

# *Alternative Development Models: In Response to Globalized Development*

NOEL SHETH\*

**ABSTRACT:** While Globalization has brought blessings, it has also turned out to be a curse which caters to the rich and the middle class, while the poor become poorer. In this article I study alternative, more wholesome models for development based mainly on traditional theories and practices in Asia. Contrary to the dominant form of globalization which is secularist and consumerist, these movements are based on traditional religious principles, self-control and selfless sharing, and are thus beneficial to the rich, the middle class and the poor as well as to nature. After discussing Gandhi's *Sarvodaya* (uplift or welfare of all) Movement, I deal with similar Buddhist models of development in Ariyaratne's *Sarvodaya-shramadana* (awakening of all through donation of labour) Movement in Sri Lanka, Sivaraksa's social transformation through inner personal transformation in Thailand, and the Dalai Lama's emphasis on human responsibility for the wellbeing of humans and the environment. I also point out that there is a growing number of similar individuals and movements that originated in the West, like the American Friends Service Committee, the Shakertown Pledge, Service Space, and Corporate Social Responsibility. These models of development walk the Middle Path between materialistic greed and spiritual escapism.

## 1. Introduction

Globalization has generated, at least for some people, an increased availability of different technologies, products, services and jobs; it has also facilitated global mutual communication through the Internet and other media of communication. This increase in variety enables someone in India, for instance, to sip Italian wine and eat French cheese or kiwi fruits from New Zealand, while typing on a Taiwanese keyboard.

On the other hand, globalization has also brought a number of disadvantages in its wake. Multinationals have contributed to human rights and

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environmental injustice as they unscrupulously pursue profit around the globe. Unrestricted globalization has hampered the development of less developed countries. Smaller firms lack the resources to compete internationally and are therefore forced out of business. Countries become increasingly dependent on other countries for meeting their needs for goods and services. Price inflation has placed millions of the world's poorest people in jeopardy.

Globalization also has negative effects, even economically, on developed countries. For example, outsourcing leads to loss of jobs in a developed country. But this is not all. Globalization has been resulting in the loss of cultural diversity and the evaporation of spirituality that leaves even the rich unhappy and depressed.

Adverse economic conditions in one country sometimes extend to other countries and even take on global proportions, as happened with the recent recession, from which several countries are still struggling to recover. Globalization may also lead to faster spread of infectious diseases, for people, animals and plants.

In addition, threats of irreversible damage to ecosystems, land degradation, deforestation, loss of bio-diversity and the fears of a permanent shortage of water afflicting millions of people are vital issues that raise important questions about the credibility and viability of globalization.

In response to such problems, I present, in this article, alternative, and more wholesome, models of development, based mainly on traditional theories and practices in Asia.

## 2. The *Sarvodaya* Ideal of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

When Mahatma Gandhi was in South Africa, travelling from Johannesburg to Durban by train, he read John Ruskin's book *Unto This Last*, which held him in a trance like a magic spell and moved him to mould his life to the high principles outlined in the book. He prepared an abridged translation in Gujarati, one of the languages of India and his mother tongue, and entitled it *Sarvodaya*, because he felt that was what Ruskin intended when he wrote his book (Kantowski 1980: 1). *Sarvodaya* is a Sanskrit word, which means 'uplift of all', i.e., 'welfare of all', and it includes all beings, not just human beings. It is not the greatest good of the greatest number, which is just utilitarianism; rather it is the greatest good of *all*, and this can be achieved only through self-sacrifice, which a utilitarian does not undertake (Gandhi 1958-1988: *Collected Works*: 32: 401-402; henceforth as cw) Gandhi declared, "I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few, but in the hands of all" (cw 25: 251).

### (i) *Gandhi's Understanding and Practice of Development*

#### (a) His Vision of *Sarvodaya*

Let me first spell out Gandhi's vision of *sarvodaya* in the spheres of religion, morality, economics and politics.

(1) From the religious point of view, *sarvodaya* involves establishing "the kingdom of God on earth". Gandhi uses the Hindu term *Rama-rajya*, the kingdom of Rama which, for Gandhi, meant prosperous, happy and self-contained villages and communities, in which there would be no inequality based on ownership, colour, race, belief, or gender. It is a kingdom of justice for all, and freedom of religion, speech and the press; it is founded on truth and non-violence<sup>1</sup> (cw 80: 300). He clarified that, although he used the name of a Hindu deity, Rama, he did not mean a Hindu kingdom, but a divine kingdom, the kingdom of God, whom Gandhi identifies with Truth and righteousness<sup>2</sup> (cw 41: 374). *Rama-rajya* is the sovereignty of the people founded on moral authority (cw 64: 192); it is not based on any particular religion, but on universal religion, i.e., a moral government based on truth and non-violence (cw 33: 9). He advocated the attitude of *sarva-dharma-samabhava*, i.e., equal attitude towards all religions. He affirms, "The root of all religions is one and it is pure and all of them have sprung from the same source, hence all are equal" (Iyer 1986-87, vol. 1: 546).

(2) From the perspective of morality, *sarvodaya* includes the concept of *svaraj* (Gandhi transliterates it with a 'w': *swaraj*). Literally, it means 'self-rule' (cw: 10: 39; 22: 150). At the national level, it means self-government. Self-control on the individual level is the pre-condition for self-government: it is the sum total of the self-rule of individuals (cw 69: 52). *Svaraj* means economic self-sufficiency and independence from the control of others; but such economic and political independence cannot be achieved without high individual and social morality (cw 64: 191-192).

(3) From the viewpoint of economics, *sarvodaya* includes the idea of *svadeshi* (again spelt with a 'w' by Gandhi), which means "belonging to one's own country". It refers to the use of locally made goods, without having to import merchandise, so that the nation may thrive (cw 13: 219; 20: 341-342). This does not mean that Gandhi was opposed to importing foreign goods. He was only against importing of merchandise that would adversely affect local interests. He was not advocating an exaggerated nationalism that was exclusive and hostile, but rather, healthy and reli-

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<sup>1</sup> For a study of Gandhi's understanding of non-violence, see Sheth 2006a.

<sup>2</sup> Strictly speaking, a reference to the word 'God' is not all inclusive because there are atheistic religions, e.g., Jainism and Theravada Buddhism. On the other hand, for Gandhi Truth is God, and all religions aim at Truth.

gious, and hence benevolent (cw 21: 291). On the one hand, he did not want foreign markets to bring exploitation and pander to greed (cw 20: 368; 31: 12; 37: 413). And, on the other hand, he wanted mutual collaboration in a spirit of service. He emphasizes, “Love of one’s country is not opposed to love of mankind, but it is a concrete instance of it. It ultimately lifts one to the highest peak of universal love” (cw 27: 304).

(4) Politically, *sarvodaya* includes *panchayat raj* (the common, non-scientific spelling is *panchayat raj*, and that is how Gandhi and others spelt it), which means government (*raj*) by the council of five (*panca*) elected officials of the village.<sup>3</sup> Villages were republics, governed by this group of five elders. Gandhi wanted independent India, and indeed the world itself, to consist of self-governed village republics, each “independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity” and the “*panchayat* will be the legislature, judiciary and executive combined to operate for its period of office” (cw 76: 308). Even now 80% of India’s population lives in villages. Gandhi felt that only self-supporting villages would curb the over-centralization in cities and the unequal distribution of goods. The villages would be organized not in “ascending circles”; they would not be in the form of a “pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom”; rather, they would constitute an ever expanding “oceanic circle” in which the ripples begin with the individual and move on to the village and the neighbouring villages (cw 85: 33-34). The ever-expanding ripples could, through self-sacrifice for the other, eventually reach the entire world (cw 28: 190).

#### (b) The Characteristics of his *Sarvodaya* Society

A *sarvodaya* society is non-violent, and this is possible only if society is based on mutual concord and collaboration (cw: 75: 44-45). Such a society is just and righteous; only then will people be happy (cw 8: 338-339). All are equal in this society: “In the individual body, the head is not high because it is the top of the body, nor are the soles of the feet low because they touch the earth. Even as members of the individual body are equal, so are the members of society” (Gandhi 1949: 97). Such a society is educated in a holistic manner, in body, mind and spirit, i.e., a physical training that develops physical culture, an intellectual education that brings wisdom, and a spiritual tutoring that leads to enlightenment (cw 30: 59).

An essential ingredient of a *sarvodaya* society is manual labour, i.e., for the rich too: if we do not produce anything and rely only on the power of our wealth, we have no place in society and wander away from the right path (cw 26: 19); human beings would be more contented, in better health

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<sup>3</sup> The Hindi word, *panchayat*, is derived from Sanskrit *panca* (five) and *ayatta* (dependent), i.e., “depending upon five (people)”.

and more at peace if the affluent too did manual labour, at least enough for their food (Gandhi and others 1962: 10).

A *sarvodaya* society supports small scale or cottage industries. Gandhi was not opposed to industrialization as such; he was not against machinery in itself, but objected to “the *craze* for machinery”, which was not interested in saving labour, but motivated by greed, and forgot that human beings were much more important than machines (cw 25: 251). He lamented the fact that, instead of workers being dignified members of society, they were reduced to becoming mere cogs in the machinery (cw 68: 266). He was against this dehumanization and exploitation of people. To counteract the dehumanizing influence of heavy industry, Gandhi favoured small-scale and cottage industries, which would lead to health, wealth and happiness (cw 21: 449). He was against the exploitation of workers: they deserved a just wage that would enable them to have adequate food, housing, clothing and health (cw 78: 220). He was not against capital as such, but against its abuse; capital would always be needed (cw 72: 306), but it should be the servant of the workers, not their master (cw 78: 220). Instead of capitalists and workers being opposed to each other, they need to cooperate with one another (cw 60: 255); they both need each other and are equal partners in a collective enterprise (cw 65: 348).

For Gandhi equality does not mean that all earn the same salary: there is a difference in the salary of an ordinary employee and that of a manager or high official (cw 62: 381); nor does it imply that everyone should own the same amount of secular goods. On the other hand, everyone should have a suitable house, enough and balanced food and necessary clothing; and gross inequality has to be removed by non-violent means (cw 72: 381). He proposes the theory of trusteeship of wealth, which is the voluntary sharing of superfluous wealth with the poor: “I want the rich to hold their riches in trust for the poor or to give them up for them” (cw 45: 354). The entire *sarvodaya* economy is based on the “philosophy of limited wants” (Doctor 1967: 67).

### **(ii) Gandhi's Hindu Philosophical Background**

It should be noted that in India Philosophy and Theology or Religion traditionally form one discipline, which goes by the name of Philosophy. Gandhi had a practical philosophy. He was not an academician holed up in his ivory tower; rather, he lived in the midst of people and their daily struggles. His philosophy was oriented towards action, blending theory and practice. Gandhi's practical philosophy of *sarvodaya* was based on the following principles:

- (1) Ultimate reality or God is one.

- (2) All other beings are the manifestation of God and are relatively real.
- (3) The individual human soul is a “spark of God”. By being conscious of this, one is able to lead a genuine and meaningful life.
- (4) The final goal of the soul is union with God and the complete liberation of all human beings.
- (5) This integral liberation is accomplished through grace, prayer and altruistic service.
- (6) One attains salvation by identifying oneself with all beings, and with human beings in particular, through non-violent action in the world.
- (7) One’s salvation is related to the salvation of others because all human beings are essentially one.
- (8) Religion permeates all aspects of life.
- (9) Religion is manifested in a moral life, in truthfulness, and selfless service for the welfare of all, including nature.
- (10) All religions are equal and lead to salvation (Kavungal 2000: 376).
- We now move on to a few Buddhist forms of alternate development in Asia. First, let us focus on Sri Lanka.

### **3. The *Sarvodaya Shramadana* Movement of Dr. Ariyaratne (born in 1931)**

#### **(i) *Ariyaratne’s Understanding and Practice of Development***

Inspired by Gandhi’s idea of *sarvodaya*, Dr. Ahangamage Tudor Ariyaratne developed his own brand of *sarvodaya* based on Buddhist principles. Ariyaratne interpreted *sarvodaya* as an interdependent awakening of the individual and society: “I cannot awaken myself unless I help awaken others. Others cannot awaken unless I do” (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 6: 3). He understood this dual awakening to be all-encompassing: the awakening of human personalities, families, villages, cities, nations and the world community in six areas, viz., spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political spheres (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 6: 97).<sup>4</sup>

*Shramadana* is donation of labour. In practice this meant voluntary service in work camps in villages for the uplift of all. By 1985 his *Sarvodaya* Movement was working in 8000 villages (Bond 1996: 136). Some years later he announced that his movement had implemented various

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<sup>4</sup> Both Gandhi’s and Ariyaratne’s *Sarvodayas* work for the wellbeing of all and are thus involved in society. But their worldviews are different. Gandhian Hindu *sarvodaya* is concerned with realizing one’s true Self through working for the welfare of all, while Ariyaratne’s Theravada Buddhist *sarvodaya* is an expression of one’s Non-self (Kantowski, cited by Bond 1996: 125).

programmes in 11,300 villages out of an estimated 25000 villages in Sri Lanka (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 7: 18).

Ariyaratne's *sarvodaya* caters to ten fundamental needs of society: a pure and attractive environment, sufficient supply of pure water, basic requirements of clothing, an adequate diet, simple residential facilities, basic health services, communication infrastructure, fuel and other energy needs, a comprehensive education for daily living, and cultural and spiritual development (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 2: 115-116). In every village *sarvodaya* tries to set up six groups: pre-school toddlers, school children, mothers, youth, farmers and the elderly. Each of these groups is conscientized and helped to participate in varying degrees in a holistic and all-round development of the village (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 43-49).

Ariyaratne lays down ten principles of his Buddhist approach to development:

(1) It is based on self-reliance and community participation at all stages.

(2) It is founded on ethical principles and not on profits and endless growth that brings about environmental pollution, ecological imbalances, debts, vast disparities in income and the promoting of an affluent life style for just a few.

(3) It generates internal dynamism within communities and countries, while external support, if received, is only to promote that internal dynamism.

(4) It starts with what they have and what they know and not with what they do not have and do not know.

(5) It utilizes the principle of using one portion of one's income for consumption, investing two portions and saving one portion for an emergency situation.

(6) It enables women to play a leading role in the field of savings and credit, food production and storage, education and social welfare, and they are always given equal status.

(7) It encourages people's participatory development which, in its essence, is an exercise in participatory democracy enabling people to manage their own affairs.

(8) It provides plenty of room for private initiative and yet is balanced by compatible cooperative systems developed within communities and even in clusters of communities.

(9) It bases technological advancements on local technologies which are under the control of people.

(10) It works towards devolution and decentralization of political and economic power to local communities so that imposition of oppressive systems of governance, economic exploitation and imposition of dominant cultures on people are minimized (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 7:42-43).

## (ii) *Ariyaratne's Buddhist Philosophical Background*

On the one hand, there is support for the development work of Buddhist *sarvodaya* in the Buddhist Pali Scripture, where certain *suttas* (sermons, discourses or dialogues) deal with social responsibilities and socio-economic affairs. The Buddha also spoke of proper economic production, the protection of the environment and resources, and a friendly milieu and lifestyle that promotes economic welfare and well-being (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 89). The *Cakkavattasihanada-sutta*, the *Kutadanta-sutta*, and the *Agganna-sutta* spelled out economic and state-sponsored measures for peace and prosperity (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 7: 30-31).

However, Ariyaratne also reinterprets traditional teachings in terms of development. The four noble truths are given a developmental orientation. The first truth "there is suffering" is interpreted to refer to a decadent village, where poverty, illness, injustice and inequality are prevalent. In some villages there may be destruction of life and property, armed conflict, life in refugee camps and separation from loved ones. There may be water scarcity, poor health care, lack of sanitation, electricity and communication facilities. The second truth "the arising of suffering", which is primarily due to ignorance and desire, leads one to become aware of the causes of this sorry state of affairs in the village, viz., selfishness, greed, competition, hatred, destructive action, disunity, etc. The third truth "cessation of suffering", which traditionally refers to ultimate liberation (*nibbana*), includes also the liberation of the villages from their sufferings and miseries, and brings about equality, sharing and cooperation, and love and freedom. The means of solving the problem is in the fourth truth "the path leading to the cessation of suffering", which is the Eight-fold Path. This Eight-fold Path is also given a social and developmental focus. Unlike in the case of monks, for the laypeople this path has to be followed in their daily life in the world and should include both individual and social awakening, using the *sarvodaya* concepts and organized action, particularly through donation of labour (*shramadana*) in village work camps that transform and develop the village, as described above (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 3: 42-43; vol. 4: 100-101, 126-128).

Traditionally the four Brahma-viharas (Sublime States) of loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), sympathetic joy (*mudita*) and equanimity (*upekkha*) were reached by withdrawing from the world and through the practice of meditation (Sheth 2003: 90-92). *Sarvodaya*, on the other hand, made explicit the implied meaning in them, and applied them in the social and developmental context. *Metta* is cultivating loving thoughts of kindness towards others; it is the motivation for the action that is expected to follow. This takes place in the form of compassionate action (*karuna*). *Mudita* is the joy that results from making those in need happy. *Upekkha* is the attitude of detachment from plaudits or censure



or from benefits or disadvantages in one's service of others. All this is done with the Buddhist spirit of non-violence, where one confronts the evil deeds and not the evil-doer: one loves the poor and the deprived, but does not bear ill-will towards the perpetrator of evil. All this leads to personal as well as social awakening. (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 1: 122-123; vol. 2: 49-51; vol. 3: 43-44, 64; vol. 6: 69).

The Buddhist virtue of *dana* (giving), is interpreted as *shramadana*, the donating of one's labour, energy and time in the work camp, where one also shares one's, motivation, knowledge, culture, skills, power, and spiritual and temporal resources for the development of the village (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 3: 44; vol. 6: 51). The Buddha's teaching of no-self and conquering selfishness leads one to practise selfless service towards others without any discrimination of class, caste or creed (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 90).

Let us now turn our attention to Thailand.

#### **4. Sulak Sivaraksa (born in 1933)**

##### **(i) Sivaraksa's Understanding and Practice of Development**

Sulak Sivaraksa has been a prolific writer and many of his publications as well as the journals that he started conscientize people on human rights, social justice and developmental issues. He does not advocate a violent approach but demands justice, and is frank and outspoken in his criticism of the government, the military, multi-national corporations, Thai society, as well as some individuals and organizations. He is against development that is based on consumerism, and advocates development that is rooted in traditional Buddhist values of Thailand. He is thus against Western influence in Thailand, which he prefers to call by its traditional name of Siam. He even dresses in traditional Siamese attire.

Sivaraksa founded a number of social welfare organizations or voluntary Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in which people work with dedication for the uplift of the poor, both in the villages and the cities. Inspired by spiritual principles, they reach out to those in need – exploited men, women and children – and help them, through non-violent means, to regain their human dignity and stand on their own feet. They also pay attention to ecology and the environment: they work for integral and sustainable development. What is particularly notable is that he also engages in interreligious dialogue and cooperative interreligious social action for development.

##### **(ii) Sivaraksa's Buddhist Philosophical Background**

Sivaraksa explains that development may be viewed from either of two aspects: quantity or quality, although they are not mutually exclusive. In

globalized development attention is paid to quantity: e.g., income, factories, schools, hospitals, buildings, food, clothing, the labour force, etc. But quality is almost totally neglected. Material development is quantity, but what about the quality of human life, and advancing the potentialities of what it means to be human? Economists see development in terms of increased production, and thus foster greed (*lobha*). Politicians see development in terms of increase of power, and hence promote ill-will (*dosa*). Both then work hand in glove and measure the results in terms of quantity, and therefore increase delusion (*moha*): these are the three Buddhist evils: greed, ill-will and delusion. Almost every country wants to increase the Gross National Product (GNP), to increase trade balance, exports, industry, construction, etc. But as for *people*, they are considered only as the labour force or as consumers. So people have value only as a means to make the numerical statistics of success look good on paper. Is it legitimate to average the increase in terms of per capita income, as is done? E.g., when the GNP increases by 8%, it may be that 80% of the increase goes to 10% of the population, while the other 90% of the population divides up the remaining 20%. This is what is happening in the developing countries, so that the rich get richer and the poor poorer.

From the Buddhist point of view, development must aim at reduction of craving, the avoidance of violence, and the development of the spirit rather than material things. Cooperation is better than competition, whether of the capitalist variety that favours the capitalist, or the socialist variety which favours the labourer. True development aims at equality, love, and freedom. It works for harmony and awakening, by getting rid of all kinds of selfishness, be it greed, hatred or delusion. Such a development would entail truth, beauty, and goodness (Sivaraksa 1994: 52-78).

For Sulak Sivaraksa, Buddhism does not concentrate merely on individual welfare and liberation, but it is also intrinsically concerned with social and political issues in order to transform society. This is the teaching of the Buddha in the Theravada scripture. The doctrine of no-self or interdependence logically points to both individual as well as social transformation: the two are interrelated and intertwined (Sivaraksa, 1992a: 65-67). Buddhist doctrine has to become alive and must be applied to the contemporary social situation. The four scenes of the old man, sick man, dead man and a wandering mendicant that the Buddha saw should help us to become aware of suffering in the modern world, e.g., in Bhopal and Chernobyl, and it should move us to take effective steps to remove such terrible destruction of human life and the environment (Sivaraksa 1988b: 9).

Sivaraksa reinterprets the traditional *Pancasila* or the Five Moral Precepts, giving them a developmental focus in the contemporary world:

(1) The first precept, abstention from destroying life, applies not only to killing humans, abortion and euthanasia. It has a much more extensive

application to other forms of such abstention. Implementing measures to curb the mass breeding of animals for human consumption “would be doubly compassionate, not only toward the animals but also toward the humans who need the grains set aside for livestock”. Discriminative economic and power systems result in global hunger and malnutrition by preventing food from reaching where it is sorely needed. The sale of arms by “merchants of death” wreaks untold havoc. The dumping of chemical and nuclear waste and the use of harmful insecticides lead to ecological problems that also boomerang on human society. The first precept also includes abstention from opulent living and wasteful consumption while others are dying of hunger. Deforestation and surplus consumption have their effects also on life and peoples in different parts of the world.

(2) The precept to abstain from stealing includes also the implicit theft involved in an unjust economic system which deprives people from meaningful jobs. Voluntary simplicity is laudable, but one has to also take pains to overthrow the structures that coerce others to live in involuntary poverty. One has to distinguish between just and unjust marketing and consumption and the use and abuse of natural resources. Some of the methods used by multinational corporations and banks constitute forms of stealing.

(3) Abstention from sexual misconduct also includes male domination and exploitation of women in various forms, e.g., questionable means of birth control such as abortion, female infanticide and the treatment of women as objects – which results in rape, pornography and prostitution. He mentions the international sex trade in Thailand, “where there may now be more prostitutes than monks”. Such collective *karma* of male domination inhibits men from achieving spiritual liberation and prevents the potentialities of women from blossoming.

(4) Abstaining from false speech has applications not only on the individual level but also in the public domain. It extends also to consumerist commercial advertising, political propaganda with ulterior motives, and distorted news under the guise of protecting national security and promoting modern cultural fads in opposition to important values in indigenous cultures. Such an expanded interpretation of this precept is also a wider application of the Buddhist Right View, so that truth will prevail over falsehood. Buddhism also teaches that ultimate truth may be beyond words and concepts. This humble realization can help us to get rid of our dogmatism (see Sheth 1988: 47, 49-52), racial prejudices and nationalistic attitudes.

(5) The fifth precept of abstaining from alcohol has to be extended to all types of intoxicants such as drugs and tobacco. The social implications of this precept should prompt us to become aware of social injustice when Third World farmers are forced by the economic system to cultivate

heroin, tobacco, cocoa and coffee because the economic system makes it impossible for them to grow rice or vegetables profitably. On top of this, unscrupulous multinationals flood the Third World countries with loads of cigarettes, enticing people into the habit of smoking, through attractive advertisements. Pseudo-political thugs and private armies of politicians have acted as middlemen in different regions like Vietnam, Myanmar, and Latin America. Full-scale wars have been waged by governments, such as the Opium War with China by the British. The use of the U.S. military to fight the so-called “war on drugs” is merely cosmetic because it attacks only the symptoms and not the root-causes of drug intake such as the despair that is generated by unemployment and unequal distribution of wealth. Preaching against intoxicants is ineffective, if we are not proactive and do not attempt to transform society with Buddhist and human values (Sivaraksa 1988a: 64-68; 1992a: 42-43, 71-79; Sivaraksa 1992b: 129-133).

Similarly, the four Brahma-viharas or Sublime States, which are traditionally meant for one’s own spiritual development by sending forth vibrations of loving kindness, compassion, etc. to others and even suffusing the world with such feelings, are reinterpreted in the form of social development: (1) *Metta* (loving friendship) connotes reaching out to others by concretely sharing one’s joy with them. (2) *Karuna* (compassion) involves empathizing with the sufferings of others and trying to remedy matters by bringing about greater equality between the affluent and the destitute, and the mighty and the weak. (3) *Mudita* (joy) implies giving up enmity and becoming one with the joy and sorrow of others. (4) *Upekkha* (equanimity) means not being swayed by success or failure, gain or loss, etc. Such indifference helps us identify with others fully (Swearer 1996: 219).

Sivaraksa’s social activism is not based on secular or non-religious principles; on the contrary it is based on awareness and inner transformation. For him mere social activism does not bring about inner change; in fact personal transformation comes first or should at least be simultaneous with social involvement. Real social change takes place only when it is inspired by religious or inner transformation. Social justice and religiosity go hand in hand: “Religion is at the heart of social change, and social change is the essence of religion” (Sivaraksa 1992a: 59-61).

In conclusion, the essence of Buddhism, for Sivaraksa is selflessness, and not in venerating the Buddha or involvement in religious rituals. Growing in mindfulness and awareness, one becomes more selfless, “so that friendship will be possible and exploitation impossible”. Religious experience boils down to selflessness (Sivaraksa, 1988a: 186; 1992a: 61). Understanding selflessness as non-exploitation, he reinterprets *dana* (giving) as “training in non-exploitation”, *sila* (morality) as “understanding the consequences of exploitative action” and *bhavana* (meditation) as a self-awareness that helps us to realize whether we are being exploitative.

Selflessness enables us to be empathetic and non-exploitative towards others (Swearer 1996: 216).

Sri Lanka and Thailand are predominantly Theravada Buddhist countries. Let us now move to the Mahayana Buddhist country of Tibet.

## **5. Human Responsibility as Proposed by The Dalai Lama (born in 1935)**

### **(i) *The Dalai Lama's Understanding and Practice of Development***

In the process of making his Tibetan Government in Exile more democratic, the Dalai Lama had already introduced the office of an elected Prime Minister, to function under him. On 10<sup>th</sup> March 2011 the Dalai Lama announced that he would relinquish his role of political leadership of the Tibetan Government in Exile. On 8<sup>th</sup> August 2011, the newly elected Prime Minister, Lobsang Sangay, took charge not only as Prime Minister, but as the secular head of the Tibetan Government in Exile, replacing the Dalai Lama, who continues as a Spiritual Head of Tibet.

Although he does not speak so explicitly and at such length about globalization as the three others we have spoken of, what the Dalai Lama says is pertinent to the subject.

The Dalai Lama observes that those living in the materially developed countries, for all their industry, are less happy and to some extent suffer more than those living in the least developed countries. There is a high level of anxiety, discontent, frustration, uncertainty and depression in the rich countries, including rich countries in Southeast Asia. This shows that there is a link between disproportionate emphasis on external progress and the unhappiness and anxiety of modern society. Traditional, rural communities enjoy greater harmony and tranquillity than those in urban communities. The fundamental issue is that we have neglected our inner dimension; what we need is not a political or economic or technical revolution: all these have an external approach that does not suffice. What we need is a spiritual revolution (Dalai Lama 2001: 5, 9, 12-13, 16-17).

Lack of contentment, which really comes down to greed, sows the seed of envy and aggressive competition, which leads to excessive materialism. The culture of perpetual economic growth needs to be questioned. If the present trend in economic and political policies continues, the poor will become poorer. Here is where universal responsibility becomes paramount (Dalai Lama 2001: 165-166; 171; 194-195).

### **(ii) *The Dalai Lama's Buddhist Philosophical Background***

Firstly, the Dalai Lama points out that we share the same human nature and are therefore all equal. Other things, such as the colour of one's

skin, different languages, cultures and religions, education, race, country, ideology, rich or poor status, etc. are secondary. The primary thing is that we are all human beings. We are all looking for happiness and want to get rid of suffering. This basic humanness makes us realize that we are sisters and brothers, loving and compassionate towards one another (Dalai Lama 1990: 15-16, 52-53, 96, 122). This commonality of being human is rooted in the Mahayana doctrine that we all have the same Buddha nature; we are all one in ultimate non-dualism.

Secondly, he speaks of the Mahayana doctrine of interdependence implied in the theory of Dependent Co-Production (*pratityasamutpada*) (Dalai Lama 2005: 106-121). In a nutshell, the doctrine of Dependent or Conditioned Co-production, states that no being or event arises without a conditioning factor: this (resulting) being or event is because that (preceding) being or event is; this (resulting) being or event is not because that (preceding) being or event is not. He makes practical applications of this doctrine of interdependence in the context of the modern world, as a means of resolving contemporary problems in society. He shows how things in modern society are all the more interdependent. Whatever happens elsewhere, whether good or bad, affects us too. For instance we and our plants and animals are severely affected by a nuclear accident that has occurred far away from where we are. Whether it is war or peace, ecological harm or enhancement, human rights, freedom and other values – these cannot be dealt with in isolation, but through cooperation, since they are interconnected in various ways (Dalai Lama 1990: 17, 53). A stock-market crash on one side of the globe can have a direct effect on the economies of countries on the other side of the globe (Dalai Lama 2001: 161).

The Dalai Lama brings out the implications of the oneness of humanity and the interrelatedness of all things, namely, universal responsibility for the well-being of humans, of the environment, and of our planet. We are all brothers and sisters of the one human family, and so should be concerned to alleviate the suffering of others and work for their welfare. In fact, because we need one another, since we are interdependent, we need to cultivate universal responsibility to solve our problems together, and to bring peace accompanied by justice. We have the responsibility to strengthen the weaker members of the human family as well as to care for the environment which we have exploited and, as a result, have been badly affected ourselves. We need a balanced, integrated relationship with the human family as well as nature (Dalai Lama 1990: 19, 58, 113-117). This universal responsibility also benefits ourselves; in fact it is we who are the main beneficiaries of the practice of altruism<sup>5</sup> and compassion (Dalai Lama 1990: 58; 2005: 33-34). Even though he himself is a monk, he emphasizes the importance of involvement in society. One may withdraw oneself

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<sup>5</sup> For a comparison between Buddhist and Christian altruism, see Sheth 2006b.

from society for certain periods of time for concentrated meditation, but most people should practice their religiosity, not in isolation, but in the midst of human society. What is important is detachment from the world, not withdrawal from society. For him, Buddhism teaches service to others and, for this, one must be involved in society (Dalai Lama 1990: 97-99).

Contrary to the dominant form of globalization which is secularist and consumerist, these movements are based on traditional religious principles, self-control and selfless sharing which are beneficial to the rich, the middle class and the poor, as well as to nature, and therefore they aim at holistic development for one and all.

## 6. Corresponding Responses in the West

There is a growing number of similar individuals and movements in the West. "Voluntary Simplicity" is a lifestyle that includes a healthy balance between material and spiritual aspects of living, sharing with those in need, social responsibility, ecological awareness, etc. Diogenes, St. Francis of Assisi and many individuals lived simple lives, in different ways. Schumacher (1974) published a book entitled *Small is Beautiful*.

The "American Friends Service Committee", which was co-awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, is a Quaker group that works for peace and justice. The Shakertown Pledge, which was composed in 1973 by Christian directors of spiritual retreat centres when they met in a Shaker village in Kentucky, U.S.A., has a nine-point pledge in which one commits oneself to live a prayerful and simple lifestyle, manifesting ecological concern, sharing one's possessions with the poor, and working for a just society where everyone can achieve holistic development in the physical, intellectual, psychological and spiritual realms (Kantowsky 1980: 157).

In 1999 a group called "Charity Focus" was started in California; in 2011 the name was changed to "Service Space". They began practising voluntary simplicity and joyful service. It is a volunteer group that serves, as individuals and as a group, with whatever it possesses, and it concentrates on small acts of service with lofty thoughts and a large heart. They have various projects, such as daily good news, performing acts of kindness, etc., and including "gift-economy" restaurants, called "Karma Kitchens", which operate on the model of "pay-it-forward": the meals are free, but, if one wishes, one may leave a certain amount of money for someone else visiting the restaurant later on to have a free meal, and so the chain of love and care continues. Such Karma Kitchens have also been started in India by Service Space. The goal of Service Space is to transform themselves and the world through such activities. Selfless actions spring from within one's being, and lead, in turn, to deeper transformation.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For details, see their website, <http://www.servicespace.org/>.

Another recent movement that also started in the West and is fast gathering momentum is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The idea behind CSR is that business enterprises should not be merely concerned with profits and dividends, but are also responsible for short-term and long-term social and environmental consequences of their varied business activities. The task of companies is not only to be involved in economic development but also in enhancing the quality of life of their workers and their families as well as that of the local community and the world at large (see Benioff and Southwick 2004). This responsibility has also been extended to universities, which are increasingly accepting such obligation to society.

Indeed, there seems to be a small but significant trend in North America and in Europe that emphasizes simple living over opulent living, spirituality over material goods, and human values over improved technology, increased productivity and huge profits (Kantowsky 1980: 158-165).

In general, in Third World countries people try to reduce involuntary scarcity, while in the First World countries people attempt to lessen involuntary affluence.<sup>7</sup> While there is a world of difference between voluntary simplicity and the harsh reality of the poor eking out a less than human existence, still, such voluntary simplicity is truly laudable both in individuals as well as groups, and such movements augur well for a better world and more holistic forms of global development than what we have at present. Indeed, the Asian and Western movements, which walk the Middle Path between the two extremes of materialistic greed and spiritual escapism, do offer hope for a better future.

## 7. Conclusion

Pope Francis has often critiqued the global capitalist market economy. On World Environment Day 2013, which was sponsored by the United Nations, Pope Francis said in his general audience at St. Peter's Square:

When we talk about the environment, about creation, my thoughts turn to the first pages of the Bible, the Book of Genesis, where it says that God puts men and women on the earth to till it and keep it (cf. 2:15)... it means making the world increase with responsibility, transforming it so that it may be a garden, an inhabitable place for us all... Instead we are often guided by the pride of dominating, possessing, manipulating and exploiting; we do not "preserve" the earth, we do not respect it, we do not consider it as a freely-given gift to look after... However "cultivating

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<sup>7</sup> This is, of course, a generalized statement, since there are extremely rich people in Third World countries and there are poor people in First World countries. Without having made a sociological survey, it does appear, prima facie, that there seem to be more wealthy people in the West who go in for voluntary simplicity than rich people in the Third World countries.



and caring” do not only entail the relationship between us and the environment, between man and creation. They also concern human relations... It is no longer man who commands, but money, money, cash commands. And God our Father gave us the task of protecting the earth – not for money, but for ourselves: for men and women. We have this task! Nevertheless men and women are sacrificed to the idols of profit and consumption: it is the “culture of waste”... If there are children in so many parts of the world who have nothing to eat, that is not news, it seems normal. It cannot be so! And yet these things enter into normality: that some homeless people should freeze to death on the street – this doesn’t make news. On the contrary, when the stock market drops 10 points in some cities, it constitutes a tragedy. Someone who dies is not news, but lowering income by 10 points is a tragedy! In this way people are thrown aside as if they were trash.<sup>8</sup>

Some might think that the Asian models of alternative development presented in this article are utopian. And the way things are, it may well be so at present. Whether it is in Mumbai, Colombo, Bangkok or Peking, wherever one goes, Coca Cola has been there already. Globalization, however, is much less of a panacea than the alternative models that I have depicted above. But, before I close, let me give you one brief example of admirable success using an alternative model of development. The village of Ralegan Siddhi, in Maharashtra, India, has been transformed into a model village by the Hindu, Anna Hazare. Inspired by Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, he was able, through his deep Hindu spirituality, selfless service and management skills, to win the collaboration of his fellow-villagers and bring about a tremendous change in his hamlet by eliminating caste discrimination and poverty, and creating a prosperous village, where people live in amity and harmony, equality and justice. In this transformation, he used a healthy blend of traditional spirituality, scientific methods of agriculture, contemporary methods of organization and modern technology (Hazare: 2003).

The Buddhist country of Bhutan, which is struggling with poverty and crime, has still a long way to go to fulfil its quest for the well-nigh elusive goal of national happiness. Nevertheless, the parliament shows its determination to reach this “unreachable star” by replacing Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Product (GNP) by Gross National Happiness (GNH) as an indication of national success. Through legislation and education, it is pursuing this goal, by promoting the spiritual, social and environmental development of their nation. Based on Buddhist principles, Bhutan is attempting to ensure unbiased social development, the preservation of traditional cultural identity in the midst of modernization, the conservation of the natural environment, and good governance.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/francesco/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_2013\0605\\_udienza-generale\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/audiences/2013/documents/papa-francesco_2013\0605_udienza-generale_en.html).

At the United Nations in 2011, 68 nations endorsed Bhutan's proposal for a holistic development, and the United Nations set up a panel to study ways in which Bhutan's model of Gross National Happiness can be pursued in different parts of the world. For instance Bhutan has made a law that at least 60 % of its land would be covered forever by forests (Kelly 2012).

It is high time that the world thinks seriously of building alternative models of development, keeping in mind the lofty ideal of Gross National Happiness, before Gross National Greed and Gross International Greed tear down everything.

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