The Story of Indian tradition:

Networking/Remote sensing vs. Worknetting/Intimate sensing

RANA P. B. SINGH

Dept. of Geography, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, UP 221005,India. ranapbs@satyam.net.in

> Path running towards crossing the boundary,
>   Out of space, out of time and the image.
> Let's go beyond sky-arc of blue territory,
>   In search of what lies across the image,
> Ultimately reaching to wholeness of cosmic limit,
>   Where God and Human frame a unit.
>
> ……. Singh (1995b: 191).

> ÒThere is not a thought that is being thought in the West or East that is not active in some Indian mindÓ. …..   *The British historian* E. P. Thompson.

> ÒWhat we do about ecology depends on our ideas of man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink of old oneÓ. …………   Lynn White, Jr, 1967.

The Indian Scenario

Having a strong historical and cultural base India possesses a dilemma between the continuity of traditions and superimposition of techno-modernity. The inside realities are very hard! The only approach we need is ÒHumanistic: by the human being, of the humanity, and for the human peaceÓ. Which turning we should follow? The Indian masses have to think and take turn while coping with the processes of globalisation and without any loss to their identity. India is a country of contrasts and diversities, e.g. presently there are thirty-six states, embracing 190 religious groups with 1,652 language and dialects in 12 language families with 24 different scripts, and 3,742 castes and sub-castes further grouped into 4,635 communities. Says Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (1996: 3, 7), ÒThe internal diversities in India offer a great opportunity to learn from each other. … We must also note that India has much to learn from India itselfÓ.

This is a great dilemma that even after fifty years of independence, the Indian government is unable to fix the minimum daily wages for the 25 per cent of labour force at the bottom --- those living below poverty line, mostly agricultural labourers and their dependants. Does India have no resource, no economic capacity, or no development strategy for the solution of such tragic situation? By an example India's potentiality and requirement can be explained. Based on National Sample Survey in 1993-94, it was estimated that for enhancing the life of those living below poverty line a subsidy of at least Rs 2,750 for rural poor and Rs 3,175 for urban poor was required. By this scale the total money required would had been:

-- **rural poor** : 257.3 million X Rs 2,750 = Rs 707.6 billion;
-- **urban poor** :   69.3 million X Rs 3,175 = Rs 220.0 billion.

This way to get out of poverty line a total sum of Rs 927.6 billion was required which was about 5 per cent of the total Gross National Product (see Singh, Jasbir, 1999: 12). But no any

strategy was prepared to solve this tragedy. This simple calculation supports the idea that only by strong political wish, ethical viewpoint, transformation of resource and its rational allocation and befitting strategy this would had been solved. Lack of economic resource is not the basic problem in this context.

Towards March

In spite of tremendous scientific-technological innovations and their application in the name of development, humankind today faces a crisis at several levels. The main idea of 'progress and development' has been conceived in the light of positivistic-reductionist, empiricist and anthropocentric enterprises introduced in Europe in the seventeenth century. However, the alternative worldview of interconnectedness and holism is considered more relevant today. Modern science, like new physics, is recapitulating in many ways the ancient spiritual worldview of integral living. In the light of such shifts, the idea of 'development' also needs to be reassessed, rethought and reoriented. For this march the role of IT (Information Technology) and its system of global networking are essential in the era of cybernetic and automation.

Like two sources of knowledge – 'the indirect' notion of understanding and imagination, and the direct one related to sensibility and perception – 'development' is also to be purveyed in the light of non-sensuous and sensuous sources, and these might be seen as complimentary. This ideology has a presuppositional bias. Each culture has some of its own distinctiveness but also commonality with others. One cannot presume that any one culture is complete and to be adopted by or superimposed upon others. Certainly, we need a thorough diagnosis of a sick culture, instead of always prescribing and using different means, measures and medicines for recovery in the frame of 'trial and error'. Let us understand the total spectrum of disordering with a view to searching the way of ordering in chaos. This reminds the theory of Self Organised Criticality, or Chaos debated recently in theoretical physics.

I do not want to write as an expert or scholar, but as a citizen of my culture and era, i.e. what India is at present, what roots it sustains and how it is trying to make its future while carrying the age-old traditions and belief systems. Where has gone our rich tradition of harmonious life integrating the divine sense of humanity and human sense of divinity, reminding what the Vedic sage said, ÒThe Whole Earth is a familyÓ (*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*)?. The present cultural crisis India faces has a root in history (cf. Singh 1993: 113-130). This is a narration of the intense 'inside' story – the never-ending story of political crisis – that I shall explain by an analogy based on the great epic, the *Ramayana* (Singh, 1999: pp. 56-57):

> On the orders of (king) Lord Rama, his brother Lakshmana paid a visit to the demon Ravana who was mortally wounded by Rama and was passing the last breath of his life. Ravana was the greatest scholar of the science of diplomacy and government. Lakshmana begged Ravana to teach him some of the key lessons of handling diplomacy and the smooth running of government.
> Ravana suggested, 'whatever system of government – democratic or dictatorship – is imposed is immaterial; but how you expose it, is a matter of serious concern. Make the public fool in such a way that the publics are always confused. And whenever some groups raise their voices against it, convince them that you are trying to integrate the varying ideologies together; and form a Commission to formulate this plan. Continue this at least for five consecutive years. Afterwards take time for reviewing and assessing progress; again make further plans and propagate assurances for the next five years. Take care that the public in no way learns which form of government is operating. This way

you will succeed to rule this great country of India forever. Remember that this culture has a deep sense of faith in the future, hope and tolerance! Take heed of this sense and rule them'.

Soon afterwards the demon, Ravana, died. Since then Rama is the president and Lakshmana is the Prime Minister of India in different faces and in different dresses.

The Indian politicians always pursue power to rule the country in the place of pursue policy to make the country and people prosperous and pleasant. This is a tragic situation and shame for the humanity and the present democracy. Democracy in India has failed at the front of stable government, national integration and balanced economy (see Singh and Singh 2002 *f.c.*). The cry of the masses in India is expressed explicitly in a lyric, Ò*the Road of Life*Ó:

This side and at other end are countless people, But people are victim of isolation.
From dawn to dusk carrying oneself as load, But becoming burial of own corpses.
Everywhere running, vanishing paths, But everywhere people are victim of people.
Everyday being alive and everyday dying, But have hope and waiting for a new light.
Life's fate is to run from one end to another, Till the last breath in search of solace.

(Based on tape of a popular song: *Sajda--STHVS--852109*, side B:2, 1991, sang by India's two most famous singers, Lata Mangeshkar and Jagjit Singh)

Networking: An Approach of Integration or Control!

The idea of global understanding and the interlinking processes of globalisation is more concerned with the pace of IT, Information Technology. Within the purview of making students and researchers more educated about the interrelationships between research, technology and teaching through 'information literacy' and 'geovisualisation', ECAI (Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative) has been recently advocated as one of the turning paths. Among the Networking Systems, the ECAI has grown up as a recent IT system. ECAI aims to develop digital infrastructure for the discovery and sharing of research resources, to provide a mechanism for dissemination of research, to provide access to distribute research resource world-wide, to enable a creation of visual and GIS maps bank and archive, and to support development of electronic research materials. This is an attempt to unite the IT and sharing of knowledge among the people through visual, spatial, audio-visual, and other forms of non-print information. This network system requires its own 'language', associated practice and interpretative framework.

A common feature of information literacy programmes now being widely implemented in universities is the expectation that teaching faculty will collaborate with other information professionals, including librarians, in making students more 'information literate'. What constitutes an information literate person is defined by mandating institution-wide information literacy 'standards'. However, the standards are highly abstract, and the ways in which they are to be met are unclear. To solve the shortcomings of the current models of information literacy the International Cartographic Association (ICA) Commission on Visualisation and Virtual Environments has proposed the concept of 'geovisualisation', which can usefully be reformulated from an information literacy perspective as 'geovisual information literacy'. Geovisual information literacy acknowledges that spatial and visual modes of information are 'languages' in their own right, and require degrees of 'literacy' as fluent and extensive as those of spoken and written language. ECAI needs to provide support for multilingual data and non-roman scripts in ECAI

tools (e.g., TimeMap) and ECAI data sets. Certainly we want to set ECAI guidelines for the use of multilingual data and to adopt standard encodings on the lines of metadata and multilingual data and related issues involving thesauri and controlled vocabularies. Through ECAI an attempt to develop a Multilingual Gazetteer System for integrating spatial and cultural resources is in process on the basis of digital library and GIS System.

Some examples of global networks may be cited. The Alexandria Digital Library (ADL) that contains 4.2 million entries with worldwide coverage is primarily based on data from two US federal government gazetteers, which emphasise named features that appear on topographic maps rather than historical and cultural materials. The ECAI at the University of California, Berkeley is developing a globally distributed temporo-spatial library of cultural and historical resources with a centralised metadata catalogue and a GIS viewer. Academia Sinica Computing Center is providing global access to a corpus of 2,500 years of Chinese historical writings through their Scripta Sinica project; the project currently amounts to 300 million Chinese characters.

The SASNET: Perspective and Path

The **SASNET**, a Lund based Swedish South Asian Studies Network aims to involve and integrate researchers from all disciplines and faculties, and co-operation between disciplines and across faculty borders at priority. It builds on the idea that South Asian studies can be most fruitfully pursued in co-operation between researchers, who work in different institutions, but are linked together via networks into programmes focused on South Asian studies. An active network root node with a network co-ordinator and a secretary/webmaster will be based at Lund University. The network root node will operate an Internet Gateway for interaction and information in South Asian studies. What other net systems and net channels are planning to work in USA, or Australia, the SASNET on the similar lines trying to do for the South Asia.

Some of the following issues SASNET has to assess, re-evaluate, re-examine on the basis of the historical perspective, future prospects and global service to the humanity, through the direct and active partnership with persons from South Asia.

*- How should SASNET work as system and network to interlink itself with smaller regional universities and institutes, and local NGOs in South Asia with weak infrastructures? To develop it what infrastructural aspects SASNET should have?

*- What positive aspects of computer-mediated interaction can SASNET develop that allows South Asian researchers/teachers/students to participate on equal terms of partnership and reciprocity of equal benefits, especially at the grass root in South Asia?

*- What are the problems involved in interdisciplinary networks between South Asia and the West, especially the European Community?

*- How a network like SASNET can avoid being swallowed by the power emanating complicated system of bureaucracy through hegemonic centres of India, e.g. New Delhi? Can SASNET avoid being confined just to the contacts already developed, often on the basis of Swedish aid interests and finance?

The **general issues**, to be taken as challenge by the SASNET, needs serious consideration on the dilemma and integration between 'inside realities' (the South Asian realm) and 'outside reflection' (the Western world); as narrated some of them are:

*- What can the globalisation of economic, cultural and political spheres mean to the science and education, especially in a global society where people simultaneously continue to be

separated and divided by ecological, economic, cultural and political gaps as well as by contradictions and conflicts?

*- How can we avoid contributing to information monopolies in the hands of Western elites and trans-national companies engaged in knowledge and science-based production or in multi-media production?

*- How can we as researchers and teachers avoid becoming a tool in the processes of increased Westernisation and commercialisation and in processes of marginalisation and impoverishment of large groups of people all over the planet?

*- How can we avoid brain-drain on the one hand, while trying to contribute to open borders, partnership and exchange on the other hand?

*- How can we ensure that the sciences and education will be concerned with the big material and social issues facing South Asian as well as other societies and also work towards alleviating and solving important social and material problems?

*- How can we build networks for all of South Asia: Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives?

Karlstad University Project of Indian Village

The Karlstad University has started its Indian studies centre in Varanasi in 1989, with emphasis to have access of direct experience of Indian life and culture by the Swede students. Since then every year students come to Varanasi and pass four to eight weeks in Varanasi. In 1991 with the initiative of Gerhard Gustafsson, a professor of human geography at Karlstad, and collaboration of Rana P. B. Singh, a study of Indian village, close to Varanasi, has been started. Rana Singh has studied and published a book on Chamaon (Gram Sabha) in 1977. It has been thought important to have a longitudinal study in time frame to understand the scene of change and continuity in village India, with emphasis on crisis and prospects. This is multidisciplinary approach with particular reference to humanistic framework. With the study of 1977 as the point of reference follow-up studies were made in 1994, 1996, 1999 and 2001.

It has been realised that Indian Village has in many ways maintained its multiplex character of spatiality, cultural integration, social and economic diversity, and traditional continuity. It has been concluded that change is obvious, acceptance and challenges too. Life in the Indian village is in a phase of transition. That is, continuing the age-old traditions and, at the same time, adopting the changing socio-economic system and the values associated with it. The cries of the poor masses, distrust of the governmental system and the ideology of gain without work are common expressions of this situation (cf. Gustafsson, et al 2000). The question pertaining to networking emerges here to be set into three-tier layering, i.e. the understanding of reality from the perspective of the ÒlocalityÓ (insideness), the diagnosis and pathology of the problems (perspectives), and finally the remedy (prospective). How do SASNET will make its networking to reach to the grass root where India's masses (above 67%) live? Are we really ready to open our boots and socks to enter into muddy swamps? OR we can sit somewhere and with the help of all sort of complex web of IT and prescribe remedial measures? Our sordid love and training for sophisticated network of IT restrict us to have direct, primary and participatory experiences! Is it possible that we can replace it by modern IT system? Most of the coming-up Western Models emphasise the assumption that if you have all sort of data, solution of problems can easily be sought! This is quite dangerous from the perspective of those by virtue of being citizen of South Asia and representative of the masses grown in a age-old long tradition of carrying values, mental set-up and lifeworld.

The IT vs. Understanding and Basic Education

A real knowledge always enlightens integral thought of ecological cosmology. Storing information is not knowledge. Knowledge is wisdom of deeper quest in the service of humankindness. Lovelock's (1995: xvi) statement that ÒModern science has become as professional as the advertising industryÓ needs to be changed and channelled for humanity. He further (*ibid*.: 13) eloquently provoked that human future depends much more upon the right relationship with the mother earth than with the never-ending drama of human interest.

In India, population education should be taken as impartial part of moral education which itself is directly associated with the formation of human values like compassion, sympathy, moral duty, simple living with high thinking, respectability and reverence, honesty, devotion to work, welfare and kindness, brotherhood and mutual cohesiveness. In Indian thought this is called as *dharma* (Òmoral dutyÓ). The moral education has been misused and misinterpreted by politicians in the frame of secularism, secularist democracy and secular education. Remember India is a multi-religious country, forming a mosaic, which altogether make a cultural-whole. Moral education is in no way related to a religious idea, rather it is a process, an internal dialogue, a mental transformation towards realising universalism, global brotherhood and ecological cosmology. In many respects the present education system is failing at the front of mass awakening for the human service. The situation at primary level education is more crucial.

Towards ÒOpenness in IT & UnderstandingÓ?

The human quest for understanding the other side, either of nature or of the people has its own historical roots. The people to be studied by a researcher certainly know some things about themselves, which the researcher does not, but what the researcher knows some things about them they do not. This is one of the dilemmas between 'insider and 'outsider' approach in qualitative search. And, both need to be taken in a balanced form to make integration for better understanding (cf. Singh 1995a: 104-108). A researcher should be a participant-observer having respect for the group s/he is studying, being free from the individual biases while maintaining a neutral position. Judging in the light of trifurcate openness in research, i.e. openness to the research situation, to the research and to oneself, and following humanistic approach and phenomenology, a researcher has to ask himself: To what extent he understands the 'other people' and how close to their feelings and sentiments he is going to expose them? In the serious studies of the lifeworld and religious traditions where deep feelings and faith always work invisibly or implicitly the issue of Òopenness in researchÓ becomes very important. One may follow phenomenology, hermeneutics, or participatory observation, or whatever approaches one like, everywhere appears a deep sense of revelation across the methodological bondage and disciplinary boundaries. This is also a challenge before the global networking and cybernetic system of IT. To give much emphasis on the storing, channelling and integrating the data will keep us away from the real understanding of life and values of the common masses.

Worknetting: Interconnecting Humanity to Divinity

The present understanding of 'development' has been based on the role of science and technology in the service of humankind with a view to controlling nature and the cosmic order. This needs a re-search and re-orientation. The greatest loss recorded in India during the colonial period was the loss of our old ethic of eco-justice, which refers to the sanctity of life and cosmic interconnectedness (ecological cosmology), which extends to the sense of global family or universal brotherhood (*vasudhaiv kutumbakam*). This ethic helped society to maintain an order between *dharma* (moral code of conduct) and *karma* (right action). In course of acculturation, the ideology of materialism, consumerism and individualism – which was mostly negated in traditional

Hindu thought – has been accepted by contemporary society. At the other extreme – and perhaps in consequence – the movement of revival of ancient cultural values is being turned to fundamentalism by some groups. The old principle of *satyameva jayate* (only truth triumphs) is now replaced by *arthameva jayate* (only wealth triumphs) (cf. Singh 1999 a: 60).

The country is facing a cultural crisis in most of its sectors. The great mystery of this crisis is that in this phase of transition at one end of our life we are carrying the uncritical taboos of the past in the form of superstition, rituals, casteism, communalism and fundamentalism, and at the other end consumerism, individualism and Westernisation. In fact, there has been the root in the remote past. Charvaka, ca the 1st-2nd centuries, propounded the materialistic philosophy (atheism) of life, a challenge to Vedic theism, who believed in the direct experience and the worldly pleasure. He says, ÒVedas are the creation of eccentric and stupid people for their own benefit and exploitation of the societyÓ. What is visual, what is to be experienced and whatever one achieves that is the *samsara* (ÒlifeworldÓ), there is nothing beyond it. He prescribes: Ò Till you are alive, enjoy the pleasant life even at the price of taking debt; if you have no means take loans from others, because after cremation your dead body will not return to see this worldÓ. By contrast to other religions and cultures, Hinduism has had a tradition of welcoming heresies into its fold. That is how, Charvaka and his followers are accepted in the pantheon of Hindu philosophies despite their repudiation of rituals and faith in the message of Vedas.

In fact, without critical appraisal and re-evaluation of the age-old traditional values, they have been now accepted as part of life, reflected mostly in the form of superstitions and rituals. The cultural and ethical crises that the country faces today are more dangerous than any other pollution. This reminds a parable of the Raft told by the Buddha:

> Once a man was drowning in a sudden flood. Just as he was about to drown, he found a raft. He clung to it, and it carried him safely to dry land. And he was so grateful to the raft that he carried it on his back for the rest of his life (Ramanujan 1992: 57).

In a very similar way the Indian society carried the out-dated traditions of the past and additionally borrowed the value-free Western approach in the name of modernisation. However, there is an invisible spirit keeping the nation alive. Says the novelist Shashi Tharoor (1997: 6), Ò the reason India has survived all the stresses and strains that have beset it for fifty years (after independence), and that led so many to predict its imminent disintegration, is that it maintained consensus on how to manage without consensusÓ. This is very difficult to understand, but not impossible. We face a clash of culture; narrates Hari Dam (as quoted in Raine 1997:10):

> You live in time; we live in space. You're always on the move; we're always at rest.
> Religion is our first love; we revel in metaphysics.
> Science is your passion; you delight in physics.
> You believe in freedom of speech; you strive for articulation.
> We believe in freedom of silence; we lapse into meditation.
> Self-assertiveness is the key to your success;
> Self-abnegation is the secret of our survival.
> You're urged every day to want more and more;
> We're taught from the cradle to want less and less.
> Joie de vivre is your ideal; conquest of desires is our goal.
> In the sunset years of life, you retire to enjoy the fruits of your labour;
> We renounce the world and prepare ourselves for the hereafter.

Basic and Moral Education

In spite of several programmes to check the speedy growth of population, India has not been able to reach its optimal goal. In 1986 a new education policy was formulated with a realisation that only moral education and conscience would help in this context. This new policy has proposed a "programme of action" which would emphasise the cultural recognition of "small family" -- *ham do, hamare do* ("we are two: husband and wife, and we have two: a son, a daughter"). Population-education is also given due consideration to promote "family planning and family welfare" programmes. Population-education is a form of moral education promoting awareness to realise the basic realities of population problems and their consequential impacts on life style, development and ongoing daily situations we have to face, and also the broader perspectives of interrelatedness between population and ecological order. The three main objectives are: (1) to inform about the consequences of high population, (2) to examine the impact of increasing population on development, human life, and natural environment, and (3) to make awareness towards realisation of the consequences, and strategy for checking and reducing population growth and promoting "small family".

The population education is impartial part of moral education which itself directly is associated with the formation of human values like compassion, sympathy, moral duty, simple living with high thinking, respectability and reverence, honesty, devotion to work, welfare and kindness, brotherhood and mutual cohesiveness. In Indian thought this is called as *dharma* ("moral duty"). The moral education has been misused and misinterpreted by politicians in the frame of secularism, secularist democracy and secular education. Remember India is a multi-religious country, forming a mosaic, which altogether make a cultural-whole. Moral education is in no way related to a religious idea, rather it is a process, an internal dialogue, a mental transformation towards realising universalism, global brotherhood and ecological cosmology. In many respects the present education system is failing at the front of mass awakening for the human service. The situation at primary level education is more crucial.

It has been obvious that during four decades after independence the literacy growth was very poor. One of the major obstacles has been socialistic planning emphasising spending volumes rather than productivity, and this results to disastrous in education as in other fields (Aiyar, 1999: 14). During 1951-91 India has spent 3.8 per cent of GDP on education, but achieved 52 per cent of literacy (1991), while in China Mao spent only 2.5 per cent of GDP but achieved 85 per cent literacy. Traditionally, educational funds were misspent in two ways in India. First, disproportionate amount went to higher education, and secondly mostly in the Hindi heartland (Uttar Pradesh and Bihar).

A case study of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), the most populous state of India recording 139 millions of people, shows that majority of elementary schools are unrecognised and therefore unaided. Such primary schools are of two types: (1) project-oriented schools managed on commercial principles, and (2) non-profit educational institutions run by voluntary organisations, charitable trusts, religious missions, development agencies and community institutions. Dreze and Gazdar (1996: 86) conclude that educational backwardness in U.P. primarily reflects the *combined effects* of (1) the state's failure to provide adequate schooling facilities, and (2) social norms and practices that have been detrimental to the widespread utilisation of available facilities. They (*ibid.*: 87) have further added: " the system of governmental schools has been comprehensively corrupted. The failure of the schooling system in combination with persistent inequalities of class, and gender, has kept even the most elementary achievements out of reach of large sections of the population". The situations in Bihar is beyond imagination; the state is well known for its corruption, scandals, political manoeuvring, caste and class war, non-payment of salaries to employees, bribery... and so on, i.e. a type of barbarian society where chaos is accepted as way of life --- a *jungle raj*! This

chaos was imposed by the ruling party, Rastriya Janta Dal, RJD, under the chief ministership of Mrs. Rabari Devi, an illiterate wife of party's president Mr Lalu Yadav. The state of Bihar, is distinct from the usual accounts hitherto on corruption, criminalisation of politics, domination of the society by Mafia, carnage, casteism, and insolent bureaucracy, etc. that the State conjures up in popular mind (cf. Biswas, 1996). A political threat is recently given by the defeat of Mr. Lalu Yadav in the recent parliamentary election (September-October 1999), which may be taken as a sign of the end of *jungle raj*.

In two other ways there are pitfalls in the education budget: the one that it is not sufficient, and also the categorical allotment is not structured. In some states teachers' salaries are swallowed up 99 per cent of the education budget, leaving nothing for aids or training. Says Aiyar (1999: 14) that ÒTraining was useless where no teaching materials were available, so teachers lack motivation. Rapacious politicians often diverted sums earmarked for educationÓ. He rightly suggests ÒIn this milieu, doubling the education budget (as proposed by former prime minister Narasimha Rao) would simply have doubled the waste. The most urgent need was institutional reform to spend money more productivelyÓ. The District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), a central government initiative in 1994 supported by foreign donors, has been successful and now spread to fourteen states. Under DPEP, the centre provides 85 per cent of funding for extra educational efforts focussed on districts with the lowest literacy and gender disparities. The state's contribution of the rest 15 per cent has to be in addition to its normal education budget. Under DPEP the foreign donors have no say in the curriculum; they can only offer suggestions on institutional change and have periodic reviews of the use of money and its impact on the educational development. In such institutional change, strong emphasis has to be laid on moral ethics, population education and conscience and awakening.

Let us hope for such breakthrough in the cultural development of India. The root of Indian mindset is Hinduism that possesses the inherent roots of tolerance, secularism and adjustability in the line of changing socio-economic conditions at global level. Says Bakker (1999: 10), ÒFor the inhabitants of India it (*Hinduism*) is much more than that; the development of Hinduism do not take example by the bloody history that joins the three great Semitic religionsÓ. Gandhian thought of *ahimsa* has shown us the right path to proceed (cf. Singh, Rana, 1999: 57).

Epilogue: From Perspective to Consensus

Ò A religion is one that teaches respect for the dignity and sanctity of all nature. The wrong religion is one that licenses the indulgence of human greed at the expense of non-human natureÓ (Toynbee and Ikeda 1976: 324). We need a religion (*dharma*), which promotes pantheism, variety of forms, and variety of inherent meanings. Hinduism is an example where all form of nature and its objects are manifested with a distinct sanctity, and someway at some point accepted as part of worship. The moral ethics and religious values provoked in almost all the religions agree that there is one true religion, which is to do justice, and love mercy and walk humbly with the earth spirit – sacred power/God (Clark 1994): 127). This is an ethical issue on the line of spirit of sustainability. Reverence – the deeper vision of the sanctity of life; responsibility – the connecting link between ethics and rationality; frugality – grace without waster; and ecojustice all form the minimal core of intrinsic values for right conservation and preservation of the spirit of sustainability (cf. Skolimowski 1990: 100-102). Philosopher Skolimowski calls it Òreverential developmentÓ, a unitary principle which combines reverence and sanctity of life with contemporary economic, social, moral, cultural, and traditional premises to bring peace and harmony with nature (*ibid*.: 103). That fact that they may be difficult to implement in practice in no way negates their importance and desirability (Singh 1996: 105). The idea of reverential development is an

exposition of integration between *dharma* (moral code of conduct) and *karma* (right action), which ultimately results to peace (Singh 2000: 454). Peace and poises are narrated by the Vedic seers as the precondition of orderly and sustainable environmental development:

> The peace in the sky, the peace in the mid air.
> The peace on the earth, the peace in the water.
> The peace in plants, the peace in the forest trees.
> And peace in all the divinities, the peace in ultimate reality.
> The peace in all things. The peace in peace.
> May that peace come to us.

The main crisis the humankind faces is the crisis of Òthought-pollutionÓ, but this can easily be resolved to a certain extent with awakening the spirit of ÒSelf-realisationÓ. Remember, Òif nothing in all the universe is frail as man, nothing likewise is so divine as he!Ó (Arvindo 1979: 14). The feeling of this reality can promote global humanism (Òwhole world as one familyÓ, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*), the inherent force of ecological cosmology (cf. Singh 1999b: 84-85). A 10th century BCE text, the *Atharva Veda* (III.10) has very clearly expressed this realisation:

> Of one heart and of one mind, Free from hated do I make you,
> Take delight in one another, As the cow does in her baby calf.
> Loyal to his sire the son be, Of one mind, too, with his mother;
> Sweet and kindly language ever, Let the wife speak to her husband.
> Brother shall not hate the brother, And the sister not the sister,
> Of one mind and of one intent, Speak ye words of kindness only.

ÒLet us hope we will have the sense to seek, the wisdom to listen, and the patience to learnÓ (Devereux 1990: 216). Let us hope that SASNET should follow the path of ecological cosmology and serve the cause of understanding and serving the humanity in a better way. The words of African ecologist poet Babu Dioum is a great warning (cf. Singh 1995b: 215):

> In the end
> We will conserve only what we love.
> We will love only what we understand.
> We will understand only what we learn.

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RANA P. B. Singh (b.1950), MA, PhD, Professor of Cultural Geography at Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, UP 221005, India. He is the *Founding President* of the (a) Society of Pilgrimage Studies, SPS (fd. 1989), (b) Society of Heritage Planning & Environmental Health, SHPEH (fd 1989), and (c) Indo-Nordic Cultural Association, INCA (fd 1992). Serving as member of the Editorial Board, SARU (South Asia Research Unit) –Australia for ECAI, since 2001. He has been involved in studying, performing and promoting the heritage planning, Eco-tourism and rural studies and development in the Varanasi region for the last two decades, as consultant, project director, collaborator and organiser. He is also serving as Chief

Co-ordinator to the two international projects: (a) Imperial College (UK) project on ÒImpact of Air Pollution on the Vegetable Farming System and Socio-economic Characteristics and its Policy ImplicationsÓ, 1999-2002, and (b) SAI Heidelberg (Germany) project on ÒVisualising Sacred Space and Religious Cartography of VaranasiÓ, 1999-2003. In research, he combines the trilogy of historical process, cultural tradition and environmental ethics to understand the people and landscape in India. His contributions are appreciated by inclusion and highlights in the **Who's Who in the World** (Marquis Who's Who, New Providence NJ, USA), an yearly publication: since 1999 to 2002. On these topics he has given lectures at various centres in America, Europe, East Asia and Australia. His publications include over hundred research papers and thirty books, including two regional guidebooks for cultural tourism. The recent ones include *Banaras (Varanasi), Cosmic Order, Sacred City, Hindu Traditions* (1993), *Environmental Ethics* (1993), *The Spirit and Power of Place* (1994), *Banaras Region: A Spiritual & Cultural Guide* (2002, with P. S. Rana), *Where the Buddha Walked* (2002, with P. S. Rana) and working on the *Holy Cities of North India: Sacred Geography and Pilgrimage Mandala.* (2002), and the *Sacred Geography of Goddesses in India* (2002).
Tel: +0091-542-314011; E-mail: ranapbs@satyam.net.in

Prof. RANA P. B. Singh : the Swedish (Nordic) Connection

1) *Project Co-ordinator*: Karlstad University, Sweden on ÒComparison of Life-world and Farming Systems in Sweden and India: Östmark (Sweden) and Chamaon (India)Ó, 1995-2000; with Prof. Gerhard Gustafsson, and supervised and helped Kristina Lejonhud, a PhD student from Karlstad University who worked on an Indian village which I studied and published a book in 1977.

2) Publication jointly with Swedish colleagues: Gerhard Gustafsson, Rana P. B. Singh, K. Lejonhud & K.I. Vålvik, ÒChange and continuity in village India: crisis and prospects in Chamaon, VaranasiÓ, **FENNIA, International Journal of Geography** (Geographical Society of Finland, Helsinki), Vol. 178 (No.2), 2000: pp. 203 – 214.

3) Visited Karlstad University and given series of Seminars and lectures on various topics of India: village life and rural development, pilgrimage systems and sacredscapes, Varanasi as Holy city and its sacred geography, Where religious ethics and development programmes meet, Development crisis, & participated in International Seminars: 1989, 1993, 1996, 1997, 1999 and 2001. During these visits also given lectures at the universities of Lund, Gothenburg, Uppsala, Stockholm; Copenhagen (Denmark), Abo and Vaasa (Finland), and Oslo and Bergen (Norway).

4) Attended as one of the key-note speakers to the International SASNET Workshop about 'Global Networking in South Asian Studies' 27-28 August, Lund University, Sweden; now co-ordinating to the SASNET as member from India.

5) Given Seminars on ÒRural Society, Environmental ethics, and Grassroots Development in IndiaÓ at Sida-Sando for the World Bank trainees Workshop in 1993, 1996 and 1999.

6) *Visiting Faculty*, Karlstad University, KU (Sweden) and Banaras Hindu University (India) Academic Exchange Programme, at KU – December 1989, May-June 1993, August 1996.

7) One of the founding members of the Swedish Centre of Karlstad University in Varanasi in 1995; and since then every year supervise students in their field studies and the thematic topics of their concern, including the introductory slide-show lecture.

8) Working closely with Prof. Anders Närman, Director: Centre for African Studies, Gothenburg University (Sweden) on the issue of ÒDevelopment dialogues in the SouthÓ, since 1996.

9) Working with Nordic scholars of religious studies on inter-religious dialogues for global peace and deeper understanding of the spirit of place: with Prof. Knut Jacobsen (Univ. of Bergen, Norway) and Prof. Eric Sand (Univ. of Copenhagen, Denmark), since 2000.

10) *Co-ordinator*: International Exchange Programme, Linnaeus-Palme Project of Karlstad University and Banaras Hindu University, LPP-KU & BHU, since 2001; collaborating with Prof. Gerhard Gustafsson and Dr Marc J. Katz (Karlstad University, Sweden).

11) Founding *President* : Indo-Nordic Cultural Association, INCA (Varanasi); since 1992.