

The Middle Path: Towards sustainability and global well-being

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Abstract: Asoka Bandarage argues that growing economic inequality and the distribution of resources and opportunities is the main social issue of our time. She explores the systemic roots of the current crisis through an integration of critical social science analysis and a universal spiritual approach to ecological sustainability and social development. She argues that the current crisis can be located in unbridled economic growth and the twin forces of capital and technology.

Introduction

Today, in the context of the worst global economic crisis since the 1930s, unemployment and social unrest are increasing in many parts of the world. The ILO warns of a 'lost generation' of youth dropping out of the labor market, 'having lost all hope of being able to work for a decent living'.¹ The highest rates of youth (ages between 15 and 29) unemployment exist in the Middle East and North Africa, around 24 percent each.² The problem is not attributable simply to population growth. In fact, the downward global trends in fertility may converge to below-replacement levels and a faster global population stabilization than earlier expected.³

Growing economic inequality and the distribution of resources and opportunities is the main social issue of our time. According to a 2008 United Nations University– WIDER study, 85% of all global assets belonged to the richest 10% of the global population with over 50% of all assets being the property of the richest 2%. In contrast, the poorest 50% in the world had barely 1% of total global wealth.⁴ According to 2011 United Nations estimates, 1.44 billion people are still living on less than U. S \$ 1.25 a day with close to a third of the world's population experiencing 'multidimensional poverty with deprivations in health, economic opportunities and living standards'.⁵

As corporations develop still more sophisticated technologies and financial networks, these so-called 'world empires of the 21st century', control larger shares of global resources and wealth wielding more power over people's lives than most governments. Governments in turn serve the interests of corporations sanctioning corporate monopolies and mergers; speculation over productive investment; wage restraints and lifting environmental regulations and restrictions

¹ 'Global youth unemployment at all-time high: UN' www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/news-details.php?nid=150549

² 'The Youth Unemployment Bomb', www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/11_07/b...

³ Bandarage, *Women Population and Global Crisis*, op.cit., pp.5, 146-149; 'Global Population Of 10 Billion By 2100? – Not So Fast' yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/global-population-10-billion...

⁴ www.wider.unu.edu/events/past-events/2006-events/en_GB/...

⁵ www.panarmenian.net/eng/economy/news/64950/144_billion...

on natural resource extraction.⁶ As 'developing' countries in the 'Global South' such as China and India fully embrace capitalism, like their western counterparts in the 'developed' 'Global North, they too sacrifice long term environmental and social sustainability for short term growth.

The accelerating race to control global energy and natural resources threatens environmental sustainability and collective security. Politicians and the corporate controlled media exacerbate dualistic 'us vs. them' thinking contributing to ethno-religious conflict, nationalism and xenophobia. As a result, attention is diverted away from the common threats faced by people across cultural and national boundaries. Quite often, political fragmentation of states serve local and external interests seeking control over territory and resources rather than the down-trodden groups that secessionist movements claim to represent.⁷ Policies of inter-governmental organizations such as the World Bank, IMF and the United Nations and non-governmental organizations associated with interests of corporations and nation states also mitigate against the development of a common global consciousness. Even minimal efforts to address climate change such as the Kyoto Protocol are undermined and many of the poorest counties are 'off track' in reaching United Nations Millennium Development Goals.⁸ In the meantime, some of the countries regions with the greatest reserves of energy and natural resources, such as, the Middle East, Africa and Central and South Asia have become the most militarized and conflict ridden.

Militarism and intervention underlie economic growth. Military expenditure is steadily rising. According to the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, global military expenditure was US\$ 1.62 trillion in 2010 or \$236 for every person in the world. This represents a 50 per cent increase of global military expenditure since 2001. The global military super power, the US accounted for 43 per cent of global defense expenses in 2010, followed by China (7.3%), UK (3.7%), France (3.6%), and Russia (3.6%).

Drones, the first wave of satellite guided unmanned aerial vehicles now being deployed could well transform warfare into a robotics arms race in space. In addition, there are some 31,000 nuclear warheads deployed or in reserve in the stockpiles of eight countries: Russia, the US, France, the United Kingdom, China, India, Israel, Pakistan. These nuclear stockpiles have

⁶ **Rajesh Makwana 'Multinational Corporations (MNCs): Beyond The Profit Motive'** in Share the World's Resources, 2006 <http://www.stwr.org/multinational-corporations/multinational-corporations-mncs-beyond-the-profit-motive.html>

⁷ Asoka Bandarage, *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy* (London: Routledge, 2001); Asoka Bandarage, "The "Norwegian Model": Political Economy of NGO Peacemaking" The Brown Journal of World Affairs, Spring / Summer 2011 volume xvii, issue ii, pp. 221-242

⁸ Climate Debt Report, 'The end game in Durban? How developed countries bullied and bribed to try to kill Kyoto', World Development Movement, Nov. 2011; 'U.S. Inaction on Climate is *Criminal*' Inter Press Service, Dec. 2011; www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11_MDG%20Report_EN.pdf

thousands of times more explosive power than the bomb used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁹

In sharp contrast to the peaceful new world order envisioned at the end of the Cold War, the world is experiencing an explosion of 'complex emergencies'. They combine terrorism and armed conflicts with collapse of economic, political and social institutions, environmental destruction, famine, displacement and other human rights violations. Complex emergencies are especially evident in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia today. Many of the estimated 50 million or so refugees in the world are 'environmental refugees', victims of crises associated with climate change. The vast majority of people killed in wars are also civilians, a large proportion being women and children. According to the BBC, there are an estimated three hundred thousand child soldiers (some as young as six years old) globally, not counting growing numbers deployed as suicide bombers.

The language of environmental sustainability, basic needs, human development, human security, human rights, etc. have been adopted by dominant world institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations, USAID and even transnational corporations. The incorporation of such language reflects the influence of social movements and progressive social forces on the status-quo. Yet, as the right wing conservative onslaught discredits liberalism more and more, radical analyses have virtually disappeared from the discourse even in academia.

The Middle Path

What is required now is not substitution of one form of authoritarianism with another but a conscious shift towards a democratic and sustainable model of global evolution. The approach that the Buddha identified as the Middle Way/Path (*majjhima patipada in Pali*) in 5 B.C. is valuable in this regard. The Buddha taught the Middle Path based on his own life experiences, first as an heir to a royal throne living the life of sensual pleasures and later as a spiritual seeker experimenting with self mortification. Having realized that neither extreme - over indulgence and self denial - provided inner peace, he went on to advocate the Middle Way as the means to liberation. According to the traditional story, the Buddha realized the meaning of the Middle Path as he sat by a river listening to a lute player on a passing boat. He then understood that to produce a harmonious sound, the lute must be tuned neither too tight nor too loose. The Yoga teachings of Patanjali which complement Buddhist philosophy also uphold moderation as the basis for balance and harmony of the human body and mind and of society as a whole.¹⁰

The applicability of the Middle Way to societal peace and harmony is inherent in the Buddha's teaching of the Four Noble Truths: reality of suffering, cause of suffering, cessation of suffering and the Path to ending suffering). Buddha pointed out the reality of impermanence, the

⁹ www.nuclearfiles.org/.../basics/nuclear-stockpiles.htm

¹⁰ *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Translation and Commentary by Sri Swami Satchidananda,(Yogaville: Integral Yoga Publications, 2007; see also, Georg Feuerstein and Brenda Feuerstein, *Green Yoga*, Saskatchewan: Traditional Yoga Studies, 2007

changing nature of all material and mental phenomena and the suffering that comes from attachment to such changing phenomena. Identifying greed, hatred and ignorance (including limited vision) as the roots of suffering, he advocated the cultivation of non-attachment or mental equilibrium/equanimity as the path to freedom. The Law of Dependent Origination explains the conditioned arising of all phenomena, the reality of cause and effect. Liberation calls for walking the Middle Path, nurturing the set of 'right' or non-harmful, non-violent actions known as the Noble Eightfold Path (right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration).¹¹

The middle road is not about mediocrity and blandness or being 'wishy washy'. Rather it is about balance, openness and patience. As scholar-monk, Bhikku Bodhi writes, the Middle Path "is not a compromise between the extremes but a way that rises above them, avoiding the pitfalls into which they lead".¹² It is a path that avoids extremes of all forms – be it fascism, terrorism, ethno-religious fundamentalism, capitalism, Communism, patriarchy or racism. The Middle Path is built on generosity, compassion and wisdom not greed, hatred and ignorance. It is a path of peace not violence. While sectarian terms such as 'Buddhist' may be cast aside, the universal relevance of the Middle Path to freedom and well being should not be overlooked. Buddhist teachings have mostly been applied to understand individual transformation, but now its relevance to social and global transformation must be recognized.

Social and Environmental Sustainability

Resolution of the contemporary global crisis calls for fundamental rethinking of the global economic system and a shift towards a more sustainable Middle Path. Economists E.F. Schumacher and Herman E. Daly envisioned it as 'Buddhist economics' and 'ecological economics' respectively while still others have identified it as 'compassionate economics'.¹³ As Schumacher explained, the Buddhist Middle Way is by no means 'antagonistic to physical well-being. It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them'.¹⁴ This teaches us to distinguish between human needs and wants and to understand that mind matters most and that we have the power to transform our individual and collective consciousness. This has great relevance for the conscious transformation of the global economic system towards rational allocation of natural resources, appropriate technology, balanced consumption, meaningful employment and a more equitable distribution of wealth.

Ethical, social and ecological criteria must be introduced into economic decision making at the

¹¹ Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, (London: Gordon Fraser, 1978)

¹² Bodhi, Bhikku (1993) 'Tolerance and Diversity', *Newsletter*, Buddhist Publication Society, No. 24, Summer-Fall; see also, publications of the Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka. www.bps.lk

¹³ Ibid., p. 325; E.F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful*, New York: Harper and Row, 1989; Herman E. Daly and Joshua N. Farley, *Ecological Economics: Principles And Application*(Washington D.C., Island Press, 2009);Jesse Norman, *Compassionate Economics: The social foundations of economic prosperity* (London: University of Buckingham Press, 2008)

¹⁴ Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* op.cit., p.60

outset rather than after social and environmental degradation has already taken place. A shift from unbridled growth to sustainability calls for changes in both property relations and the technologies used in production, distribution and communication. Production of negative use values - nuclear and conventional weapons, violent entertainment, the skin trade- and so on must be transformed into production of life enhancing goods and services. In their Councils, the Iroquois and other Native American communities made each important decision by considering its impact on the seventh generation.¹⁵ It is not possible or necessary to return to the stagnation that characterized tribal societies or abandon economic and technological innovation and growth altogether. But, we can learn from some of our ancestors how to strike a balance between short-term profit maximization and long-term reproduction of human beings and the ecosystem.

The Middle Path does not advocate a complete disavowal of quantitative growth, the state or complete delinking of regions from the global market or technology. Rather, it calls for greater awareness of the dangers of the current trajectory of development and consideration of more balanced alternatives. As Herman Daly, has argued, to maintain sustainability, the economy should not grow beyond the ecosystem's capacity to regenerate raw material inputs into production and its capacity to absorb waste materials and energy outputs from production.¹⁶ In other words, use of renewable sources of energy and appropriate technology must come before economic growth considerations. To this must be added employment needs, meaningful livelihood and economic survival for people.

Community economics is vital for the survival of local ecosystems, cultures, ethnic groups, communities and families. As futurist Hazel Henderson has noted, the demand for bioregionalism and decentralization carries within it a critiques of monopoly capitalism and unsustainable technological growth.¹⁷ Bioregionalism honors local self-sufficiency as well as control of water, land and other natural resources including plant and seed varieties by local populations.

Still, given deepening globalization and centralization, calls for economic decentralization and 'small is beautiful' must not override the need for a global social and ecological agenda. Given the deepening global inequality-poverty-conflict-environment nexus, codes of conduct to regulate transnational corporations and nation states, especially in the realm of natural resource exploitation and weapons production, are called for. As organizations and movements such as Share the World's Resources, the World Development Movement, Friends of Earth and the Third World Network and the growing world-wide Occupy Wall Street Movement advocate, policies to limit the private appropriation of resources and wealth are

¹⁵ Cited in Bandarage, *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, op.cit., p.326; see also, Helena Norberg-Hodge, *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1992

¹⁶ Herman Daly, "Achieving Development Without Growth", *Surviving Together*, Winter 1993, p. 44

¹⁷ Hazel Henderson, *Paradigms in Progress: Life Beyond Economics*, San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995

urgently needed.¹⁸

The accumulation of wealth by a few at the expense of the survival of the many and the natural environment is simply not sustainable. Large banks, for example, need to invest accumulated monies in sustainable development and employment creation rather than the pursuit of more money. Increasing global economic inequality is sharpening the divergence between under consumption and over consumption among different segments of the global population. In order to eradicate poverty and hunger among marginalized groups, overconsumption by the wealthy need to be reduced and under consumption among the poorer groups increased. The 'Middle Path Equilibrium Curve' (Figure) helps demonstrate that neither the extreme of poverty nor wealth can bring forth material and spiritual well being.

Middle Path Equilibrium

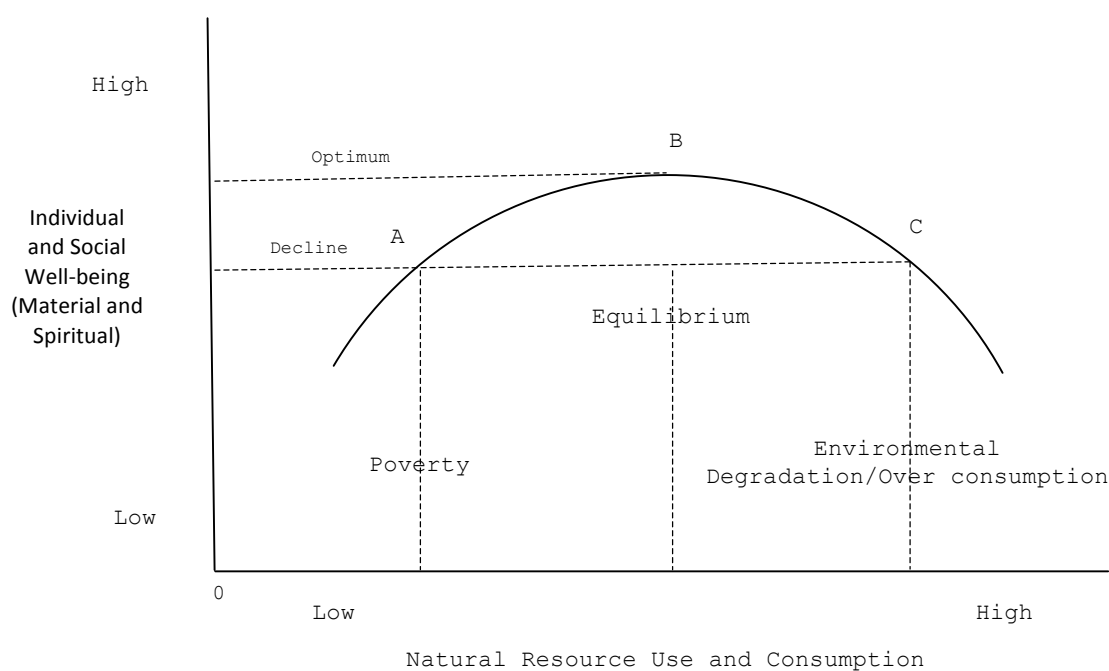
Poverty and under-consumption contributes to human suffering. Excessive material consumption also has the tendency to decrease overall human well-being by contributing to natural resource depletion, social inequalities and conflicts as well as human alienation from each other and spiritual emptiness.¹⁹ In contrast to these two extremes, the optimum balance between human well-being and environmental sustainability can be achieved by following a Middle Path of rational use of natural resources and balanced consumption.

See Figure !

¹⁸ Share the World's Resources - www.stwr.org; World Development Movement www.wdm.org.uk; Friends of Earth www.foe.org; Third World Network www.twn.org

¹⁹ Patrick Mendis, 'Buddhist Equilibrium: The Theory of Middle Path for Sustainable Development', Staff Paper P93-2, Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, January; Duane Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity: Toward A Way of Life That is Outwardly Simple, Inwardly Rich*, New York: William Morrow & Co. Inc., New York, 1981.

Figure 1 Middle Path Equilibrium Curve



Source: Adapted from P. Mendis, 'Buddhist Equilibrium: The Theory of Middle Path for Sustainable Development', Cited in Asoka Bandarage, *Women, Population and Global Crisis: A Political-Economic Analysis* (London: Zed Books, 1997), p. 331

As Alan Durning has shown in *How Much is Enough: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth* there are three distinct classes in the world with regard to consumption including raw material usage, food consumption and transportation.²⁰ The top and bottom rungs representing the extremes of poverty and wealth are both unsustainable whereas the middle rung represents a balanced Middle Path to human and ecological sustainability.

At the bottom of the global 'resource consumption ladder' are about 1 billion rural people in regions such as Africa and South Asia who survive mostly on local biomass collected from their immediate environment amounting to about half a pound of grain, two pounds of fuel wood and fodder for their animals every day. But, with increasing environmental destruction, poverty and population growth, even these minimal resource needs are more threatened. In contrast, at the top of the global resource consumption ladder are people living in the developed regions such as the U.S.A, Western Europe and Japan responsible for much of

²⁰ Alan Durning, *How Much is Enough: The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*, New York: W.W.Norton and Co., 1992; Alan Durning, "Asking How Much is Enough" *State of the World*, World Watch Institute, 1991 cited in Bandarage, *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, op.cit., pp. 228-232

global resource depletion. A typical resident of the industrialized fourth of the world is estimated to use about '15 times as much paper, 10 times as much steel, and 12 times as much fuel as a resident of the developing world.'²¹

In the middle rung of the global resource consumption ladder are the 2 billion or so people living in countries such as Mexico and Turkey. They use between 50 and 150 kilograms of steel, around 1,000 kilograms of energy and around 33 kilograms of paper a year. Per capita energy use, which is a good indirect indicator of overall use of materials, is relatively low and their contribution to forest destruction through use of paper is also minimal.²² Global energy and resource consumption need to shift from the extremes of under and over consumption to this sustainable middle rung. The same applies to food consumption.

The 'bottom twenty percent' of the global population living in poverty do not have enough food to eat or clean water to drink. Malnutrition and poverty related illnesses are rampant among them. In contrast, is the eating habits of the topmost rung of the global food ladder. Their high fat diet is associated with a number of so-called diseases of affluence, like heart disease, stroke and different types of cancer. Indirectly, this meat eating quarter of the world's population consumes about 40% of the world's grain, that is, the grain used to fatten the livestock they eat.²³ Cattle ranching takes land away from cultivation of beans and other staple food items of poor people. The extreme case of producing two pounds of 'American steak' requires 'ten pounds of grain and the energy equivalent of a half a gallon of gasoline' not counting associated 'soil erosion, water consumption, pesticide and fertilizer run off, ground water depletion and emissions of the greenhouse gas methane'.²⁴

In the middle rung of the global food consumption ladder are about 3.4 billion grain eaters who consume the world's healthiest diet consisting of sufficient calories and plant-based protein. This balanced, middle path of food consumption should become the global norm. Unfortunately, however, as more and more countries adopt the western model of 'development', people who have lived on grain based diets traditionally are also shifting towards meat and processed foods. The same pattern can be observed with regard to transportation.

At the bottom of the global transportation hierarchy are the billion or more people with a severe lack of access to transport who must do most of their travelling by foot. At the top of the hierarchy are those pursuing the fast paced American life style dependent on individual ownership of cars.

Individual ownership of vehicles prevents development of public transit systems, disrupts community and earth based life styles and alienate people from each other. Motor vehicles

²¹ Durning, "Asking How Much is Enough" op.cit., 161

²² Durning, Asking How Much is Enough, op.cit., p.53,67,81,91

²³ Durning, "Asking How Much is Enough" op.cit., p. 159

²⁴ Durning, "Asking How Much is Enough" op.cit., p. 159

are estimated to be directly responsible for more than 13% of the carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuels worldwide along with air pollution, acid rain, and over a quarter million annual traffic fatalities, not to mention growing conflicts and wars over oil.²⁵ According to estimates by the UNFPA, the world car fleet was expected to grow from 400 million to 700 million between 1990 and 2010 - twice as fast as the human population.²⁶ India and China respectively have the largest and fastest growing markets for cars in the world today.

Like water, food, shelter, health care and other basic necessities, the poor needs access to reliable and safe methods of transport. The so-called 'middle classes' pursuing the rich lifestyle based on over-consumption do not need to give up cars altogether but shift towards a Middle Path based on greater use of renewable energy and shared transportation. In the middle rung of the global transportation hierarchy, there are some 3 billion citizens who already travel mostly by bus or bicycle. Their mode of transport is cheap, safe and ecologically and socially sound and should therefore be the global norm.

From the vantage point of the Middle Path, a complete renunciation of economic and technological expansion, use of defense forces or complete social equality and homogeneity may not be required. However, the global shift to the Middle - towards renewable sources of energy, organic agriculture, community gardening, housing communities, biking, public transportation, etc. need to become stronger than the polarization towards the extremes of over and under consumption.

The shift to the balanced Middle Path calls for a global consciousness and social movement that can transcend the separation and competition between individuals, communities ethno-religious groups and nation states. As Brazilian scholar Leonardo Boff put it, "the citizens' sense of responsibility as active agents of society and co-builders of their common history' needs to be asserted."²⁷ For this to happen the myriad single issue movements and struggles and organizations must be unified by a common vision of humanity as a family and a species in nature and a commitment to non-violent change.²⁸ To withstand external cooptation and repression and internal dissension and rupture, the movement for social change must be firmly grounded on a more collectivist vision and interdependent thinking. The feminist writer Riane Eisler and others have conceptualized this as the paradigm shift from domination to partnership.²⁹

The Partnership Paradigm

An alternative partnership based consciousness has been present from the beginning of

²⁵ Ibid., p. 158

²⁶ cited in Bandarage, *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, op.cit., p.231

²⁷ Boff, Leonardo (1995) *Ecology and Liberation: A New Paradigm*, New York: Orbis Books, 1991, p.83

²⁸ Asoka Bandarage, 'In Search of A New World Order', *Women's Studies International*, Forum 14, No. 4.

²⁹ Riane, *Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987.

human societies. It is now converging into a global consciousness integrating seemingly disparate intellectual and spiritual traditions such as Buddhist, Native American and other indigenous teachings with social justice philosophies as well as elements of monistic fields of western science such as quantum theory and evolutionary biology. Physicists like Niels Bohr, David Bohm and Albert Einstein seem to speak the same language as the ancient spiritual teachers like the Buddha and Patanjali when they identify consciousness as energy and the 'ultimate building block of everything in the universe'.³⁰ According to Bohr, the universe is an 'unbroken whole' and as Bohm put it, the 'whole of the universe was enfolded in each of its parts...'.³¹ Consciousness and matter are not separate but interdependent.

The emerging synthesis of physics and spirituality is creating an eco-centric, holistic approach that takes the entirety of nature rather than its separate parts as its point of departure. Like the Mother Goddess worshipping prehistoric cultures, some contemporary scientists are also beginning to see the Earth -Gaia- as one living, breathing organism, indivisible and synergic.³² The eco-centric, partnership thinking allows the mind to see the organic unity of life and the interdependence of all phenomena. Humanity is not an entirely separate species, but a part of the animal system, which in turn is part of the plant system and the Earth organism, and ultimately of the ever-evolving Universe or multiple universes. In this sense, 'interbeing' the term coined by Vietnamese Buddhist scholar- monk, Thich Nhat Hanh, helps us move away from hierarchical dualisms towards an understanding of the inherent connectedness and the realization that the survival of the self depends on the survival of the other.³³ The early teachings of Christ as well as St. Francis of Assisi and some of the contemporary forms of Christian Liberation and Creation theology also take a more democratic, partnership approach to human and human-non human relations, in contrast to the domineering approach upheld by orthodox Christianity.

it is only as human beings begin to transcend the numbing of our hearts by excessive technology, materialism and bureaucratic regimentation and begin to soften inside that we can feel the pain of those destroyed by war, poverty and environmental disasters and so on as if it were our own pain. It is then that we can see the essential equality of all human beings and value the commonality of the human family and planetary community over our diversity and differences. The Middle Path is based on respect and a deep sensitivity towards the oneness of life and the necessity for cooperation and balance between the different parts and aspects of the whole.

Transformation of the Self

The transformation required in the world now is not simply an intellectual one; it is primarily a

³⁰ Ronald L. Peters, *Exploring the Psychology of Disease: A Manual for Healing Beyond Diet and Fitness*, (Nevada City, Blue Dolphin Publishing, 2003, p. 56

³¹ Ibid., pp. 56-57; see also, *The Tao of Physics*, Fritof Capra, Shambhala Publications, 1975

³² Cited in Bandarage, *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, op.cit., p. 316

³³ Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Sun My Heart*, (Berkeley, Parallax Press, 1988).

shift of the human heart: from ignorance, greed and hatred towards wisdom, generosity and compassion. It is only with wisdom and strong commitment on the part of more and more people to the basic values of compassion and generosity that the exploitation and domination of the present world order can be transcended and sustainable alternatives created.

Whereas haste and the achievement of ends and goals are the virtues within the dominant mechanistic paradigm, the process and the means used to achieve those are more important in the eco-centric paradigm and the Middle Path. Accustomed to living within a competitive, mechanistic world, many people today are cynical about commitment to non-violent, participatory processes. They have been taught to see life as nasty and brutish and diversity and difference as leading inevitably to conflicts. Indeed, nature is not all peaceful and cooperative; conflict and violence are interwoven with harmony and interdependence. Like birth and creation, death and destruction are inevitable aspects of planetary evolution. Finding one's place in the hierarchy and fighting for it may also be a basic aspect of primate life.

However, studies and statements such as the Seville Statement on Violence, issued at the International Colloquium on Brain and Aggression help dispel the widespread belief that global violence and crisis are attributable to biologically determined aggression. The Seville Statement points out that aggression and war are not inevitable; they are socially and historically created.³⁴ The pessimism of the Hobbesian and similar perspectives overlooks the capacity of the human mind for conscious transformation, the capacity which places humans above other species. Darwin himself recognized the importance of empathy and altruism in human evolution.³⁵ Compassion and Altruism Research based on the integration of scientific and spiritual investigation is emerging as a major field of study today.³⁶

We need to develop global visions and strategies that appeal to the highest moral and ethical values of human beings instead of our worst fears and insecurities. It is necessary to move away from stage one of moral development identified by Lawrence Kohlberg, of 'survival of the fittest' and rule of physical power towards stage six where universal ethical principles and democratic principles prevail.³⁷ We need to develop an agenda for political action that is firmly grounded on universal, spiritual teachings that move us beyond narrow sectarianisms and economic competition between nation states. We need commitment to a universal ethical code of conduct and a non-violent methodology as experimented with by Mahatma Gandhi. Non-violence must not be regarded as passive resistance but as an active power requiring creative confrontation and qualitative growth in all aspects of our lives. As Gandhi discovered, it is a power that lies in the process of discovering reality: it is a force of truth (*satyagraha*).³⁸

³⁴ Cited in Bandarage, *Women, Population and Global Crisis*, op.cit., Appendix 2

³⁵ **'Darwin the Buddhist? Empathy Writings Reveal Parallels'**

³⁶ Stanford University Center for Compassion and Altruism Research

³⁷ Cited Ibid., p. 322

³⁸ Cited *ibid.*, p.322

As such, it is diametrically opposed to the power that comes from the barrel of the gun.

Conclusion

The forces of authoritarianism and the forces of democracy have always been in dialectical interaction. The global paradigm change needed at this time, is not necessarily a final, once and for all utopian shift from domination to partnership. What is required for the purposes of global crisis resolution now is to strengthen the democratic participatory processes and undermine the authoritarian processes. Revolution lies in the process of transformation itself: it lies in every moment, in the here and now, rather than in the distant future.

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