Conclusion
CULTURAL HARMONY: A NECESSITY IN THE MODERN ERA

Section II

At the threshold of the 21st century, we are the witnesses to an unprecedented growth and progress in many fields of human endeavor; like economic, social, cultural, political, scientific and technological. We have witnessed the end of the cold war; the break-up of the Soviet Union and the birth of new republics, the crumbling of the Berlin wall and the unification of Germany, Truly, this has been the Age of Breakthroughs!\(^{300}\)

The present age is characterised by a growth of integrating trends and the acceleration of development. Uniqueness preserves itself by overcoming its own hypertrophy. Even the least developed countries are being drawn increasingly into the orbit of modern civilization. Interrelations are becoming closer and there is greater exchange of historical experience between one nation and another. All this goes to show that an unprecedented world-historic community of mankind is in the process of formation and requires a joint co-ordinating reason, not centrifugal forces that generate trouble-spots all over the world and bring grief and suffering upon millions of innocent people. More intensely than ever before, humankind expects enmity and strife to be replaced by order and harmony. As yet, however, everything is in a state of contradiction.

\(^{300}\) Dr. Lourdes R. Quisumbing VALUES IN A CHANGING WORLD. Presented to APNIEVE Experts’ Group Meeting at Riviera Bay Resort, Malacca, Malaysia, July 1-5, 1996.
The victories of technology are often won at the cost of human health. Even the pure light of science with its radiant truths may also contain destructive rays. Discoveries and inventions, all the brilliant fireworks of the human intelligence, may burn up the very torch of reason.\textsuperscript{301}

There is a sense of urgency to make progress quickly before ‘time runs out’. We are faced with a tremendous challenge, a challenge of unprecedented scope, scale and complexity. We are pressed to act even as we are still working out new concepts and new methodologies. We are pushed to change structures and mindsets. Can the human mind and heart keep up with the race of industrialization, mechanization, automation, modernization, globalization with the accompanying values, skills and behaviour of individualism, impersonalism, consumerism, materialism without losing the essence of our humanity and spirituality, our cultural identity and heritage?

Human cultures grow and develop in a slow process throughout the course of history. In the process of historical development, experiences are accumulated and handed down from one generation to another and at the same time, new elements from other cultures are introduced through accommodation, cross-fertilization and diffusion.

Today, we live in a situation where we meet and confront people of many traditions, cultures, religions and philosophies, etc.

\textsuperscript{301} A. Spirkin. \textit{Dialectical Materialism (Chapter 5. On the Human Being and Being Human(Man and culture), First Published: © 1983 by Progress Publishers;)}, \url{http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/spirkin/works/dialectical-materialism/ch05-s08.html}
It seems evident that we need to learn and know each other for mutual enhancement, enrichment and to bring about a desired harmony. More than ever before, different geographical and historical cultures have been brought closer at present. The ‘other man’ is our priority. The other man needs to be understood and analyzed in order that we may, to say the least, understand ourselves. We can no longer overlook the presence of the other man, but analyze and understand him to enhance and understand ourselves better. We must grow out of ourselves while rooted and firmly grounded on our own.

Admittedly, throughout the history, cultural differences lead to misunderstanding, lack of respect and conflicts between countries. Studying cross culture enables to benefit from other experiences and helps in developing a sense of mutual understanding. In today's world it is necessary to study other cultures in order to minimize differences, create harmony between societies, benefit from each other and avoid conflicts.

The necessity of cross cultural studies comes from the fact that there is no inferior culture. All cultures have some positive sides that can be beneficial for all mankind. For example, special foods and drinks in some societies are proved to be healthy but not known elsewhere. By studying other cultures, nations benefit from each other and are closer to one another.

When we know about other societies and understand their cultures, there are chances to minimize the conflicts and maximize cooperation. The conflicts most of the times stem from misunderstanding of others' behaviors and even speeches which are resulted from different cultures. Information about others' cultures allows good understanding and consequently strengthens relations between nations.
It also helps maintaining peace and love between states regardless of their origins, religions and languages. By studying others' culture we will certainly respect them and work together with them for the benefit of all.

What people read and watch, and the kind of culture, literature, values and norms they are exposed to, through the home, education, society, television and the internet - provide them with basic values, attitudes and norms which affect and motivate them throughout their lives. The stories people hear and read as children and as adults, become an integral part of the core of their identity and personalities. The Nobel Prize Laureate, Elie Wiesel, explained: "We are the stories we hear and the stories we tell." Even religions, which are an integral part of culture, are mainly built on stories and parables. It is of crucial importance therefore, that those stories we are exposed to, at the socio-cultural and educational levels, which we watch on television and in films and which we read, should be pluralistic and peaceful ones that open our eyes to the world, and that build and do not destroy.\(^\text{302}\)

Religion is a major influence in the world today. It seems that people in all cultures have a set of beliefs that go beyond both the self and the natural world. Part of the great diversity of humankind is the many different religions and belief systems we have developed – Animism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Taoism, and many more. Religious beliefs have a strong influence on the culture of a community.

\(^\text{302}\) Prof. Dr. Ada Aharoni, “GLOBAL MULTICULTURALISM VERSUS THE “WAR OF CULTURES” (Globalisation for the Common Good, Conference in Istanbul, Turkey 5-9 July 2007) p.2.
Indeed, for many people around the world, religious beliefs are central to their culture and provide the moral codes by which they live. Even where people in the contemporary world believe that the traditional beliefs of their parents and societies are not so relevant to their everyday lives, the underlying religious beliefs about human worth and how to relate to other people and the Earth is still important parts of their lives.  

The world is getting interconnected at an ever increasing speed. The particular phenomenon of globalization is challenging the traditional power authority. This is gradually making all nations part of one unified society. Times like this, the tribals are the most vulnerable to having their traditions, relationships, and knowledge and skills ignored and denigrated. Their culture can be among their most potent assets, and among the most ignored and devastated by development programs, especially in a country like India where tribals constitute 8.14% of the total population of the country, numbering 84.51 million (2001 Census) and covering about 15% of the country’s area, there is a need for collective and cross-cultural endeavours due to the fact that tribal people need special attention which can be observed from their low social, economic and participatory indicators. 52% of Tribal population is Below Poverty Line and what is staggering is that 54% tribals have no access to economic assets such as communication and transport.

In India the institutions of governance that emerged during the period of Jawaharlal Nehru (the first Prime Minister of Independent India) or thereafter are of major interest and are models with a wider appeal.

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[303] Culture & religion for a sustainable future
(http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_c/mod10.html?panel=4#top)

[304] India tribal belt (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India_tribal_belt)
It is true that different societies have different social and cultural realities and face specific problems of harmony between social justice and economic development. What methodology is to be adopted to strike a balance between conflicting claims of social justice and economic development would vary from one society to another. The basic approach that Nehru laid down is, however, of intrinsic value.

Mr. Nehru puts it:

_It is obvious that the tribal areas have to progress. Nobody wants to keep them as museum specimens. It is equally obvious that they have to progress in their own way. They do not like something alien to be imposed upon them. No individual can grow in alien surroundings, habits or customs. How are we going to reconcile these two considerations? There are two extreme approaches. One is the museum approach, keeping them as interesting specimens for anthropologists to discuss. The other may be called the ‘open door’ approach. Both are equally bad. The second approach attracts all the undesirables from outside who exploit these people economically and otherwise and take them out of their moorings. We have to find a middle course. That can succeed only if there is no element of compulsion about it. That attempt has in fact to be made through their own people._

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305 Implementation Committee for the Commemoration of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centenary, *Nehru’s Tribal Philosophy, Centenary Volume*, (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 584
What the first Prime Minister of India told few decades ago is relevant even today. The Tribal people are even today observed as objects displayed in exhibitions, since their unique dress codes, socio-cultural habits, method of communication etc., are different from the so called urban masses. Their life-styles have become topics of research for several academicians. As Mr. Nehru has correctly pointed out, they improve themselves through their own inherited and borrowed resources.

The different tribes in India if ever counted can move up to a mind blogging number, with all their ethnicities and impressions. In India almost a new dialect can be witnessed each new day; culture and diversification amongst the tribals can be admired from any land direction. Indian tribal culture speaks volumes about the diversity of the country. Unity in diversity is one of the most spectacular features amongst the population of India. Many external forces had threatened the tribal cultures especially after the post-independence. External forces instead of desiring cultural harmony through acceptance in turn failed to see the rich cultural heritage and brought about undesired problems.

Mr. Nehru correctly points out in his writings:

... I am alarmed when I see not only in this country but in other great countries too how anxious people are to shape others according to their own image or likeness and to impose on them their particular way of living....
Nehru’s approach towards the tribal people is of relevance not only to India but also to others in the world whether in Australia, the United States, China or the Soviet Union, who are engaged in similar tasks of development of tribals located on the periphery of their society, who have led a sequestered life for centuries.\textsuperscript{306}

No single culture, no single tradition or a person can face or solve any human predicaments single handedly. Learning to live together implies ‘tolerance’. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty; it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace. Different cultures and languages have equivalents that range from passivity and negativism to active respect and positive appreciation of others.

Harmony between different cultural traditions of the world is indeed the need of the hour. Our time demands a criss-crossing of borders and letting our borders be crossed. We need to learn to negotiate with the borders so as to realize and experience pluralism and inter-culturality. Criss-crossing of cultures allows a new openness of the human spirit which may present opportunity as well as challenge. It is only in the crossing over to the other side we see a thing in its wholeness.

\textsuperscript{306} Ibid.298,p.584
Peace and harmony can become possible only when we can transgress our own borders and see the other borders as possessing goods which will enhance our horizon of understanding. An attitude of such does not consider other borders as breeding fear or insecurity but to strengthen one’s own. The strength lies in our resilience to take each other seriously in spite of differences.

One of the important novelties of our time is to realize and experience cultural pluralism. Our time demands collective cross cultural endeavor. Learning and experiencing other peoples' culture and traditions can greatly improve acceptance of others cultures. All cultures have their own traditions and beliefs, cultural pluralism helps people to find these common beliefs and traditions, which promotes acceptance and reduces fears. It also encourages people to continue to embrace their own beliefs and culture.

In the past, many people who were born, lived and died within a limited geographical area, never encountering people of other races and/or cultural backgrounds. Until people were exposed to different cultures, they were culturally unconscious. Most people did not know how people in other cultures react to certain things such as conflict, completing tasks, communication style, and decision making. Such existences no longer prevail in the world. Even members of once isolated groups now frequently have contacts with the members of other cultural groups. The idea, most notably in connection with the phenomenon of globalization, has given rise to the concept of multiculturalism.
In one way or other, a large part of the contemporary world population lives in more than one culture, be it because of the exchange of culinary techniques, or musical knowledge, or fashion ideas, and so on.

We should all draw wisdom and strength from our distinctive cultures and traditions, from our own wealth and uniqueness to find our distinctive way for our understanding of tolerance, our own adaptation to modernity.

Let’s learn to live together in peace and in harmony, respecting each other’s uniqueness and diversity and building on our shared values and beliefs/virtues and beautiful traits of Caring and Sharing, Respect and Compassion.