaborative working.

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Research into local culture: implications for participatory development

Odhiambo Anacleti

Subjects or objects of development?

People in Africa are rarely asked what kind of development they want. They have always been the *objects* of various models, although these have rarely increased their supplies of food, or improved their state of health. Indeed, the poor in Africa have rarely been considered to be humans in their own right. They have always been the ones whom others would like to see changed, whether through Christianity, civilisation, research, or development projects. They are seldom thought to have a religion, a culture, or even a trading system of their own. They have to be initiated in all of this. They have to be helped, assessed, and given aid.

If the hope of a more equitable order is to be realised, attitudes towards the rural sector and rural people in developing countries need to undergo radical changes. It must be recognised that the rural sector (which is referred to here as 'local') has a dynamism of its own which does not have to be explained by comparison with, and in contrast to, external events and history. Rural people have their own concept of development, and have always been engaged in some kind of exchange of material goods and ideas with the outside. This already gives them a perception of the merits and demerits of such exchange. Such perceptions do not depend on how the world perceives and defines the concepts — but instead on how those concepts actually affect them.

Rural development must be seen as a process by which rural people avail themselves of an opportunity to upgrade their way of life, moving from mere strategies for survival to challenging the physical and social environment in which they find themselves. It is a process which enables them to become aware and to analyse the constraints to which they are subject. It is also a process that gives them access to the resources required for removing such constraints; and which

acknowledges their right to plan and control their destiny in accordance with the resources available to them. To create equity, it must be appreciated that people, including rural people, do not wish others to define their needs for them. They can do it for themselves.

To recognise this implies a change in attitudes towards development; and, in turn, a need for information to identify the underlying causes behind the continued subservience of the rural sector to the towns and cities. Such information will provide the basis for creating alternative solutions to critical problems in the developing countries. This is the only way open to us to reverse the extreme economic difficulties of the last three decades, which have had such devastating effects on the development potential of African rural people, and so undermined their political, economic, and cultural integrity — and even their identity. Collecting such information entails research into existing systems and institutions, and the possibilities for using these as the stepping stones towards development relevant for the people.

Why research into local culture?

We might question why anybody should recommend more research, given the amount of information available on practically every aspect of our lives! After all, increasing knowledge about the ‘developing’ countries and their poverty does not seem to have provided solutions to it. Is it because the information is irrelevant? Or is it because the solutions proposed are the wrong ones? Whatever the reason, I tend to the view that the researchers are asking the wrong questions.¹

Community development is a process — and a rather slow one. It will be even slower if development agencies ignore Julius Nyerere’s dictum that ‘People are not developed, they develop themselves’.² But for people to develop themselves, they have to be convinced that the changes envisaged will not be a mere experiment with their lives, but will actually mean a change for the better.

People participate in what they know best. At present, and for the foreseeable future, at least 70 per cent of Africans will continue to be rural and semi-literate. Their knowledge will continue to be parochial, but specific to the realities of their daily lives. Most of this knowledge will continue to be transmitted through tradition from one generation to another. The tradition will continue to be guided mainly by cultural principles and values. Hence the need to study local culture as the starting point for dialogue about people’s development and their participation in bringing it about.

Practically all rural communities still cherish their culture, as manifested by their traditional knowledge, skills, values, customs, language, art forms, organisation and management systems, and institutions: these are what have enabled them to survive as communities in a physical and social environment that is sometimes very hostile. It seems obvious that research should be focused on developing this culture. The tendency, however, has been towards finding alternatives to what people already have, rather than identifying where the inadequacies lie and improving on them. It is no wonder that communities often respond negatively when they are expected to implement the research findings of development theorists: it often seems to them that the proposed solutions would alienate them from the very culture which they value.

It is ironic, but true, that colonial governments were more conscious of this than independent governments. Colonial officials were very aware of the importance of knowing the culture of the people, presumably reasoning that if they did not control people's cultural behaviour, they would never rule them. Speculation aside, they did quite a lot of work in trying to understand the native systems, and even applying them in day-to-day administration. One such example is Hans Cory's study³ of the Kuria of Tanzania's Tarime district, which was used in establishing the system of chieftaincy that transcended the traditional clans, and is still in use today. As one Tanzanian Regional Commissioner told me: 'The colonial DC travelled more miles per year in his district than the current Tanzanian DCs do in their Land Rovers.'⁴ This gave the colonial authorities a close insight into the culture of local communities, which they would then apply in organising their rule over the people. Could the current administrators not imitate this?

The success of any effort to do so would depend on two factors. First, understanding people's culture requires some degree of humility on the part of the researchers, since they are required to confess ignorance about the subject of their research. Many would-be researchers fear exposing their ignorance of the specific systems. It is easier, after all, to assume that all rural areas are similar, and that whatever is true for rural Malawi will apply to rural Kenya.

The second factor militating against research into local culture is the assumption by indigenous researchers that because they are natives, they already understand the culture. These people forget that their socialisation process in their own communities was not completed,

because of the short spans of time they spent there once they began attending school. Besides, being indigenous usually limits the kinds of question they may ask, as they will be supposed by the communities to know the answers already. Being indigenous can be more of a hindrance than a help to cultural research; and the researcher needs to be conscious of this fact.

*I know you do not know what I know, but why do you not want to know that I too know what you do not know? You may have quite a lot of book knowledge, but I still believe that the anus does not teach the mouth the sweetness of food.*⁵

Such was the exasperation of Mzee Joel Kithene Mhinga of Buganjo village in northern Tanzania, expressed after a long discussion in which I was trying to prove to him that he had got his historical facts wrong about the genesis of the Baganjo clan. It reminded me of another argument I had heard in a workshop held in Dodoma to train traditional birth attendants. The village women were protesting at being called ‘traditional’ and ‘attendants’. They were wondering why the formally trained midwives wanted to monopolise the word ‘midwife’, when they were sure they had delivered more live children than any nurse present there. As a compromise, they agreed to be called ‘traditional midwives’, provided that the hospital midwives agreed to be called ‘pen midwives’.⁶

It is not often that rural people will express themselves so candidly. But the truth remains that the traditional knowledge which has enabled the communities to survive has often been ignored in preference to book learning. Researchers and development agents have presumed to know the inner thinking and behaviour of illiterate rural people, even when they do not know enough. And because they fail to understand what rural people know, they tend to compensate for this with something new, rather than proving the inadequacy of the existing knowledge, systems, and institutions. Local knowledge has been undervalued for too long — to the detriment of the development of the rural people and their countries.

Although history has proved that alien ideas imposed on people always end in failure, there is still great faith in the imposition of development models, supposedly successful elsewhere, on other people without their consent. This happens despite people’s resistance to such imposition. We should reflect on the example of Minigo village in Tarime district, Tanzania, where in 1986 the men refused an offer

of manually powered grinding mills because (according to the Chief) 'it would make their wives lazy'. In fact, what the village was trying to convey was the fact that they felt that the time of manual grinding mills had passed. They were hoping that if they refused them, then the donors would give them a diesel-powered grinding mill which would not only help the women but would also bring revenue to the village.

For people to participate in decisions that affect their lives, they must start from where they are and with what they know. What most people know is their own culture and values. Hence in order to liberate people from imposed, impractical, and often unproved systems and institutions, they need to be involved in integrating those systems into their culture, in the search for alternatives within their cultural milieu.

The relevance of participatory development

'Participatory development' implies development which involves all the people, especially those whose basic needs and aspirations are affected by decisions about the availability of resources and entitlement to such needs. Participatory development, therefore, includes equitable sharing of the control, division, and use of the resources and of the ultimate benefits of development in a community. It also involves taking responsibility and being accountable to the community at all levels. This will be just wishful thinking if the decision-making structures remain alien, bureaucratic, and elitist. Rather, the structures must be made more comprehensible and acceptable to the people. The best way of doing this is to look at existing cultural systems and integrate the decision-making structures into them.

In 1973, the Tanzanian government decided to settle its population in villages. The aim was to make Tanzanians live like a traditional African family which 'lived together and worked together', to achieve the objective of building 'a society in which all members have equal rights and equal opportunities; in which all can live at peace with their neighbours without suffering or imposing injustice, being exploited or exploiting; and in which all have a gradually increasing basic level of material welfare before any individual lives in luxury.'⁷ If the plan had been implemented properly, it would have come very close to achieving what is implied by participatory development. What actually happened was that cultural implications were not taken into consideration. There was no local research to find out what forms of working together were still in existence, and how they fitted into a pattern in which individuals were producing their own individual cash crops.

The type of 'Ujamaa' living envisaged would have been possible only under the communal system of land ownership which was no longer extant in Tanzania. An examination of the way in which people had adopted and organised new patterns of land ownership would have helped to increase the social and economic acceptability of the whole operation. As this was not done, it was no wonder that 'villagisation' was regarded as coercive behaviour on the part of the government, in its attempt to show that it ruled over (rather than belonged to) the people. This is a good example of a situation in which concern for and awareness of people's culture and customs would have gone a long way to achieving participatory change. No wonder that people are now going back to their old homesteads and re-creating their own structures. What a waste!

Involving people in discussing their own development, and arriving at decisions, leads to an understanding of why engagement in the whole process of problem-solving is necessary to bring about lasting and worthwhile change. The current process is that researchers and development agents claim to be representatives of the people, on the arrogant assumption that their particular techniques are the exclusive domain of trained academics and elites. This ignores the fact that they depend on local people to achieve their goals.

People, in the last analysis, are the repository of local knowledge. In order to help them to develop, they must be enabled to tap that knowledge. The best way to do this is to help them to extrapolate from what they know best: their culture. In doing so, they will be able to relate their deeply felt aspirations to the surrounding social reality. This connection is so rarely made by development agents that people are usually seen as just another resource for development, rather than the subjects of their own development.

Notes

- 1 An idea that was explained very well by Michael Edwards, in his paper 'The Irrelevance of Development Studies' (mimeo 1979).
- 2 J.K. Nyerere: *Freedom and Socialism* (Oxford: OUP, 1978).
- 3 This study, written in 1948, is stored in the Tanzania National Archives.
- 4 P. Syovelwa, visiting Hadzabe village, 1979.
- 5 Personal communication with Joel Kithene, 1979.
- 6 Workshop for Traditional Birth Attendants, Mvumi Hospital, 1986.
- 7 Nyerere, op. cit.

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Some thoughts on gender and culture

Maitrayee Mukhopadhyay

In an article which appeared in *Development in Practice*, Volume 5, Number 3, Mike Powell raised many issues about subjective perceptions, mainly those of 'outsiders' who interfere in cultures they do not fully understand. Such dilemmas have implications for 'insiders' as well as 'outsiders', because all development practitioners are in some way intervening in processes of social transformation, and are involved in the business of allocating resources.

I want to explore the issue of gender and culture: areas where the ways in which development practitioners understand and intervene in a situation can further entrench gender-based inequality, or demonstrate the possibility that such inequalities are open to challenge.

In India, I operate within my own society and culture, and so am an 'insider'. But in my work for gender equity, I have often experienced allegations from different quarters that this is against our culture, violates our traditions, and (the worst criticism of all in the Indian context) that it is 'Westernised'. It is common for gender and development practitioners to be labelled in this manner, though the precise allegations may differ from one place to another. Gender relations are viewed as among the most intimate aspects of our cultural traditions, and challenging them seems to challenge the very basis of who we are.

In 1984, I published a book about women and development in India, and undertook a publicity tour in the United Kingdom. Among many presentations I made, the most memorable for me was at the Pakistan Centre in Liverpool. Most of the predominantly male audience were from India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh.

The discussion that followed my talk was lively, to say the least, and abusive at its worst. My book criticised the Indian model of development for working against women's interests, and Indian society for its treatment of women. I was initially taken aback by the reaction, until it dawned on me what was happening. The Indians, Pakistanis, and

Bangladeshis had united (leaving aside, for the time being, their bitter differences on the sub-continent) in a vigorous defence of culture and tradition: a tradition which respected its women, a tradition which was protective of its women, and one in which women were the centre of families which, in turn, were collectivities of co-operation, love, and sacrifice. In fact, they were drawing a simplified picture of gender relations which amounted to a fiction of a monolithic, timeless culture: an immutable, 'South Asian' culture.

I had offended my audience, first by 'turning traitor' to my own culture, and raising doubts about women's position in Indian society. Secondly, I had done so in a Western country which they had decided to perceive, in the interests of preserving their own separate cultural identity, as a culture full of 'loose' women, and broken families.

There was a sequel to this experience: a Pakistani woman followed me out of the hall, and thanked me for my presentation. She had been working with Asian women facing domestic violence, ever since her daughter committed suicide, unable to endure further harassment and torture in her marital home.

I am often asked, usually by expatriate development workers, whether by intervening on women's behalf we are upsetting the gender roles and relations characteristic of the culture. The fear that we may be imposing our own cultural values by promoting gender equity in our development work is a real one. However, it is real largely because we allow our own culture-based assumptions about women to colour our response to alternative visions of gender equality. And we fail to recognise the everyday forms of resistance put up by subordinated groups, because these do not correspond to our experience.

If gender relations are equated with the most intimate aspects of our cultures, and if culture and tradition are assumed to be immutable, rather than the site of resistance from subordinated groups, gender relations soon become a 'no-go area'; and allocating resources in order to redress the imbalance of power between men and women is made politically difficult.

But cultures are not fixed or immutable. Contests to 'fix' the meanings of social entities take place all the time, leading to changes in social practices. Development practitioners have to take sides in those contests which help to dismantle hierarchies of gender and class. By failing to recognise that these are going on, and listening only to the voice of the powerful in society, we are in fact taking the side of the fundamentalists, who render religion uniform throughout the world by

enforcing traditions of hierarchical gender roles and relations, and presenting them as unchanging and authoritative.

There are no hard and fast distinctions between the material world and the world of ideas, values, and beliefs. We must work at both levels to bring about the changes that are supposed to be the purpose of development. I end with a plea for development practitioners to use culture as a way to open up intractable areas of gender relations, and not to regard it as a dead end which prevents us from working towards more equitable relations between women and men.

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Resources

An enormous amount has been written on both development and culture(s), although much of the latter has tended to address development issues from an anthropological or ethnographic perspective, or from a concern for disadvantaged minorities or threatened ways of life; and a considerable amount of the former appears not to take cultural matters into account at all. While there has been a growing awareness of the complex intersections between the two fields, particularly since the World Decade for Culture and Development, most of the recent literature focuses on the cultural dimensions of development, rather than the developmental dimensions of culture.

We have sought here to reflect the current direction of the debate, and specifically to highlight writers and organisations that, in the words of Amartya Sen's paper (delivered at the World Bank Tokyo meeting on 13 December 2000), view culture not just 'as a constituent part of development and its basic ends', but as a means to understanding and achieving a form or forms of development from which people can draw meaning and fulfilment in their lives.

This resource list was compiled and annotated by Nicola Frost and Deborah Eade, Reviews Editor and Editor respectively of Development in Practice.

Books

Simone Abram and Jacqueline Waldren (eds.): *Anthropological Perspectives on Local Development*, London: Routledge, 1998.

Contributors focus on local-level experiences of domestic development projects, charting the reaction of local communities to interventions planned and implemented from outside. Drawing on case studies from Europe, Asia, and Africa, the book highlights the elements of conflict in responses to development, and shows how members of a given community can hold competing views.

Haleh Afshar and Stephanie Barrientos (eds.): *Women, Globalization and Fragmentation in the Developing World*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999.

The impact of globalisation on the lives of women in developing countries has been both dramatic and deeply fragmented. Flexible employment patterns have drawn many more poor women into the labour market, while male migration has led to a sharp rise in the number of female-headed households. In some cases these changes have created opportunities for empowerment and independence; in others, women have had to deal with family tensions and a repressive backlash against female participation in formal employment. This book explores these issues, with case studies from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Frédérique Apffel-Marglin with PRATEC (eds.): *The Spirit of Regeneration: Andean Culture Confronting Western Notions of Development*, London: Zed Books, 1998.

Founded in 1987, PRATEC (Andean Project of Peasant Technologies) brings together a group of Peruvian development specialists from non-élite backgrounds to consider the problem of the failure of a development practice dominated by Western epistemologies and ideas. Contributions reflect their broad multi-disciplinary approach to attempting to insert an understanding of Andean peasant reality into the practice of development, something they feel cannot be done from within the professional ethos and constraints of the development industry. This book presents PRATEC members' attempts not only to articulate something of peasant practice, but also to expose the ethnocentrism embedded within the development paradigm.

Frédérique Apffel-Marglin and Stephen A. Marglin (eds.): *Dominating Knowledge: Development, Culture, and Resistance*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Contributors take the perspective that indigenous systems have a cultural and ecological cohesion and harmony which is largely ignored by development strategies that are based on the supposedly objective superiority of science and modernity. They ask whether the 'problems' of development are the result of flawed indigenous strategies, or whether they can be traced to the way in which the development project has thus far been conceived and defined. The challenge is to find ways of increasing well-being without destroying valued ways of life. Contributors include Arjun Appadurai, Tariq Banuri, and Ashis Nandy.

Joanne R. Bauer and Daniel A. Bell (eds.): *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Contributors ask whether there can be a more sophisticated approach to the question of human rights than either a Western definition of a 'universal' code or the claim of an authoritarian régime to non-Western values. With reference to East Asia, this book argues that non-Western peoples can contribute positively to the development of international human-rights principles, despite significant constraints deriving from both these positions. The editors note that the impact of economic globalisation on poor people has resulted in very similar social problems on both sides of the Pacific, and that the recognition of this mutuality, and a desire for co-operation, could have a beneficial impact on approaches to human-rights policy.

Lynda S. Bell, Andrew J. Nathan, and Ilan Peleg (eds.): *Negotiating Culture and Human Rights*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

One of several recent titles to grapple with the problem of universalism versus relativism through an examination of the debate about Asian values in relation to human rights. The contributors represent varying viewpoints, but the general consensus is a cautious 'yes to universalism', with numerous caveats. One contributor argues for the universality of moral reasoning, while another warns of the dangers of a homogenising 'West and the rest' attitude to cultural diversity.

Deryke Belshaw, Robert Calderisi, and Christopher Sugden (eds.): *Faith in Development: Partnership Between the World Bank and the Churches of Africa*, Oxford: World Bank and Regnum Books, 2001.

Providing insights into the spiritual dimension of poverty, this collection of papers is taken from a conference organised by the World Bank and Christian leaders in Africa, which was intended to explore paths for greater collaboration, especially at a grassroots level. Contributions explore themes that include corruption, gender, micro-enterprise, and health.

John Boli and George M. Thomas (eds.): *Constructing World Culture: INGOs Since 1875*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

The editors begin from the suggestion that international NGOs (INGOs) are one of the missing links between global social construction and more micro levels of organisation, policy, and mobilisation. They analyse the growth of the INGO sector, its influence on shaping global development, and ask 'not only how global actors go about their business, but how and why they define their business as they do'. Contemporary world culture defines actors as rational, self-interested, and capable of initiative, who will be empowered by political participation and economic expansion. Conversely, innovators are seen to shape their institutions through their actions. The book looks at the principles and models of 'world culture' in a historical perspective and demonstrates an increasing tendency towards top-down 'structural isomorphism', resulting in a uniformity of goals, using similar resources, which increases conflict.

Abdin N. Chande: *Islam, Ulamaa and Community Development in Tanzania: A Case Study of Religious Currents in East Africa*, San Francisco: Austin and Winfield, 1998.

An example of a detailed local-level study, tracing the history of Islamic leadership in an East African town, and examining the Muslim community's responses to the challenge of modernity. In particular, it examines the relationship between religious organisations and the state, and the effect of the broadly conservative outlook of the Islamic leadership in this context.

Emmanuel M. Chiwone and Zfikile Gambahaya (eds.): *Culture and Development: Perspectives from the South*, Harare: Mond Books, 1998.

Based on papers from a conference held in Zimbabwe in 1997, this collection represents a range of thinking from Southern Africa on the theme of culture,

which is viewed as the context of all social issues, and as an often-ignored yet critical influence on development. The contributions emphasise the importance of 'premissing social change on ideas and perceptions that derive from specific cultural situations'. Papers consider topics that include indigenous languages and literature, the role of institutions in development, and the impact of mass media on local cultural sustainability.

Christopher K. Clague and Shoshana Grossbard-Shechtman (eds.): *Culture and Development : International Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2001.

This issue of the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (volume 573) presents a varied collection of papers, exploring connections between economic development, political participation, and culture. One article examines the role of institutions in promoting the integration of culture in development planning to ensure lasting democracy in developing countries. Others consider the link between political participation and health in India, and the causes and consequences of corruption.

John Clammer: *Values and Development in Southeast Asia*, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Pelandak Publications, 1996.

Despite impressive economic growth in South East Asia before the recent crisis, poverty reduction, pollution, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources continue to cause problems. Attempts to explain these failures have frequently focused on values, whether the relationship of religion to development, or a concern with the dominance of Western concepts of development. Clammer argues that values are the foundation of social and economic development, and expands the conventional notion of development to bring currently peripheral matters such as culture, religion, and ethnicity into the mainstream.

Nat J. Colletta, Teck Ghee Lim and Anita Kelles Viitanen (eds.): *Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention in Asia: Managing Diversity through Development*, Washington: World Bank, 2001.

This collection begins with a desire to avert further intra-state conflict in Asia, through ensuring more equitable benefit from economic development. It asks questions about the role of the state in managing diversity, be it ethnic differences, or urban/rural variations, and looks at ways of developing new forms of social capital to combat the breakdown in social cohesion. Contributions give both internal perspectives and the viewpoints of development practitioners looking in from the outside.

Emma Crewe and Elizabeth Harrison: *Whose Development? An Ethnography of Aid*, London: Zed Books, 1998.

Drawing on detailed case-study material from two aid agencies, one official and one non-government, the authors explore the many assumptions made about culture in their policies, programmes, and interactions with the intended beneficiaries. They describe how the cultural actualities of race, class, and gender mediate and are mediated by development practice and the exercise of power.

Denis Dwyer and David Drakakis-Smith (eds.): *Ethnicity and Development: Geographical Perspectives*, Chichester, UK: John Wiley, 1996.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, ethnic identities and ethnic conflict have become increasingly prominent. The discipline of Development Studies has been slow to respond with new theoretical and practical perspectives that would replace the traditional view of ethnicity as an obstacle to development with a more engaged and pragmatic approach. This book contributes to a rethinking of the relation between ethnicity and development, through a series of case studies and overview articles. It emphasises an awareness of the spatial dimension (in particular the relation of people with territory) as critical in effective development planning.

Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Suri Prakash: *Grassroots Postmodernism: Remaking the Soil of Cultures*, London: Zed Books, 1998.

The authors chart the emergence of new social movements, and their operation as vehicles for regenerating local cultural spaces. They argue that, far from being swallowed up by a hegemonic global culture, which is dominated by Western-inspired notions of human rights and development, the 'social majority' is challenging entrenched modernist intellectual frameworks and reviving the concept of community. The nature of culture and local action is engaged with on a theoretical level, combined with examples from the *zapatista* movement, and the activities of international financial institutions.

Katy Gardner and David Lewis: *Anthropology, Development and the Postmodern Challenge*, London: Pluto Press, 1996.

The relationship between anthropology and development has been a close but uneasy one. This book is a useful introduction to the points of conflict and similarity. It examines what an involvement in development might mean for anthropologists' historical commitment to minimising their impact on the people with whom they work. It also explains how development theory and practice could benefit from an anthropological perspective, and avoid many of the pitfalls of development initiatives conceived without a thorough understanding of local culture.

R. D. Grillo and R. L. Stirrat (eds.): *Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives*, Oxford: Berg, 1997.

Treating 'development' as a problematic concept, this book aims to examine the relationship between the various actors involved, and understand ways in which discourses of development are generated and perpetuated. Contributors highlight the apparent presence of an authoritative voice (the 'development gaze') in many development contexts, which constructs problems according to criteria that resonate with themes currently in vogue in development agencies. The editors however warn against a strictly monolithic conception of developer and developed, as has been displayed by numerous critics: this model fails to allow for the multiplicity of collaborations and examples of North–South exchange.

Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah (eds.): *The Myth of Community: Gender Issues in Participatory Development*, London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1998.

This book examines the intersection of two major streams of development thought: gender and participation. It begins by noting the relative failure, contrary to widespread assumptions and intentions, of participatory approaches to development to be socially inclusive: 'many participatory development initiatives do not deal well with the complexity of community differences'. The rhetoric of participation can obscure women's priorities and constraints, reducing the chance of equitable development. The book urges practitioners to integrate gender awareness into participatory practice, to enable a less naïve notion of community to emerge.

Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (eds.): *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Contributors ask why some countries and ethnic groups are better-off than others, why the divide between rich and poor is growing, and why people in some countries live under oppression and fear, while others enjoy greater freedom. The book examines the role of culture and cultural values in influencing national economic, social, and political performance.

Sharon Harper (ed.): *The Lab, the Temple and the Market: Reflections at the Intersection of Science, Religion and Development*, Bloomfield CT: Kumarian, 2000.

This collection examines the interface between the world-views of science, religion, and development. Contributors consider these relationships from the perspectives of Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, and the Baha'i faith.

Mary Ann Hinsdale, Helen M. Lewis, and S. Maxine Waller: *It Comes From the People: Community Development and Local Theology*, Philadelphia PA: Temple University Press, 1995.

Telling the story of community renewal in a rural US town through interviews, photographs, and scenes from a local theatrical production, this book explains how the process of rebuilding and economic development uncovered a growing consciousness of cultural and religious values. The book also provides a frank exposition of the difficulties faced by outside researchers working with local people.

Antony Hooper (ed.): *Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific*, Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2000.

There is a lively tradition of discussion and debate about issues of culture and development in the South Pacific region. Often culture, tradition, and identity are counterpoised against such concepts as development, rationality, and good governance, with development initiatives frequently seen as responsible for the impoverishment of local culture. This book discusses ways to resolve these contradictions so that access to improved welfare and amenities does not mean the death of tradition. Contributors write about natural-resource management, handling social issues, and the potential of tourism.

Deepak Lal: *Unintended Consequences: The Impact of Factor Endowments, Culture, and Politics on Long-Run Economic Performance*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1999.

Deepak Lal is an economist who has written widely on problems related to development and eurocentrism. In this historical study of why the East stagnated after its burst of creativity hundreds or thousands of years ago, he focuses on cultural factors. More recently, Lal argues, it is possible to explain Asian economic success in conventional economic terms, without reference to Western cultural values. See also: *Culture, Democracy, and Development* 1999; *The New Cultural Imperialism: The Greens and Economic Development* Occasional Paper, New Delhi: Liberty Institute, 2000.

Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd (eds.): *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1997.

This collection takes a critical approach to 'transnationalism' as a theoretical framework for understanding social practices. It argues that, although anti-colonial, anti-racist, or feminist struggles are ubiquitous, they generally take place in local sites, and have widely varying forms and bases which are not addressed by post-modern concepts of globalisation. Transnational capitalism tends to commodify everything and therefore to collapse culture into economics; culture becomes politically important when the logics of culture and economics clash. The book aims to identify alternatives to capitalist development. Case studies include civil rights in the USA, feminism within Islam, and Latin American insurrection movements.

Mahmood Mamdani (ed.): *Beyond Rights Talk and Culture Talk: Comparative Essays on the Politics of Rights and Culture*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000.

A collection of comparative essays from India, Africa, and the USA, considering different aspects of the tensions between cultural politics and social justice, and especially the often difficult relationships between individual and cultural freedom, and between both of these and global discourses of human rights.

Marjorie Mayo: *Cultures, Communities, Identities: Cultural Strategies for Participation and Empowerment*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000.

Aspects of culture and identity are increasingly recognised as being important to communities and to those who work with them. But the basis for identity is changing: a 'community' is as likely to be linked by religion or gender as by locality. This book explores some of this variety, and includes examples of strategies to integrate culture into plans for community political participation and economic development in both the North and the South.

Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (eds.): *Women, Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.

A successor to the 1993 *The Quality of Life*, edited by Nussbaum and Amartya Sen, this collection focuses on the cultural traditions that impair women's quality of life. Most contributors argue that neither an imperialist attitude, nor a cultural-relativist position, is helpful in analysing the problems of women and working towards

creative solutions. This collection builds on the 'capability' principle developed by Sen as a way of assessing quality of life, a principle that owes as much to philosophy as economics.

Susan Perry and Celeste Schenck (eds.) *Eye to Eye: Women Practising Development Across Cultures*, London: Zed Books, 2001.

Starting from the premise that development is not something apart from daily life, but is embedded in every aspect of it, the editors bring together essays from a wide range of feminists – international femocrats, academics, NGO workers, lawyers, writers – who explore the role of the World Bank in promoting gender equity, the relationships between NGOs and religious ideologies, attitudes to harmful traditional practices, and the importance of literature. The volume makes an inspiring contribution to thinking about development and culture, and grounds theory in practice in an original and lively way.

Gilbert Rist: *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* London: Zed Books, 1997.

In this volume, this Swiss scholar examines the nature of the persistent faith in the potential of development, despite all evidence to the contrary. He traces the history of the development paradigm as Western myth, from colonialism to Truman and Rostow, and on to the era of 'human development'. Rist argues that the way forward is to begin to dissolve this naïve belief, not merely through economic argument, but through examples from history and comparative anthropology. See also *La culture, otage du développement?* Paris: Harmattan/EADI, 1994.

William F. Ryan: *Culture, Spirituality and Economic Development: Opening a Dialogue*, Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1995.

How can human values and belief systems be properly integrated into the modern economic development paradigm? The author examines this problem through reflections on a series of interviews conducted with people from various disciplines and backgrounds. It is suggested that a new universal paradigm would not be helpful – rather, what is needed is sensitivity to various world-views, and awareness of their interdependence.

Baidyanath Saraswati (ed.): *Interface of Cultural Identity and Development*, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1996.
Integration of Endogenous Cultural Dimension into Development, New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1997.

These two volumes arise from several dialogues on cultural identity and social change initiated by the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts. *Interface* catalogues findings from studies from throughout rural India. *Integration* takes the discussion further, and looks at how indigenous cultural knowledge can be integrated into development projects, while avoiding a process of cultural alienation. Case studies are from South East and East Asia as well as India.

Susanne Schech and Jane Haggis: *Culture and Development: A Critical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

Aiming to ‘pull culture out of the shadows in development studies’, this book provides students with a wide-ranging introduction to new ways of thinking about the issues. Drawing on recent work in cultural studies, the book critically examines how ‘development’ itself operates as a cultural process. It argues that the entrenched association of development with modernity and anthropology with culture has been partly responsible for the inappropriate nature of development initiatives, and that development institutions and practices are inevitably caught up in a web of cultural presuppositions, values, and meanings.

Ismail Serageldin and Joan Martin-Brown (eds.): *Culture in Sustainable Development: Investing in Cultural and Natural Endowments*, World Bank, 1999.

The report of a conference jointly sponsored by the World Bank and UNESCO, this collection offers a variety of pieces (keynote speeches, commentaries, and seminar summaries) from a broad range of participants. Sessions considered the contributions of women, the relationship between national culture and sustainable development, and the role of economics. In his summary, Ismail Serageldin notes the importance of conceiving of culture as not only cultural heritage and material legacies, but also culture as lived today – that which makes life meaningful and binds society together.

Amy L. Sherman: *The Soul of Development: Biblical Christianity and Economic Transformation in Guatemala*, Oxford: OUP, 1997.

This book explores the influence of religious conviction (in this case evangelical Protestantism) on economic and political behaviour, and particularly on prospects for development. Beginning with an overview of the culture and development literature, it concludes that world-views do matter, and that orthodox Christianity in Guatemala correlates with perceived development-enhancing practices more closely than do syncretic folk beliefs and Mayan animism.

Tracey Skelton and Tim Allen (eds.): *Culture and Global Change*, London: Routledge, 1999.

Recognising the influence of culture on development policy and implementation requires an understanding of the assumptions surrounding the concept of a globalised culture. Contributors to this comprehensive collection underline the ethnocentrism of the development paradigm, and the resultant tensions for development NGOs responding to forces in both North and South. Other sections consider instances of resistance and the role of religion. Contributors include Peter Worsley, Hazel Johnson, and Jeff Haynes.

Selo Soemardjan and Kenneth W. Thompson (eds.): *Culture, Development and Democracy: The Role of the Intellectual*, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1994.

A tribute to the Indonesian statesman and social thinker, Soedjatmoko, this collection brings together theoretical, regional, and national perspectives on the

role of intellectuals in promoting development without compromising national and individual political and cultural freedom through the dictates of foreign donors. Contributors address questions such as the 'culture free' presentation of technology in development models, and whether intellectuals are more guardians of tradition than champions of development. Case studies include the experience of Latin American intellectuals, and the Indonesian national context.

Caroline Sweetman (ed.): *Gender, Religion, and Spirituality*, Oxford: Oxfam, 1999.

Why have considerations of faith and spirituality been left on the margin of development research, practice, and policy, not only by 'mainstream' development but also by many gender and development workers? This collection argues that the dismissal of a critical area of human activity has had negative implications for economic and social development in general, and for the attainment of equality for women in particular. Contributors explore the complex relationships between culture, religion, and feminism from both within and without spiritual contexts. See also *Women and Culture*, 1995.

Vincent Tucker (ed.): *Cultural Perspectives on Development*, London: Frank Cass, 1997.

This collection first appeared as a special issue of the *European Journal of Development Research*. It asks whether cultural analysis has anything to offer development studies, and whether indeed culture can provide a new paradigm for development, or merely muddy the theoretical waters. The papers therefore constitute a critique of current development thinking, while warning against the reversion to an idealised notion of 'local' development. It is suggested that ideas from social theory, such as network theory and the ethnography of institutions, could help to develop clearer concepts of social processes and how development initiatives interact with them.

Thierry Verhelst: *No Life Without Roots: Culture and Development*, London: Zed Books, 1990.

Written in the midst of NGO development activity, and published during the UNESCO Decade of Culture and Development, Verhelst's examination of the Westernising power of development is now a classic. The book argues that those involved in international development project their culturally alien aspirations, theories, and experiences on to 'beneficiaries' who may have different aspirations, or different means of achieving them: 'happiness does not have a universal flavour and the means of pursuing it may vary'. The book concentrates on the activities of NGOs and asks why 'indigenous traditions', which could form alternative, more culturally appropriate social models for development, are often seen as negative and backward – candidates for transformation or elimination.

N. N. Vohra (ed.): *Culture, Democracy, and Development in South Asia*, Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2001.

This collection brings together contributions from 23 participants from all over South Asia to share perspectives on the 'Asian values' debate, to consider whether

some cultures are more conducive to development than others, and to ask why South Asia has remained plagued by poverty since independence.

Bret Wallach: *Losing Asia: Modernization and the Culture of Development*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

In this account of the aesthetic cost of modernisation in Asia, the author argues – with reference to personal experience and historical record – that, rather than follow a Western model of agricultural development in the race to develop, Asia must become wealthy enough to be able to preserve its traditional countryside – its ‘cultural landscape’. Attacking the long-prevalent utilitarian thinking that has driven development policy, Wallach warns that much of the ‘science’ of the environmental movement furthers a similar agenda.

D. Michael Warren, L. Jan Slikkerveer, and David Brokensha (eds.): *The Cultural Dimension of Development: Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1995.

This volume contains 46 papers, from a range of disciplines, including anthropology, geography, and agricultural sciences. It brings together accounts and experiences of the potential of indigenous knowledge to contribute to development planning and implementation, and makes a strong case for local knowledge to be valued and respected by outsiders.

Sarah White and Romy Tiongco: *Doing Theology and Development: Meeting the Challenge of Poverty*, Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1997.

Asserting that the connection between theology and development is critical, and that political and religious values together help to form our world-view, this book looks at attitudes to world poverty from within the Christian tradition. The authors argue that development is impossible unless the developers get to know the poor.

Richard Wilson (ed.): *Human Rights, Culture and Context: Anthropological Perspectives*, London: Pluto Press, 1997.

This collection of anthropological writing makes links between the increase in ethno-nationalist conflict and political violence, ideas about culture, and the activities of human-rights organisations. It traces the often difficult relationship between local cultural politics and the idea of universal human rights. Case studies come from Guatemala, Hawaii, and Mauritius.

World Commission on Culture and Development: *Our Creative Diversity*, 2nd edn., Paris: UNESCO, 1996.

‘Is “culture” an aspect or a means of development?’ asks a quotation from the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins at the beginning of this report. The report argues that culture must be seen as an integral element in human development, not a series of ‘factors’ to be taken into account. Development involves not simply access to goods and services, but the opportunity to choose a fulfilling and valuable social life. This book is a manifesto for a universalist approach to rights and ethics, combined with a principle of cultural pluralism. The report recommends

action to promote and deepen the discussion and analysis of development and culture, to encourage peace, and enhance democratic participation for all.

Journals

Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal: published twice yearly by Curzon Press, ISSN: 0143-8301. Editor: Malory Nye.

Aims to promote critical investigation into all aspects of religion and culture across a range of disciplinary fields including anthropology, cultural studies, critical theory, gender studies, and postcolonial studies.

The Development Anthropologist: published by the Institute for Development Anthropology.

Explores the relationships between economic development and anthropological theory, and considers ways in which anthropology can be of practical use to development planners and implementers.

Development in Practice: published five times a year by Carfax, Taylor & Francis on behalf of Oxfam GB. ISSN: 0961-4524. Editor: Deborah Eade.

A journal of practice-based analysis and research concerning the social dimensions of development and humanitarianism, which acts as a forum for debate and the exchange of ideas among practitioners, policy makers, and academics worldwide. The journal seeks to challenge current assumptions, stimulate new thinking, and shape future ways of working. Web: www.developmentinpractice.org

Ethnicities: published quarterly by Sage, ISSN: 1468-7968. Editors: Stephen May and Tariq Modood.

Aims to explore the interconnections between sociology and politics, and between culture and socio-economic structures in a global context; and to add a new and distinctive dimension to the academic analysis of ethnicity, nationalism, identity politics, and minority rights.

Journal of Human Values: published twice yearly by Sage India, ISSN: 097 16858. Editor: S. K. Chakraborty.

Acts as an international forum for the exchange of ideas, principles, and processes concerning the application of human values to organisations, institutions, and the world at large; and, since many operational human values are culture-specific, the journal also addresses the historico-social origins and cross-fertilisation between cultures.

South–South Journal of Culture and Development: published twice yearly by the National University of Lesotho, ISSN: 1595-0298. Editor: Dr Innocent V. O. Modo.

Taking the broadest approach to African culture and relating it to all aspects of development, this journal makes some interesting connections and associations. Contributions are drawn from many disciplines, including history, social sciences, politics, and health.

Organisations

The **British Council's** Arts and Culture for Development strategy has led to increased collaboration between the organisation's development and arts specialists. It sees arts and cultural activities as a means for empowerment and participation, as well as a way of celebrating diversity, and encouraging economic development. Address: 10 Spring Gardens, London SW1A 2BN, UK.

Email: <general.enquiries@britcoun.org>. Web: www.britishcouncil.org/

Centre for the Study of Culture and Society is concerned with understanding culture, and specifically Indian culture, as encompassing the diverse attempts of people to produce meaning of various kinds. It grew out of a response to the failure of 'orientalist' or social-science frameworks to deal adequately with questions of gender, caste, community, and ethnicity, or with contemporary transformations and political mobilisations. It offers courses and organises various events as well as undertaking and publishing research. Address: 466, 9th Cross Madhavan Park, 1st Block Jayaganar, Bangalore – 560011, India.

Email: <admin@cscsban.org>; Web: www.cscsban.org/

Creative Exchange aims to promote greater awareness and understanding of creative activity as a force for change, and of cultural rights in general, and to enable practical creative action for sustainable development. It offers research and consultancy services, facilitates networking and information for partners, and plays an advocacy and awareness-raising role. Recently published: *Creative Exchange Worldwide Partners Directory 2001*. More on-line directories and resource lists for organisations and publications concerned with culture and development are planned. Address: Helen Gould (Coordinator), 18 Percy Road, London E11 1AJ, UK.

Email: hotline@creativexchange.org; Web: www.gn.apc.org/creativexchange/

Culturelink Network, Institute for International Relations, Zagreb (IRMO), the Network of Networks for Research and Cooperation in Cultural Development, was established by UNESCO and the Council of Europe in 1989 and encompasses some 1000 networks and institutions that work on these issues from 97 countries worldwide. Its quarterly journal, *Culturelink*, reflects its on-going research interests and provides current information about relevant initiatives. Address: IRMO, Vukotinoviceva 2, 10000 Zagreb, Croatia.

Email: <clink@irmo.hr>; Web: www.culturelink.org/

Institute for Indigenous Sciences and Cultures is made up of an interdisciplinary team of researchers working to systematise and disseminate the knowledge of indigenous peoples. The Institute provides technical assistance to public and private bodies on activities related to indigenous peoples, directing awareness towards overcoming marginalisation. It also has a programme of documentation and publication. Address: Buenos Aires 1028 y Estados Unidos, Postal Box 17-15-50B, Quito, Ecuador.

E-mail icci@wacom.net; Web: <http://icci.nativeweb.org/>

Intercultural Institute of Montreal (IIM) is a non-profit research and social action organisation, dedicated to promoting a deeper understanding of cultural pluralism, intercultural relations, and social change. It believes that the major challenges facing today's world can be met only by seeking wisdom and insight from every culture, through dialogue, understanding, and co-operation. Publishes the twice-yearly journal *INTERculture* in both English and French. Address: 4917, Saint-Urbain, Montréal H2T 2W1, Canada.

Email: <info@iim.qc.ca>; Web: www.iim.qc.ca

Islamic Studies is a website offering a non-polemical view of Islam (including Sunni Islam, Shi'ism, and Sufism) and also of Judaism and Christianity. It provides comprehensive coverage (in English and Arabic) for people seeking basic information and for those with more specific interests, for instance in Muslim women and women's rights, law, philosophy and scientific thought, and art, music, and architecture. Web: www.arches.uga.edu/~godlas/

South-North Network Cultures and Development (Réseau Cultures) addresses the role of cultural dynamics in all societies, and in the processes and interventions associated with development. It undertakes cross-cultural research, offers training and consultancy services, and publishes the bilingual journal *Cultures & Development*.

Email: reseau.cultures@skynet.be; Web: www.networkcultures.net/

Survival International supports the rights of tribal peoples worldwide and has supporters in 82 countries. Its combination of campaigning, education, and funding has helped to position these issues on the mainstream political agenda. Advocacy work includes advising on the drafting of international law as well as informing people of their legal rights and about the situation of indigenous peoples elsewhere. Survival believes that public opinion is the most effective force for change and, if mobilised, will eventually make it impossible for governments and companies to oppress tribal peoples. Address: Survival International UK, 11-15 Emerald Street, London WC1N 3QL, UK.

Email: info@survival-international.org; Web: www.survival-international.org/

UNESCO is the principal UN agency for research and publishing in the field of culture and development. From the late 1960s it began to stimulate reflection on how cultural policies could be integrated into development strategies, particularly in the context of decolonisation. The World Decade for Cultural Development led to the report of the independent commission, headed by Pérez de Cuellar: *Our Creative Diversity*. UNESCO's flagship publication, *World Culture Report 2000: Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism* addresses these issues in relation to poverty, international trade, citizenship, and international migration; and includes cultural indicators and statistics on languages, religions, heritage sites, and cultural festivals. Other relevant publications include *Cultural Dynamics in Development Processes*, (1995) and *The Cultural Dimensions of Global Change: An Anthropological Approach*, (1996). Address: 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France. Email: webmaster.culture@unesco.org; Web: www.unesco.org/culture/development/

The World Bank's Culture in Sustainable Development Group has recently produced a Framework for Action (available on the website), setting out the reasons why an awareness of culture is beneficial for development, and exploring how to integrate these insights into its work. The Network for Culture and Development, established in 1998, consolidates resources and information from its members and aims to promote collaborative efforts to integrate cultural heritage into sustainable development. The Culture and Poverty Learning and Research Group is a Dutch-sponsored initiative looking at the ways in which culture influences people's values, and their responses to developmental changes. It plans a major new edited collection on culture and poverty, edited by Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton. Address: 1818 H Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20433, USA. Web: www.worldbank.org

World Faiths Development Dialogue is a joint initiative between the World Bank President, James Wolfensohn, and George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury (the spiritual head of the Church of England). The role of religions has often been overlooked in development, both as organisations deeply involved in poor communities, and across countries and regions, and as a moral voice helping to direct and calibrate the purpose and design of anti-poverty interventions. WFDD aims to explore how links between faith leaders and organisations and development institutions might be enhanced. It has published a number of relevant booklets and papers, including *Poverty and Development: An Interfaith Perspective*, and *A New Direction for World Development?* Address: Elmfield House, University of Birmingham, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LQ. Email: <info@wfdd.org.uk>; Web: <www.wfdd.org.uk>.

Addresses of publishers

(addresses for organisations are listed under individual entries)

Asia Pacific Press

Asia Pacific School of Economics and Management, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200, Australia.
<books@asiapacificpress.com>

Austin and Winfield

4720 Boston Way, Lanham, MD 20706, USA. <custserv@rowman.com>

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10 E. 53rd Street, New York, NY 10022, USA.
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Berg Publishers

150 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JJ, UK.
<enquiry@bergpublishers.com>

Blackwell Publishers

108 Cowley Road, Oxford OX4 1JF, UK.

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK.
<information@cup.cam.ac.uk>

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Customer Services Department, Rankine Road, Basingstoke RG24 8PR, UK
<journals.orders@tandf.co.uk>

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61 West 62nd Street, New York NY 10023, USA.

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51a George Street, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1HJ, UK.
<publish@curzonpress.co.uk>

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PO Box 90660, Durham, NC 27708-0660, USA.
<orders@dukeupress.edu>

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<info@sagepub.co.uk>

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Shipra Publications

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2235, USA.
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