

# **The Unity of Sciences and Unification Thought**

## **from the view point of the Social Sciences**

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1.

### **Setting and Argument**

I am extremely grateful to the organizers of the 18<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Unification Thought for having given me this opportunity to participate in this dialogue. I consider this Symposium both important and relevant in today's world.

The framers of the Prospectus of this Symposium have rightly posed the issues facing us in the following words:

*“Throughout history, people have longed for peace. Are there concrete examples of how people have longed for peace? In our current global age, religious and ethnic conflicts have taken on added intensity because of the growing access to weapons of mass destruction and because of seemingly insoluble problems such as the Palestine-Israel conflict. This and other problems need creative responses and the academic world has long served as the cradle for such innovation.*

Today the world is facing a range of complex issues transnational in character i.e. terrorism, armed conflict, environmental degradation, poverty, illiteracy and disease. Each one poses enormous challenges that call for a global strategic response. The Unification Movement under the leadership of Reverend Sun Myung Moon seeks to provide an adequate response. It calls for unification in thought the purpose of which is “*to reconcile warring nations and conflicting religions*”. The purpose of Unification Thought is also to achieve the goal of one-world family and to realize everlasting ideal world of God's love. The moot questions are: (i) how to move the world towards peace as firmly as it moved towards war in the last century?; and (ii) how to build a constructive public voice in global civil society in this behalf?

There is need to recognize that conceptual disarray significantly contributes to turmoil and barbarity that we see around us. Towards this, one of the major areas that require unification thought approach relates to social sciences and in particular to history.

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## Social Sciences

The unprecedented trust in science and technology to come up with all the answers is being increasingly challenged. The social sciences teach us to see in a wider perspective of what is really happening in and to our world. The expansion of the social sciences in the recent years and its being accompanied by growth in public awareness, acceptance and use is thus not surprising. The social scientists are in increasing demand by government, market, educational institutions, voluntary organizations and faith institutions. It is being realized by social scientists that finding fundamental solutions for today's complex world problems is impossible without a solid view of history equipped with a clear vision of the future.

## History

Etymologically, history is both “a tale”, and “a chronological record of significant past events”. The opening lines of story books for children – “once upon a time” – captures both story and time character of history. The history of our concern is both political history and the history of ideas. In the history of history, facts are sacrosanct. The relevant question is: does history have any role to play in shaping the future of a society?

In all major civilizations, the beginnings of historical narratives have a combination of both facts and imaginations. Over the years, successive historians have developed a number of sophisticated methods of checking the evidence and dealing with the gaps in their knowledge as well as partialities of their sources. In undertaking this task, historians aim to be objective rather than to move towards a said purpose. They have drawn enormous support from archaeology, anthropology, zoology, geography, economics and psychology and even the scriptures to support their interpretation.

An objective narration of events of a society or a country does not merely provide memory to a people or to a country about themselves but its corpus of knowledge also becomes a teacher. And its teachings educate us in many ways to help build a better world for the future. For, the discipline of history generates understanding and consciousness which is a profound influence upon the likely, the possible and the desirable future of society. It was in this context that E.H. Carr, in his book, *What is History?* speaks of history as “the long struggle of man, by the exercise of his reason, to understand his environment and to act upon it”. The social revolution and the technological revolution and the scientific revolution are part and parcel of the same process.

In recent times, two scholars, the celebrated Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) and a living legend - Francis Fukuyama in particular have written about end of history. Hegel had contemplated that Prussia could become Europe's leader and as Europe was already the ruler of the world, then history might be recorded as approaching towards its appointed end. In 1992, Francis Fukuyama, in his book, *The End of History And The Last Man*, asserted that with victory of capitalism over communism, the world could look forward to "the universalisation of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." Both these views had limited relevance in terms of time. The decline of Prussia in the last century and rise in terrorism and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have clearly established the untenability of end-of-history doctrine.

### **The 9/11 Terrorist Attacks**

The events of 9/11 and spread of terrorism have made it clear that peace still eludes us. There is an imperative need for a unified view of history that among other things would ensure correct narration of events and that in turn could help us formulate a public policy of harmony to meet demands of different peoples and societies.

On September 11, 2001, I was at Washington DC (working as Executive Director and Ambassador at the World Bank) and a witness to arrival of terrorism with a bang at the world stage. In the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, it became fashionable for every think tank to frequently meet in order to unravel "What went wrong?" and 'Why people hate us (Americans)?" I too strayed into one such meeting, barely ten days after the catastrophe. The gathering was impressive, but there was no overcrowding and I got a place almost opposite the Chairperson. The guest speaker had concluded on a somber note on the need for building a coalition of nations against terrorism. He also talked of radicalization of Islam, the values of religious pluralism, and the need for tolerance. Presentation made, the Chairperson asked for comments. She looked at me (there were not many Indians at the meeting), and saying that India may have the answer in view of its heritage of pluralism and originality of mind, she gave me the floor. I was caught on the wrong foot, as I had gone to listen, not to participate. I recall having said then that while India may have the answer, I do not. I went on to narrate my experience of tackling terrorism and insurgency in India. But I knew I could not answer.

### **The Bahudhā Approach**

The incident set me thinking. They say when the student is ready the teacher will appear. I found it in Bahudhā philosophy, which has its origins in the Rig Veda. The Bahudhā approach

helps us understand another person's point of view about life and religion, science and spirituality, politics and economy, with tolerance and respect. It also calls for – and that is significant – inculcation of a habit in which one person thinks that the other person's point of view may be right. The Rig Vedic hymn enjoins:

*'Ekam Sad Vipra Bahudhā Vadanti'*

(One truth, many interpretations)

I imagine this approach was formulated by our *rishis* both in order to point to the ultimate reality and also for harmonious living in society among peoples of many beliefs and practices, each claiming superiority over the other.

### **Democracy, Ecology and Culture**

In this backdrop of history, the previous century was characterized by two contradictory trends: On the one hand, the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the most disastrous in human history. In social and political terms – more than 200 million men and women died in military or political conflicts, anti-colonial movements and civil strife. Apart from the cost of life, vast resources – both material and intellectual – were wasted on weapons. On the other hand, the second half of this century ushered in an era of progress in economic development and scientific progress at a scale unprecedented in history. We also clearly see the emergence of three powerful lights, which if properly nurtured, could make the 21<sup>st</sup> century an era of peace and harmony in the world. These three lights are those of *democracy, ecology, and culture*.

2.

### **Democracy**

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all forms of government known in classical antiquity were in existence: monarchy, aristocracy, democracy, colonial orders, military dictatorships and mixed regimes. With the death of fascism, the demise of colonialism and the establishment of the United Nations on October 24, 1945 began crystallization of the universal norms of governance. It found eloquent expression in Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights when it declares:

*"the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government and that this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage".*

Ever since one country after the other has embraced democracy. The wind of democracy is blowing far and wide. The Islamic world is also getting increasingly democratized. Today 119 out of 193 member-countries of the United Nations have governments created by elections. Even dictators such as Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe go through the rituals of national elections to demonstrate "the will of the people" in their favour to govern their countries.

One of the significant features of democracy is that it allows pluralist approach to bloom. Democratic governments are also conscious of limitations upon their authority and recognize autonomous character of institutions like families, faith organizations and civil associations in the realm of humanitarian services, knowledge, science, culture and the arts. The government has, however, a role of coordination and adjudication in case of disputes among these organizations.

All democracies believe in separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state. All democracies also seek to uphold freedom of speech and expression, a free press and rule of law. There is need to legitimize the process of consultation between different segments of society of rich and poor, between different ethnic and religious groups, between peoples' groups and governmental bodies, between concerned citizens and government functionaries. All these would encourage and sustain 'self-governance' on part of citizens.

The world has moved from the era of "pure democracy" of ancient days in which citizens assembled and demonstrated the government in person as in Athens in Greece and Vaishali in India to a modern system of democracy in which people express their will through a system of periodic elections. Today, the inter-connectivity introduced by the computer revolution could provide citizens a more effective voice in governance than in the recent past.

There is a widespread demand for good governance. In a democratic regime, good governance can be secured through well-organized political parties, sensitive leadership and overall a moral concern for doing good to the people. Side by side, people are also concerned about what Fareed Zakaria in a recent book entitled *The Future Of Freedom* calls the phenomenon of "illiberal democracy". In several countries frequent elections have brought to power persons who are known to have suppressed freedom of speech, freedom of press and freedom of political opposition.

Mere adherence to forms of democracy like periodic elections, regular meeting of legislatures and Parliament does not secure meaningful dialogue, concerns for human rights and delivery of services particularly to the poor. The waning in prestige of democracy is evident in many parts of the world which have forced citizens to go to court for redressal of their grievances. The executive directly under the control of political masters are getting increasingly guided in decision-making and also in political behavior by caste and religious considerations.

Several democracies are facing governability crises and are characterized by “soft” state or “failing” state syndromes. They are unable to protect life and property of their citizens against terrorists and other lawless elements largely out of fear of losing the next elections, bias or even worse. The consequential low levels of development and dischantment of citizens are threats if not removed properly in time could lead to demise of democracy.

It is in this context that the role of political parties, which provide leadership in a democracy and content to its proper functioning is very vital. Without effective political parties, politics become a game of individuals particularly with muscle power and interest groups. Such democracies could lapse into military dictatorships. It is not true that governments with limited power cannot be strong states. The case of the United States proves that the state with limited powers can also be an effective state.

The mere fact that more countries have embraced democracy in recent years, and more and more are willing to do so should not deter us from debating and taking creative measures to infuse democratic institutions not only with form but also with its spirit. Democracy with all its shortcomings is the best form of government and it needs to be secured and strengthened for building a harmonious and peaceful world.

### 3.

## Ecology

The World Charter for Nature (adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 29, 1982) rightly declares that

*“civilization is rooted in nature, which has shaped human culture and influenced all artistic and scientific achievement, and living in harmony with nature gives man the best opportunities for the development of his creativity, and for rest and recreation.”*

Unfortunately, rapid industrialization and pattern of life style based on consumerist approaches have led to destruction of eco-system despite the fact that as many as 168 nations are signatories of Convention on Biological Diversity [CBD].

The soil degradation and pollution of waters do pose major ecological challenge. We have altered our national landscape in decisive ways replacing trees, shrubs and grasses with roads and buildings, dams and canals, townships and industrial structures. Notwithstanding our cultural tradition of according sacred status to our rivers, we did not set up affluent plants for our industrial units and allowed the waste to directly flow into them. The magnitude of problem with respect to drinking water and sanitation facilities, soil maintenance, bio-diversity conservation and purity of air is such that it needs immediate attention. The forest cover is considerably depleted with the rapid growth in population and industrial activities.

Another area of great concern is climate change. Millions of people are vulnerable to natural disasters and environmental hazards and threat to many countries would increase as a result of climate change. According to the World Bank, during the past century, the global climate varied by about 0.7C because of human activities, with accompanying changes in rainfall patterns, extreme weather events, and sea levels. Another 1.4C – 5.8C temperature rise is projected in the next 100 years that would further lead to more extreme weather events, and sea level rise. Climate change thus is no longer an issue for the distant future. Although aggressive mitigation of green-house causing emissions is crucial if dramatic long-term changes are to be averted, most of the changes projected for the coming decades can no longer be avoided.

It is true that to accelerate the pace of development in poor countries, we have to use resources in a big way. It is also true that poor countries consume on a per capita basis, only 5 per cent of the modern energy consumed by rich countries. In rural areas of the developing world, particularly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, 4 out of 5 people live without electricity. Rich countries have developed more than 70 per cent of their economically viable hydro-electric energy. For developing countries, overall the corresponding figure is only 20 per cent, and for Africa it is just 3 per cent. The big question is whether it is possible to provide access to energy that developing countries desperately need in a way that leaves a sustainable environmental footprint – both at the local, national and global levels?

The “grow now clean up later” approach to development imposes high costs. Fortunately, people in most developing countries are increasingly concerned about their environment. As per

the World Bank's estimates, the economic costs of environmental degradation in many developing countries are estimated to be at 4 to 8% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The task of integrating environmental concerns in development programs is not always such a complex phenomenon as is widely believed. The success in implementation of development programs could invariably depend upon peoples' cooperation and they would be forthcoming more easily if the development projects are sensitive to the purity of soil, forests area and water.

The future of our eco-system lies both in efficacy of the legal system and belief in shared values. A dedicated cadre of civil servants and police personnel supported by the local leadership would ensure that those indulging in destruction of forests and wildlife trade would be punished under law. But power of law by itself cannot be a reliable guide to ecological order. We need a democratic culture of sharing and informing between people and the government. We must also draw upon our religious and spiritual strengths that favor conservation and also our rich history of ecological movements and the traditions of ecological prudence among several of our ethnic communities.

In this increasingly important arena, a large number of international institutions supported by the national governments are playing significant role. Their efforts are supported by local, national and global institutions as well. Several corporate houses have also come up for collaborative arrangements with national and international bodies. In almost every country, there are well-informed citizens dedicated to the cause of environmental conservation.

When we stand outside the world-view dominated by arrogance of science and technology in relation to nature, the social sciences teach us that science and technology too can play a positive role in conservation. It is true that ecology deals with complex systems that have a great deal of variability and poor predictability. It is true that science cannot answer questions such as why do we need a 'sacred grove'? But it can help us address issues that relate to its effective management.

Deference to ecology and concern for peace has been dominant thoughts in human consciousness. One of the songs very popular in India reads: 'the earth is my mother and I am a son of the world' (*mata bhoomih putroo aham prithibhiah*). This song was composed over 3 millennia ago. The need is to bring these values at the center of our dialogue, to link it up with our traditions, folklores and folktales. Respect for cultural diversity and pluralism, protection of

environment and bio-diversity should be of concern not only for students, but also of society at large. The important organs of our political institutions like legislatures and government need to be sensitized so that they pay special heed to these concerns. The axiom is: we do not inherit eco-systems from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children.

4.

## Culture

In a past publication, I argued that culture is power. I then defined culture as follows:

*“As expressed through language and art, philosophy and religion, education and science, films and newspapers, radio and television, social habits and customs, political institutions and economic organizations, culture heightens the skills of an individual and a society in its totality in all walks of life because it is by culture that a man or a society gets an insight into the whole .... Culture includes not only art, music, dance, and drama, but a whole way of life. In part, culture is ‘sanskriti’, or a process of refinement. It is in this broader sense that culture has to be viewed.”*

A number of scholars and civil servants had told me then that I had misused the word ‘culture’. I still hold to my opinion because for me the term culture, in its most comprehensive sense, refers to the diverse creative activities of a people – to literature; to the visual and performing arts; and to various forms of artistic self-expression by the individual (specialist or lay) or by communities. These activities give a sense of purpose to human existence and, at the same time, provide the reflective poise and spiritual energy so essential to the maturing of a ‘good society’.

We define culture as the values, attitudes, beliefs, orientations and underlying assumptions prevalent among people in a society. Culture is a dynamic variable, enormously potent and influential. When it is articulated in a manner aimed at achieving an objective, it releases the dormant energies of a community.

The emergence of culture as an important factor in determining the status of an individual in society, or of a nation in the world is a matter of great significance. Art has a curious way of belonging to its times, and yet of being removed from it. Art has its own agenda, and has habitually risen above the conditions prevailing on the ground in every period of human history. While all the old art forms have exhibited significant achievements, several entirely new ones have been invented and popularized such as cinema, pop music, and television documentary.

There are, however, two opposite points of view: One that considers culture as a factor that could inhibit development; and the other views culture as a possible source of conflict.

First, in 1968, Gunnar Myrdal published *Asian Drama: An Enquiry into the Poverty of Nations* after 10 years of study of South Asia. He concluded that cultural factors, profoundly influenced by religion, are the true obstacles to modernization. It is not just that they get in the way of entrepreneurial activity but that they permeate, rigidify and dominate political, economic and social behavior. The caste system was particularly mentioned as a factor, which has hugely contributed to existing inequities, and even contempt for manual work. Several other scholars are of the view that the Muslim clergy is responsible for decline in progress in Islamic countries in the last few centuries.

How can one remove cultural obstacles to progress? Economic development, we know, changes cultures but that truth does not help us completely if our goal is to remove cultural obstacles to economic development itself. Societies also may change their culture in response to political trauma. Germany and Japan, two most militaristic countries in the world, turned out to be most modern and pacifist after their defeat in the Second World War. Looking at Asia, one could safely argue that developments in Singapore and South Korea prove that traditional cultural attitudes could be transformed to make it amenable to economic development and social progress by a determined leadership. In democratic India too, major changes are taking place ensuring a high rate of economic growth and social progress notwithstanding multiplicity of castes and tribes, religious and linguistic groups.

There is, however, another point of view, which advocates that certain civilizations will play a decisive role in the transformation of states and societies in a manner that would lead to conflicts and wars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard University in his much talked about paper entitled *The Clash of Civilizations* published in the 1993 summer issue of Foreign Affairs, followed by *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* published in 1996, has argued that the conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world. The possible conflict between Christianity and Islam is viewed in this context. But we have also to remember that it is also human to love and to have self-expression. More than enemies, people need a wide range of friendships and sharing for a meaningful existence. Cultures do not clash, savagery does. Civilizations would not clash as long as they respect another point of view, an alternate way of

perceiving truth. The underlying attitude has to be to move away from fundamentalist approaches.

The need to stress those aspects of culture, which unite people and enable them to develop themselves fully in terms of their potential, cannot be over-emphasized. We firmly believe that governments may come and go, but culture and its set of values survive and persist in binding society. This is not to minimize the importance of the government and political systems and of economic factors in shaping or reshaping cultural values.

## 5.

### **Concluding Remarks: the Unity of Approach**

How do you live in a time of decline? I think the important thing is to realize that we cannot go on living the way that we are.

The explosion in consciousness and spread of knowledge has transformed life of individuals in many ways. Increasingly, individuals are contributing in a variety of areas beyond their professional responsibilities. The collective impact of the efforts of these concerned citizens has imparted to them and their institutions a more dominant role than ever before. These are significant beginnings and they need to be spread and they need to be multiplied.

Governments can play a constructive role in recognizing these individuals and in lending support to their efforts. They should also be looking systematically for their ideas to inform public policy. The media too can contribute towards creating an environment by providing coverage to new ideas and activities. Once we succeed in aligning energies of concerned citizens and their organizations with those of governments, we could rapidly move towards building of peace.

Peace is more than the absence of war. A truly peaceful society would enable a citizen to work for human welfare and for building up of a just society. The following observations of Dr. Joseph Rotblat, emeritus President of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, explains such a phenomenon aptly:

*“With a small stone is thrown into a pond, the ripples travel widely out from the centre. Though the ripples may become less powerful, they still do not completely disappear. Every person has the power to create ripples that can change society. If these efforts are concentrated and channeled through NGOs, unavoidably the power to influence society will grow.... if we unite, we can change the world. It might take some time, but viewed from a long term perspective, the people will be victorious in the end.”*

Globalization, among several positive things, has also unfortunately generated an intense feeling of isolation. Concerned citizens and their organizations can really work for building an inclusive society in which individuals can be pro-active, robust and engaged. It is common experience that transformation in the inner life of a single individual can spur and encourage similar changes in others and as it extends into society, a meaningful and lasting foundation of peace can be built.

The triumph of democracy over all forms of dictatorship signals that in future, dialogue and debate will decide local, regional and global issues. One knows from personal experience as to how dialogue allows one to maintain one's point of view while at the same time to understand and accommodate another idea. For in dialogue, people will give serious consideration to views that differ substantially from their own. It is a fascinating quality of human mind that it can entertain many conflicting possibilities simultaneously.

The ecological crisis is rather serious. For certain animal and vegetable species it is already too late, and restoration of certain areas in India as well as in other developing countries even if so intended now, is somewhat beyond our efforts for the next forty to fifty years. A genuine ecological recovery can succeed only through a break with the present trends of a technology-driven consumerist society.

The interaction between democracy, ecology and culture in the context of a global economy raises several important questions. One is political. As countries belonging to different cultures blend economically, it is necessary to develop both trust and cooperative economic institutions to sustain the independence of each country as well as their inter-dependence. The role of culture in the development of that trust is of importance. In the absence of such trust and institutional framework, the rich countries would protect themselves while the developing and economically weak countries would succumb to financial crises.

The growing faith in democracy as a form of governance, conservation of ecology and preservation of the environment, and cultural pluralism as a way of living, are integral parts of our common future. As forces of democracy, ecology and culture in different parts of the world interact and support each other, many effects of value and substance would result and would enrich the world community. It is heartening to see that the youth in different societies of the world are concerned not only with their own future, but also with the security of the global value-system. The expansion in television coverage, computer networking, and the press, is

going to ensure that the joys of creativity in both the realms of science and culture will be shared by humanity as a whole and will not remain a localized affair. If global transmission of information gives the required focus to the cultural attainments of 'the global village', the present situation will vastly improve.

We are not without answers to our present concerns. Two personalities—Gautama Buddha and Mahatma Gandhi—stand out as world figures. If their messages are properly harmonized with the social and economic realities of our life and times, they seem to have the potential to avert any future clash among civilizations and also to strengthen the forces of democracy, ecology, and culture. For Mahatma Gandhi offers a human and humanizing alternative in which there would be enough for everybody's needs but not for everybody's greed. Mahatma Gandhi once posed questions which are relevant to our deliberations. He wrote:

*"Will our world always be one of violence? Will there always be poverty, starvation, misery?"*

And then he went on to answer:

*"Different men give different answers to these questions, each man drawing the plan of tomorrow's world as he hopes and wishes it to be. I answer not only out of belief but out of conviction. The world of tomorrow will be, must be, a society based on non-violence. That is the first law; out of it all other blessings will flow."*

The Gandhian approach is a self-questioning, self-critical one which, at another level, connects with the Buddhist approach as well, which is exemplified in the axiom: 'Be a lamp unto yourself (Appa Deepo Bhav).

We must jettison fundamentalist attitudes and deliberately breathe the spirit of multi-cultural co-existence in our thinking and behavior. We see no need at all for different faiths and cultures to merge into one another to build a global civilization or a world government. It is enough if they accept one another as legitimate and equal partners. Towards this, it is necessary to understand one another and to respect and honour one another's differences.

We must consciously work for the propagation of the values of a family which could reflect a basic sense of decency and quality in which cooperation and support could be a guiding principle. The family values alone would provide a spiritual pilgrimage into our inner space and thus help build strong foundations for world peace.

The movement for democracy, for environmental preservation, for religious harmony and furtherance of cultural pursuits are not to be viewed as separate ideals or goals. These are inter-

related. Creative minds, civil society institutions and global political architecture need to have a unity of purpose. The imperatives of a peaceful world demands cooperation among all these powerful forces.