

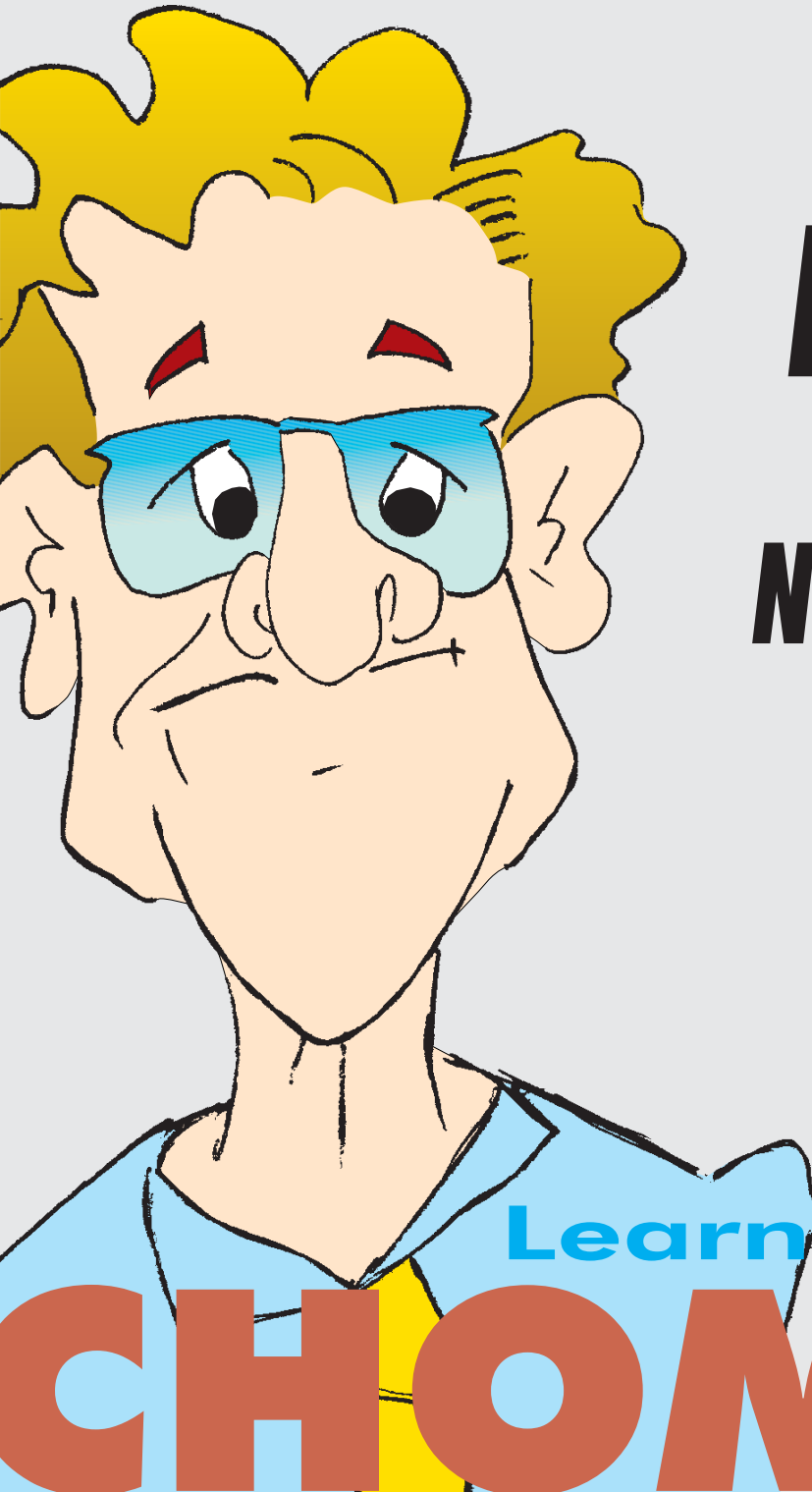
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EDucate!

A Quarterly on **E**ducation & **D**evelopment

**CHOMSKY
Special**



Page 17
***Exclusive
Interview
With
Noam Chomsky***

**COVER
STORY** **Page 7**

Learning from

CHOMSKY

CHOMSKY SPECIAL



Cover Story Page 7

LEARNING FROM CHOMSKY

A fascinating selection of dialogue
between Noam Chomsky &
David Barsamian
by Ambreena Aziz

UR On...

Noam Chomsky
An Interview for EDucate!
by Mashhood Rizvi



Page 17

WHAT HAPPENS TO DISSENT?

A Reflection on Chomsky's visit to Pakistan
by Dr. Tariq Rahman

21

THE CHOMSKY ARCHIVE

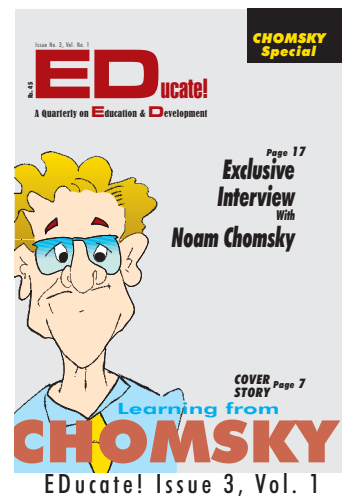
Morality, Human Behaviour & Education
by Tor Wennerberg

29

NOAM CHOMSKY & THE STRUGGLE AGAINST NEOLIBERALISM

by Robert Mcchesney

Page 40



EDUCATION

CRITICAL EDUCATORS

Critical pedagogy in the shadow of terror
by Peter McLaren

35

RETHINKING EDUCATION

Reclaiming our creativities from a
ready-made world
by Manish Jain

44

AN ILLITERATE'S DECLARATION TO THE LITERACY PREACHER

by Shri Dyal Chandra Soni

Page 49

SOCIETAL LEARNING

BOOKS FOR A BETTER WORLD

Book reviews
by Naureen Mushtaq

38

WEBSITES FOR A BETTER WORLD

Websites reviews
by Aziz Kabani & Somaiya Ayooob

Page 39

DEVELOPMENT

PEOPLE CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Development
Conventional verses emergent alternative wisdom
by David C. Corten

50

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT

The March Of The
Monoculture
by Helena Norberg-hodge

Page 24

OPEN LETTERS

4

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Professor Anita Ghulam Ali

4



Uncle Sargam

...On
Development

Page 5

EDITOR'S NOTE

6

ICON OF LIBERATION

Muhammad Iqbal
A manifestation of
self-reconstruction
and reformation
By Dr. Ali Shariati



Page 31

WAKEUP CALLS, INSPIRATIONS & REFLECTIONS

43

VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

What is the underlying root cause of poverty?
by Muhammad Khan Zada

54

DEVELOPMENT DIARY

Is Chomsky only for the elites or...
by KT

56

FINAL ANALYSIS

The hope of possibility,
The possibility of hope
by Mashhood Rizvi & Howard Zinn

Page 58

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This pioneering magazine has been created to challenge ethically, morally and intellectually the inequalities in the existing paradigms of education and development in order to liberate people's thoughts and actions.

CHAIRPERSON

Prof. Anita Ghulam Ali

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mashhood Rizvi

CONSULTING EDITORS

Tehseena Rafi, Shahbano Bilgrami

EDITOR

Ambreena Aziz

ASSISTANT EDITORS

Aziz Kabani, Naureen Butt

CONTRIBUTORS

Michael W. Apple, David Barsamian, Shri Dayal Chandra Soni,
Robert McChesney, Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman,
Helena Norberg-Hodge, Manish Jain, David C. Korten,
Peter McLaren, Farooq Qaiser, Dr. Tariq Rahman, Ted Trainer,
Professor Umme Salma Zaman

EDITORIAL ASSISTANCE

Shakeel Ahmed, Naem Nizamani, Samuel Ray

DESIGNER

Zulfqar Ali Zulfi

ILLUSTRATION/PHOTO CREDIT

Fatima Zaidi, Hussain Zaidi, Paul Hilken,
Naem Nizamani, Shakeel Ahmed,
www.monkeyfist.com:8080/chomsky, www.robertmcchesney.com,
www.identitytheory.com, www.shariati.com

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGER

Somaia Ayooob

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Shukri Rehman

CONTRIBUTIONS

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CORRESPONDENCE

Please address correspondence to the Correspondence Manager at the above address or via email at dpre@cyber.net.pk or sef@cyber.net.pk. Correspondence relating to subscription, membership, previous issues and change of address should also be addressed to the Correspondence Manager.

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Dear Friends,

Asalam-o-Alaikum,

This issue of EDucate! brings with it our best wishes for the year 2002 and a gift for those who are watchers of world events. One is tempted to pontificate on a host of issues, but our team has had the privilege to trail the master Professor Noam Chomsky during his recent visit. An exclusive interview presents part of the package that we hope will vet your appetite for expositions that 'bless and burn'. The Editorial Board promises to give its readers reflections of Pakistanis on development issues which they hope will nurture a vocal forum for those who have been the thinking and the silent. Perhaps, the institution of debate will make EDucate! the vehicle of decisions of choice.

Anita Ghulam Ali

OPEN letters

"...Looks good! The format is visually engaging and the overall content is articulate and very interesting."

Michael Apple,
Professor of Curriculum
& Instruction &
Educational Policy Studies,
University of Wisconsin, USA

"Thank you very much for the wonderful effort. It is a unique contribution in that it combines beauty with knowledge – and makes it affordable!"

Dr. Tariq Rahman,
Professor of Linguistics and South Asian Studies,
Quaid-e-Azam University,
Islamabad, Pakistan

"Congratulations on bringing out a magazine of quality and substance on a subject of great importance. Most of the articles and interviews in the second issue are very informative and thought provoking. The content is highly

encouraging, for it can generate debate on issues relating to education. I hope your journal will keep the present standard."

Dr. Syed Jaffer Ahmed,
Pakistan Studies Center,
Karachi University,
Karachi, Pakistan

"Two things are striking about the recent issue: the Urdu glossaries (*farhang*) at the end of some articles, and Voice of the Voiceless by Muhammad Khan. These are often the two most left out sections in a magazine. As for the rest of the articles, just one word: great! Keep up the good work!"

Abbas Hussain,
Director,
Teachers' Development Center,
Karachi, Pakistan

"...Opens a whole new world, enriches our thoughts and provides valuable information

about issues that are of interest to our local intellectuals. The articles are really interesting, incisive, informative and thought-provoking."

Mukesh Kumar Mandhan,
Lecturer,
Department of English,
Sindh Agricultural University,
Tandojam, Pakistan

"...Is very useful and would be of great help for researchers who require further information about this subject"

Prof. Mohommad Ali Shaikh,
Director,
SZABIST,
Center for Information & Research,
Karachi, Pakistan

"...Is an excellent and innovative approach and is appreciated by all who read it."

Prof. Shuja-ul-Mulk,
Chakesar, Shangla,
N.W.F.P, Pakistan



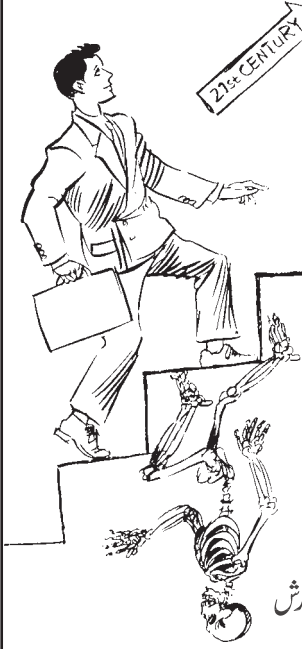
UNCLE SARGAM

Development

What wonderful development by Man!
Filling his 'lap' with diseases
Smoke all over, polluted air,
Noise rises and thinking shrinks.
Chirping of birds - humming of waterfalls,
All eaten up by the engine's rumbling,
(He is) Dying an unwarranted death
by destroying environment,
What wonderful development by Man!
Heaps of garbage - diseased life,
Cloud of gun powder - rain of ailments,
Conspiring to raze the forest,
What wonderful development by Man!!!
Dying of cancer by destroying the Ozone,

ترقی

21st CENTURY



انسان بھی ترقی کیا خوب کر رہا ہے
بیماریوں سے اپنی جھولی کو بھر رہا ہے
پھیلا ہوا دھواں ہے، آلودگی فضا میں
اب شور بڑھ رہا ہے اور غور گھٹ رہا ہے
چڑیوں کی چچھاہٹ جھرنوں کی گنگناہٹ
ان سب کو کھا رہی ہے انجن کی گڑ گڑاہٹ
ماحول ختم کر کے بے موت مر رہا ہے
انسان بھی ترقی کیا خوب کر رہا ہے
انبار گندگی ہے بیمار زندگی ہے
بارود کا ہے بادل بیماریوں کی بارش
جنگل کو قتل کرنے کی ہور ہی ہے سازش
انسان بھی ترقی کیا خوب کر رہا ہے
اوزون ختم کر کے کینسر سے مر رہا ہے

"Firstly, I would like to congratulate Professor Anita and the DPRC team for producing such a unique magazine, which unveils the 'real meaning' of development and is an eye-opener for most of the traditional development practitioners. EDucate! provides an opportunity to 'rethink' education and development practices to radically shift the paradigm of development, spread new avenues for societal learning and discover the importance of human values and above all social justice. It also provides a ray of hope to all those, who in their capacities, are trying to create awareness for social change and transformation."

Nooruddin Merchant
Karachi, Pakistan

"In a world awash in fundamentalism – both Eastern and Western varieties – there is now, more than ever, a need for voice of understanding justice, and peace. EDucate! magazine is such a voice. It asks its readers to question conventional wisdom, to reject rigid adherence to ideology. It encourages the readers to think critically. As a result, it is an island of reason in a global ocean of insanity."

Stephen Fein,
thirdworldtraveler.com

Reflections from a Reader

"It's hard to imagine a more poignant time (at least during my time) to reflect on life than the one we find ourselves in the midst of. The year-end usually represents a benchmark to have the visions of Janus (the roman goddess of hind/foresight(s), and the origin of the word January). It seems quite dismal with the threat of a nuclear exchange looming and most of our neighborhood in ruins already. Pictures around the world don't appear too promising either with economic melt-downs and rapid social fragmentation are the most "alluring" offerings of the new-millennium so far.

For us educators it's a burgeoning reminder that some critical pieces in our supposed "panacea" (of schooling) seem to be missing, with "deeply educated societies" sinking into genocidal hysterics. This has led serious thinkers to ponder whether human beings as a species are a "biological error" programmed to destroy themselves.

Let me make a more upbeat assumption. As a learner/educator I believe that today's chaos represents a deeply dialectical juncture of maybe more promising prospects of generating and rebuilding than ever. It will be a privilege to participate/contribute in such quests with colleagues and friends like you.

Prayers and Peace &
A Happy New Year
Wasif Rizvi

Editor's Note

The last quarter saw a lot happening, the most significant being Chomsky's visit to Pakistan. Keeping this in perspective, it was not merely a temptation to give him utmost coverage in our latest issue of EDucate! it was an important responsibility. I say responsibility for these reasons: 1) Noam Chomsky is hardly known in this part of the world where we live, therefore, it's necessary to talk about him and all that he stands for, 2) Those who know him (like the majority present at his talks in both the cosmopolitan cities) misinterpreted him as being merely a critic of his country's foreign policies and did not acknowledge him for what he really is: a world-renowned linguist, philosopher and political analyst of our times, 3) People are overwhelmed by his prowess for linguistics and politics and tend to "idolize" him, which he has remained vehemently opposed to. Chomsky is a pursuer of freedom and social justice, who denies any cult following. It's important to understand and learn from his struggle for truth rather than 'glamorize' it.

This EDucate! celebrates the life and works of Noam Chomsky, the most cited revolutionary of our times. It would not be an overstatement to say that he is to us what Socrates was to the Grecians. In fact in the history of intellectual pacesetters, he ranks eighth, just behind Plato and Freud. Also he is one of the ten most quoted sources in the humanities along with Marx, Shakespeare and the Bible. James Peck, in his introduction to the Chomsky Reader, writes, "In all American history, no one's writings are more unsettling than Noam Chomsky's... No intellectual tradition quite captures his voice... No party claims him; he is a spokesman for no ideology." Professor of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he has to his credit some 70 books and a steady stream of articles, not to mention his assiduous speaking schedule that frequently takes him around the world. His enigmatic flair for both linguistics and politics sets him apart from the typical academic faction and makes him, in the words of David Barsamian, "a very special person to many people—not just in the United States, but around the world." Although never truly brought in the limelight by the mainstream media, Chomsky's works still dominate the progressive global academia, journals and the Internet. His words exude the supremacy to draw audiences in the thousands even though he is not a charismatic speaker, as he himself admits.

"Learning from Chomsky" – a comprehensive feature that glimpses into his works, beliefs and teachings will hopefully prove invaluable to all those who want to learn more about Chomsky and understand his standpoints on a number of issues. Compiling it was surely an enlightening experience.

The readers will find some parts missing from this issue; the Urdu glossaries (*farhang*), some regulars like "Global Media for Global Control", "Devil-opment", etc. But since this is entirely a Chomsky special, therefore, we tried hard to include articles that exclusively revolved around him and his teachings. We promise to bring you EDucate! including all its customary attributes next quarter.

Chomsky gives us a message of hope... He is the embodiment of hope and he teaches us to scrutinize and challenge our conditions rather than being submissive to them. It is important to learn from him because his relentless logic and "razor-sharp intellect" are a guiding light in these hours of ignorance, despair and privation. Through EDucate! we aspire to propagate the same hopefulness and we believe that you too will share our spirit and struggle.


Ambreena Aziz

Cover Story

Learning from **Chomsky**

"In conversation (with David Barsamian), Chomsky is more relaxed, tentative, and discursive than he is in his books or his public speaking engagements."

Vancouver Sun

In accordance with the spirit of paying tribute to "arguably the most important intellectual alive", we bring to our readers a fascinating selection of dialogue excerpts between veteran radio interviewer and long time activist David Barsamian and Noam Chomsky. Together they explore and fathom the powerful maze of information, ideas and analysis on subjects that are usually *best left out*. They urge the listeners to evaluate, discern and condemn the illusions of corporate power and face the truth.

Compiled By:
AMBREENA AZIZ



Learning about Chomsky

A lot of people don't know that your given name is actually Avram. When did that switch take place?

Before I was conscious. My parents told me that when I was a couple of months old they didn't want everyone calling me Abie, so they figured they'd switch to the second name.

Is Abie the diminutive of Noam?

No, of Avram. Avram is Abraham.

Is it Noam in Hebrew?

Yes don't tell anybody – it means “pleasantness”.

Surely the irony was noted by your parents. You once told me there was a little bit of gender confusion around your name.

I once had to get my birth certificate for some reason. I wrote a letter to City Hall in Philadelphia. They sent me a copy. The birth certificate had my name crossed off in pencil. Some clerk didn't believe it and changed Noam to Naomi. That's understandable. But they also changed Avram to Avrane. I think the idea is that girls could have crazy names, but boys have to have names like John or Tom. They didn't change M to F, so I was still male.

You talked about the demands on your time, for example, the hours you're spending on e-mail. How do you organize your time? With the constant and ever-increasing demands on your time, how do you do it?

Badly. There's no way to do it. There are physical

limitations. The day's twenty-four hours long. If you do one thing, you're not doing something else.

But if you're spending a couple of hours responding to e-mail, you're not writing an article on linguistics or a political article for Z.

That's a decision I made forty years ago. You cannot overcome the fact that time is finite. So you make your choices. Maybe badly, maybe well, but there's no algorithm, no procedure to give you the right answer.

I'd like to put readers in this office space for a moment. Your desk is pretty neat right now. There are usually even higher piles of books. There are at least six or seven piles, stacks of books and papers, and on your filing cabinets even more. How do you divide your labor? You've just been away for about two weeks. You come back and have this avalanche of mail, phone calls, things to read. How do you get through this? What are you prioritizing here? Is there an order to this madness?

First of all, it looks remarkably neat now because while I was away they did something really nasty. They painted and cleaned the office, which I never would have permitted while I was here. So it looks surprisingly clean. You may have noticed I'm trying to take care of that.

So it does look neater than usual. But if you want to know what it's like, you've been at our house. Around 4:30 this morning there was what we thought was an earthquake, a huge noise. Our bedroom is right next to the study. We went in and discovered that these big piles of books, six feet high, a couple of piles had fallen and were scattered all over the floor. That's where I put the books that are urgent reading. Sometimes when I'm having an extremely boring phone call, I try to calculate how many centuries I'd have to live in order to read the urgent books if I were to read twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week at some speed reading pace. It's pretty depressing. So the answer to your question is, I don't get anywhere near doing what I would like to do.

You make yourself available for various groups all over the country. You made that choice pretty early on. Why don't other intellectuals, other privileged people in your position, get engaged politically?

Individuals have their own reasons. Presumably the reason most don't is because they think they're doing the right thing. That is, I'm sure that overwhelmingly people who are supportive of atrocious acts of power and privilege do believe and convince themselves that it was the right thing to do, which is extremely easy. In fact, a standard technique of belief formation is to do something in your own interest and then to

construct a framework in which that's the right thing to do. We all know this from our own experience. We always manage to construct our own framework that says, yes, that was the right thing to do and it's going to be good. Sometimes the conclusions are accurate. It's not always self-deception. But it's very easy to fall into self-deception when it's advantageous. It's not surprising.

One of the things I've observed over the years of working with you and watching you interact with others is a sense of balance and enormous patience. You're very patient with people, particularly people who ask the most inane kinds of questions. Is this something you've cultivated?

First of all, I'm usually fuming inside, so what you see on the outside isn't necessarily what's inside. But as far as questions are concerned, the only thing I ever get irritated about is elite intellectuals, the stuff they do I do find irritating. I shouldn't. I should expect it. But I do find it irritating. But on the other hand, what you're describing as inane questions usually strike me as perfectly honest questions. People have no reason to believe anything other than what they're saying. If you think about where the questioner is coming from, what the person has been exposed to, that's a very rational and intelligent question. It may sound inane from some other point of view, but it's not at all inane from within the framework in which it's being raised. It's usually quite reasonable. So there's nothing to be irritated about.

You may be sorry about the conditions in which the questions arise. The thing to do is to try to help them get out of their intellectual confinement, which is not just accidental, as I mentioned. There are huge efforts that do go into making people, to borrow Adam Smith's phrase, "as stupid and ignorant as it's possible for a human being to be." A lot of the educational system is designed for that, if you think about it, it's designed for obedience and

passivity. From childhood, a lot of it is designed to prevent people from being independent and creative. If you're independent-minded in school, you're probably going to get in trouble very early on. That's not the trait that's being preferred or cultivated. When people live through all this stuff, plus corporate propaganda, plus television, plus the press and the whole mass, the deluge of ideological distortion that goes on, they ask questions that from another point of view sound inane, but from their point of view are completely reasonable.

In all these talks that you've given, you must have reached hundreds of thousands of people, your articles, the interviews, the radio, the TV. It must put a tremendous, not just a physical burden on you, but an emotional one, too. Everything is riding on your shoulders. I'm concerned about that, just as a friend.

I don't feel that way at all. I feel I'm riding on other people's shoulders. When I go to give a talk in Chicago, say, I just show up. They did all the work. All I did is take a plane, give a couple of talks, and go home. The people there did all the work. I just came back from Australia. Those guys have been working for months to set everything up, and they're still working. I went, had a nice time, talked at a bunch of places. I'm exploiting other people. Actually, it's mutual exploitation. I'm not trying to be modest about it. There are some things that I can do pretty well. Over the years I've tried my hand at a lot of things.

Like what?

I did spend a lot of time, believe it or not, organizing and going to meetings, like in the early days of Resist, of which I was one of the founders. I religiously went to all the meetings and sat there and was useless and bored. Finally, out of all this, a kind of division of labor emerged by mutual

Learning about Theories

You're not big on theories. Why not?

I think theories are great. I work on them all the time. But the term "theory" shouldn't be abused. You have a theory when you have some non-obvious principles from which you can draw conclusions that explain in surprising ways some of the phenomenon that are worth studying. That's hard

to do. It's done in the hard sciences. There are a few other areas where it's done. But for the most part it's impossible. You can understand that. Even in the sciences, when you get to matters of any complexity, theoretical understanding declines quite sharply.

When you get to human affairs, I can't even think of anything that deserves the name "theory". Marx is certainly worth studying. He was a theorist of capitalism. He developed a certain abstract

model of capitalism. There's nothing wrong with abstract idealization. That's the way to study things. He investigated what might happen in that kind of system. How much relationship it had to the real world of that time, one has to ask. He had essentially nothing to say about socialism, a few scattered sentences here and there. He had no theory of revolution or of social change. But you study what he did for it's important work, and one should know about it. If you want to call it a theory, OK.

Learning not-to-compete

...Football coach Vince Lombardi once said, "Winning isn't everything. It's the only thing." What kind of societal consequences result from that kind of thinking?

If anyone were to take that seriously, if you do it on the sports field, it's just obscene. If you do it in the general society, it's outrageous. It happens. I see it with children's sports. Let me give you a personal experience. One of my grandchildren is a sports fanatic. He was describing to me with disappointment a game that was called off. Seven-year old kids playing baseball, they're all organized into teams which is OK. You want to play teams that's fine. They had a game scheduled with another team. The other team didn't have enough players. Some kids didn't come that day. My grandson's team had more than enough players.

So they had to call off the game.

The kids were all disappointed. There was an obvious solution. Let some of the kids on his team play on the other team. In fact, you could have one team and still have a game, the kids that are in the field could be the kids at bat, just intermingle. Then they all would have had fun. But then it wouldn't have been a game in which the team with one color won and the team with another color lost. This way they all had to be disappointed. This isn't a huge problem, but it's carrying the cult of competition to childish absurdity.

When it enters into the rest of life, it's extremely harmful. Any decent human existence is going to be based on sympathy, solidarity, and mutual support. If we push it to the limit, the idea that the only thing to do is win, then in a family the strongest person would take all the food. This is just inhuman.

It's just as inhuman when you generalize.

What do you say to the argument that competition is intrinsic to human nature and not only that, it builds character?

It builds a certain kind of character, namely the kind of character that wants to beat other people down. Is it intrinsic to human nature? First of all, anyone who says anything about what's intrinsic to human nature is automatically talking nonsense, because we don't know very much. But it's a plausible guess that all kind of characteristics are intrinsic to human nature.

Much of the educational system is built around a system of rewards based on grades, beating other students in tests, and then coming to the front of the classroom and being praised by the teacher.

It is, and that's a particular

consent. We would all do the things we can do. There are some things I just can't do at all and other things I can do very easily. I do the things I can do easily. But the serious work is always done by organizers. There's no question about that. They're down there everyday, doing the hard work, preparing the ground, bringing out the effects. There is absolutely no effect in giving a talk. It's like water under a bridge, unless people do something with it. If it is a technique, a device for getting people to think and bringing them together and getting them to do something, fine, then it was worth it. Otherwise it was a waste of time, self-indulgence.

I had a glimpse of what you go through. In November I was in Seattle and Olympia. I gave three public talks, three interviews, and a workshop in a day and a half. At the end of that time, my brains were completely fried. I had no idea what I'd said to whom. I was wondering, how do you keep not just your equilibrium and equanimity, but that separation of what you said?

As far as I know, I have only one talent. I'm not trying to be modest. I think I know what I'm good at and what I'm not good at. The one talent that

I have which I know many other friends don't seem to have is I've got some quirk in my brain which makes it work like separate buffers in a computer. If you play around with a computer you know you can put things in different places and they just stay there and you can go back to them whenever you feel like it and they're there. I can somehow do that. I can write a very technical paper in snatches: a piece on an airplane, another piece three weeks later, six months later finally get back to it and pick up where I left off. Somehow I don't have any problem switching very quickly from one thing to another. I have some other friends like this. I had one, a well-known logician in Israel, who was a very close friend. We would see each other every five or six years. We would always just pick up the conversation where we had left it off, without any break, without even noticing it, particularly. We didn't even notice it until people seemed to find it strange.

You continue to be in tremendous demand for these speaking engagements. Are you considering stopping?

I would be delighted to stop. For me it's not a great joy, frankly. I do it because I like to do it. You meet wonderful people and they're doing terrific things.

kind of training. It's training in extremely antisocial behavior that is also very harmful to the person. It's certainly not necessary for education.

In what way is it harmful to a person?

It turns them into the kind of people who do not enjoy the achievements of others but want to see others beaten down and suppressed. It's as if I see a great violinist and instead of enjoying the fact that he's a great violinist and I'm not, I try to figure out a way to break his violin. It's turning people into monsters. This is certainly not necessary for education. I think it's harmful to it. I have my own personal experiences with this, but I think they generalize.

How do you deal with day-to-day situations is a complicated matter. But as far as schooling was concerned, it just happens that I went to a

school up to about age twelve where there was no competition. I didn't know I was a good student until I got to high school. Everyone was encouraged to do their best and to help others do their best. You applauded them if they did. If they fell short of their own standards you tried to help them meet them. I didn't really know about the idea of competition for grades until I got into an academic city high school. And the educational level declined at that point.

Incidentally, going on to my last forty-five years of educational experience, which happens to be at MIT, it is not a competitive environment. In a graduate scientific department, technically you have to give grades because there's some formalism that requires it. But people are working together. You don't try to do better than the next guy. You have a common goal. You want to understand this stuff.

Let's work on it. It's certainly the most positive way for an educational or a research experience to proceed.

Let's say in a different kind of environment, like an auto factory, the boss tells you, If you work an extra eight hours this week, I'll increase your pay by \$100 and I'll give you an extra week's vacation.

That's a different question. That has nothing to do with harming other people and being first and making sure they're second. That's a question of how you want to react to an inhuman system in which you're forced to exist. You're compelled because of lack of other choices to exist in a system in which some human being can control you, which shouldn't happen in a decent society, and you have to ask, How do I adjust to that? It's like being in prison. If you're a human, you don't do it.

It's the most important thing I can imagine doing. But if the world would go away, I'd be happy to stop. What ought to be happening is that a lot of younger people ought to be coming along and doing all these things. If that happens, fine. I'm glad to drift off into the background. That's fine by me. It's not happening much. That's another thing that I worry about. There's a real invisibility of left intellectuals who might get involved. I'm not talking about people who want to come by and say, okay, I'm your leader. Follow me. I'll run your affairs. There's always plenty of those people around.

Learning to Encounter Propaganda

Let's talk about a theme that we return to periodically, and that is propaganda and indoctrination. As a teacher, how do you get people to think for themselves? Can you in fact impart tools that will enable that?

You learn by doing, and you figure out how to do things by watching other people do them. That's the way you learn to be a good carpenter, for example, and the way you learn to be a good physicist.

Nobody can train you on how to do physics. You don't teach methodology courses in the natural sciences. You may in the social sciences. In any field that has significant intellectual content, you don't teach methodology. You just watch people doing it and participate with them in doing it. I don't try to persuade people, at least not consciously. Maybe I do. If so, it's a mistake.

The right way to do things is not to try to persuade people you're right but to challenge them to think it through for themselves. There's nothing in human affairs of which we can speak with very great confidence, even in the hard natural sciences that's largely true. In complicated areas, like human affairs, we don't have an extremely high level of confidence, and often a very low level. In the case of human affairs, international affairs, family relations, whatever it may be, you can compile evidence and you can put things together and look at them from a certain way. The right approach is simply to encourage people to do that. A common response that I get, even on things like chat networks, is, I can't believe anything you're saying. It's totally in conflict with what I've learned and always believed, and I don't have time to look up all those footnotes. How do I

know what you're saying is true? That's a plausible reaction. I tell people it's the right reaction. You shouldn't believe what I say is true. The footnotes are there, so you can find out if you feel like it, but if you don't want to bother, nothing can be done. Nobody is going to pour truth into your brain. It's something you have to find out for yourself.

Learning to live 'together'

Another comment I hear is that people say, I'm no Noam Chomsky. I don't have his resources. I work at Logan Airport from 9 to 5. I've got a mortgage to pay. I don't have the access and the ability. Does it take special brains?

It doesn't take special brains, but it takes special privilege. Those people are right. You have to have special privilege, which we have. It's unfair, but we've got it. To have the resources, training, time, the control over your own life. Maybe I work a hundred hours a week, but it's a hundred I choose. That's a rare luxury. Only a tiny sector of the population can enjoy that, let alone the resources and the training. It's extremely hard to do it by yourself. However, we shouldn't exaggerate. Many of the people who do this best are people who lack privilege, for one thing because they have several advantages. Not having undergone a good education, not being subjected to the huge flow of indoctrination, of which an education largely is, and also not having participated by taking part in the system of indoctrination and control, so that you internalize it. By indoctrination I mean from kindergarten up through professional life. Not being part of that, you're somewhat more free. So there are advantages also to being outside of the system of privilege and domination.

But it's true that the person who's working fifty hours a week to put food on the table does not have the luxury we do. That's why people get together. That's what unions were about, for workers' education, which often came out of the unions in the workers' movement. Over quite a range, in fact: literature, history, science, mathematics. Some of the great books on science and mathematics for the public (for the millions) were written by left-oriented specialists, and such topics found their way into workers' education, often union-based, sometimes offshoots. Very little is done individually. It's usually done in groups by collective action and interchange and critique and challenge, with students typically playing an active and often critical role. Part of the genius of the system of domination and control is to separate people from one another so that doesn't happen. We can't "consult our neighbors", as one of my favorite Wobbly singers once put it back in the 1930s. As long as we can't consult our neighbors, we'll believe that there are good times. It's important to make sure that people don't consult their neighbors.

Learning about Children

Do people have to "discover their inner child" in order to ask the obvious questions?

Anyone who has had any dealings with children knows that they're curious and creative. They want to explore things and figure out what's happening. A good bit of schooling is an effort to drive this out of them and to fit them into a mold, make them behave, stop thinking, not cause any trouble. It goes right from kindergarten up to what Huntington was talking about, namely, keep the rabble out of their

Learning about Inequality

The issue of inequality, not only in the US but around the world, as you just mentioned, is hard to ignore. Even the Financial Times recently commented that "At the beginning of the 19th century, the ratio of real incomes per head between the world's richest and poorest countries was three to one. By 1900 it was 10 to one. By the year 2000, it had risen to 60 to one."

And that is extremely misleading. It vastly understates what's going on. The real and striking difference is not the difference among countries but the difference within the global population, which is a different measure. That's risen very sharply, which means that within countries the divisions have sharply risen. I think it's now gone from about something like 80 to 1 to about 120 to 1, just in the last ten years or so. Those are rough figures. I'm not sure of the exact numbers. But it's risen very sharply. The top

1 percent of the population of the world now probably has about the income of roughly the bottom 60 percent. That's close to 3 billion people. These outcomes are the results of very specific decisions, institutional arrangements, and plans which can be expected to have these effects. And they have these effects. These are principles of economics that tell you that over time things ought to even out. That's true of some abstract models. The world is very different.

hair. People are supposed to be obedient producers, do what they're told, and the rest of your life is supposed to be passive consuming. Don't think about things. Don't know about things. Don't bother your head with things like the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) or international affairs. Just do what you're told, pay attention to something else and maximize your consumption. That's the role of the public.

Learning not to Deify

You don't think highly of the deification of individuals and the construction of cults around people?

That's putting it pretty mildly. I don't think you should deify anybody or anything. In the fields where there really is intellectual substance and progress, everyone knows that this is not how it works. In the hard sciences, for example, the way you make progress is in graduate seminars, where half the ideas are coming from the students. There are people who have interesting ideas, and they're usually partially right and particularly wrong. You can try to fix them up, improve and change them, but there's no Einsteinism in physics. You have notions like that only in fields that are, either consciously or unconsciously, covering up a lack of intellectual substance.

Learning about the Internet

Talk about what's been called the seismic shift from print to cyberspace. What kind of effect is that going to have on the future of research? What will the archives of the future look like?

Nobody really knows. Part of the reason is that nobody knows the longevity of the methods of storage that are now being used. There have been some technical conferences of librarians and others to discuss how long electronic storage will last. You can be pretty sure that seventeenth-century books will last, because they were made of good paper. Take a look at them. I do often. They're in real good shape and are fun to read. Then look at a twentieth-century book. It's much less likely that it's going to be around long. The paper's much cheaper. It's going to deteriorate and disintegrate. Things are being put over into electronic storage, and here there's just not a lot of experience. So it's a good question what the shape of the archives will be.

On the other hand, there's an overload problem. The real problem in the sciences and elsewhere is not shortage of information. It's sensible analysis of information. Just the amount of e-mail communication is a terrific burden, and a growing one, for business too.

Another thing which I see myself is that it's just too damn easy. Anybody who has some harebrained idea for three seconds can punch a key, and all of a sudden there's something that half the people in the world see. It's a sense of power. The half of the people of the world who are receiving it have to do something with it. You should see some of the stuff I get.

Also, people get addicted. There are people who are simply addicted to the Web. They spend time surfing the Web. People who wouldn't care where France is are getting the latest newspapers from Tibet. It's an addiction which could be harmful.

...A woman in the audience asked you, in a pretty straight-ahead question, How come you don't factor gender into your analysis? You pretty much agreed with her, but you really didn't answer her question.

In fact, I've been writing about it quite a bit in recent books in connection with structural adjustment, globalization of production, and imposition of industrialized export-oriented agriculture. In all cases, women are the worst victims. What we

discussed the other day about the effect on families is essentially gender war. The very fact that women's work is not considered work is an ideological attack. As I pointed out, it's somewhere between lunacy and idiocy. The whole welfare "debate," as it's called, is based on the assumption that raising children isn't work. It's not like speculating on stock markets. That's real work. So if a woman is taking care of a kid, she's not doing anything. Domestic work altogether is not considered work because women

do it. That gives an extraordinary distortion to the nature of the economy. It amounts to transfer payments from working women, from women altogether and working women in particular, to others. They don't get social security for raising a child. You do get social security for other things. The same with every other benefit. I maybe haven't written as much about such matters as I should have, probably not. But it's a major phenomenon, very dramatic now.

Learning about Economy

You said the economic system is a “grotesque catastrophe.” What kind of system would you propose?

I would propose a system which is democratic. It's long been understood that you don't have democracy unless people are in control of the major decisions. And the major decisions, as has also long been understood, are fundamentally investment decisions: What do you do with the money? What happens in the country? What's produced? How is it produced? What are working conditions like? Where does it go? How is it distributed? Where is it sold? That whole range of decisions, that's not everything in the world, but unless that range of decisions is under democratic control, you have one or another form of tyranny. That is as old as the hills and as American as apple pie. You

don't have to go to Marxism or anything else. It's straight out of mainstream American tradition.

The reason is simple common sense. So that's got to be the core of it. That means total dismantling of all the totalitarian systems. The corporations are just as totalitarian as Bolshevism and fascism. They come out of the same intellectual roots, in the early twentieth century. So just like other forms of totalitarianism have to go, private tyrannies have to go. And they have to be put under public control.

Then you look at the modalities of public control. Should it be workers' councils or community organizations or some integration of them? What kind of federal structure should there be? At this point you're beginning to think about how a free and democratic society might look and operate. That's worth a lot of thought. But we're a long way from that. The first thing you've got to do in any kind of

change is to recognize the forms of oppression that exist. If slaves don't recognize that slavery is oppression, it doesn't make much sense to ask them why they don't live in a free society. They think they do. This is not a joke. Take women. Overwhelmingly, and for a long time, they may have sensed oppression, but they didn't see it as oppression. They saw it as life. The fact that you don't see it as oppression doesn't mean that you don't know it at some level. At some level you know it. The way in which you know it can take very harmful forms for yourself and everyone else. That's true of every system of oppression. But unless you sense it, identify it, understand it, understand furthermore that it's not, as in that New Yorker article, the genius of the market and a mystery, but completely understandable and not a genius of anything, and easily put under popular control—unless all those things are understood, you cannot proceed to the next step, which is the one you

So, it's contributing to the atomization that people experience?

The interconnection among people that the Internet establishes is very positive in many ways, for organizing and just for human life. But it has its downside, too. I've spoken to friends whose teenage children go up to their rooms after dinner and start their social life with virtual characters, chat friends, and who make up fake personas and may be are living in some other country. This is their social circle. They are with their friends on-line who are pretending to be such-and-such and they are pretending to be so-and-so. The psychic effect of this is something I wouldn't like to think about.

We are human beings. Face-to-face contact means a lot. Not having an affair with some sixty-year-old guy who's pretending to be a fourteen-year-old girl in some other country. There's an awful lot of this stuff going on. It's extremely hard to say what the net effect of the whole thing is.

However, this is all small potatoes. The real problem is totally different. The corporations have, only in

the last few years, discovered that this public creation can be a tremendous tool for profit, for basically a home marketing service. And marketing means not just perfumes, but also attitudes, beliefs, consumerism, and so on. And they want to take control of it. Whether that's technically possible is not so certain. But that's being worked on.

Let's move on to the Internet and issues of privacy. Unbeknownst to many Internet users, businesses are collecting profiles and amassing data on people's preferences and interests. What are the implications of that?

The implications could be pretty serious, but in my view they are all secondary to another issue, which is Internet access. The huge mergers that are going on in the media megacorporations carry the threat which is not at all remote that they'll be able to effectively direct access to favored sites, meaning turning the Internet system even more than it is now into a home shopping service rather than information and interaction.

The megamergers like AOL and Time Warner offer

raised: How can we change the system?

Let's say you're a CEO of a major corporation. Isn't it in your economic interest to keep enough change in my pocket so that I'll buy your products?

That's an interesting question, and nobody knows the answer to it. It was a question that had an answer in a national economy. So if you go back to the 1920s, at the time of the big automobile manufacturing burst, that was the question that Henry Ford raised. He drew the conclusion that you just drew. He said, I'd better give these guys a decent wage or nobody's going to buy my cars. So he raised workers' salaries beyond what he was forced to by market pressures. And others went along. That was on the reasoning that you just outlined, and it made sort of sense in a national economy.

Does it make sense in an

international economy? Does it make sense in an international economy where you can shift production to the poorest and most deprived and most depressed regions where you have security forces keeping people under control and you don't have to worry about environmental conditions and you have plenty of women pouring off the farms to work under impossible conditions and get burnt to death in factory fires and die from overwork and somebody else replaces them and that production is then integrated through the global system so that value is added where you have skilled workers and maybe pay a little more but you don't have many of them?

Finally it's sold to the rich people in all the societies. Even the poorest Third World country has a very rich elite. As you take this kind of structural Third World model and transfer it over to the rich countries —

it's a structural model, it's not in absolute terms — they have a sector of consumers that's not trivial. Even if there's plenty of superfluous people and huge numbers in jail and a lot of people suffering or even starving. So the question is, Can that work? As a technical question, nobody really knows the answer. And it doesn't make any difference anyway. We shouldn't even be allowing ourselves to ask it. The point is that whether it could work or not, it's a total monstrosity. Fascism works, too. In fact, it worked rather well from an economic point of view. It was quite successful. That doesn't mean it's not a monstrosity. So there is the technical question, Will it work? To that nobody knows the answer. But there's also a human question of whether we should even ask, and the answer to that is, Of course not. That's not the CEO's question, but it should be everybody else's.

technical possibilities to ensure that getting on the Internet will draw you into what they want you to see, not what you want to see. That's very dangerous. The Internet, is a tremendous tool for information, understanding, organizing, and communication. There is no doubt at all that the business world, which has been given this public gift, intends to turn it into something else. If they're able to do it, that will be a very serious blow to freedom and democracy.

You described the Internet to me once as a "lethal weapon". Someone once wrote an article and put your name on it and circulated it on the Net.

That happened. The article was then picked off the Net and published. A lot of ugly things can happen.

Learning about Linguistics

Talk a little bit about linguistics. In layman's terms, could you explain your theory of language?

First of all, theories aren't personal. Nobody owns

them. So there is an approach to language of which I'm one of the participants in studying it and there are contributors from lots of sources and plenty of interaction. It starts from the fact, and it's not a very controversial fact, that the capacity for language is a species-specific property. That is, every normal human being has that capacity. As far as we know it is biologically isolated.

A capacity isn't one thing. It has many strands. So for example, the fact that I'm using my tongue when I speak is not biologically isolated. Other organisms have tongues, like cats. And undoubtedly there are many other aspects of it that are shared by primates or mammals or maybe all of life.

But some particular crucial aspects of language do appear to be biologically quite isolated with properties that we don't find elsewhere in the biological world. There's nothing homologous, meaning same origins, or analogous, meaning roughly the same structure, among other species. So it's some kind of unique aspect of human intelligence that may have developed in many hominid lines, but only one has survived, namely us.

The one that survived apparently came from a pretty small breeding group, maybe tens of thousands of people, may be a hundred or two hundred thousand years ago, something in that range. Since that time, there has been essentially no time for evolutionary effects to have become detectable and, as far as is known, there's extremely little genetic variation among existing humans as compared with other species. So we're a very homogenous species, and the language faculty in particular seems to be essentially shared. What that means is that if your kids grow up in East Africa they'll learn Swahili as perfectly as anyone there. If their kids grow up in Boulder, Colorado, they'll speak the Boulder dialect of English as well as anyone there.

These characteristics seem to be a shared and specific part of our genetic endowment. We want to find out what they are. What they are, whatever they are, they allow an infant, maybe even pre-birth, there's evidence for that, but certainly very early on, to do some pretty astonishing things. First the infant has to pick out of the environment, which is a lot of undifferentiated noise and activity, the child has to somehow select out of that massive confusion the parts that are language. Nobody knows how to do that.

There are similar problems faced by other organisms. Insects, which seem to be more similar to humans in this respect than any other known organism – no relevant evolutionary relationship, obviously – a bee, for example, has to be able to pick out of all the activity that it observes just the parts which are what are called the “waggle dance”, the dance of the bees that's used to communicate distance and the quality of the flower. Exactly how that's done, nobody knows. When we look at bees dancing around, we don't see it. You have to be a bee to see it. In fact to discover it is sophisticated enough a trick that you can get a Nobel Prize for it.

A human has a much more complicated task to pick out a language, and no other organism will do that. If you raise an ape in the same environment as a child without special training, and even with special training, the ape won't pick out the linguistic activities as a category distinct from anything else. It's just a mass of things happening. But somehow a human infant is designed to do exactly that.

The infant has some sort of mental faculty, some

special component of the whole intellectual system, call it the language faculty, and that faculty picks out the stuff that's linguistic, and that's language-related, and then passes through various transitions and gets to the point where you and I are, where you use this system of knowledge freely and productively to talk about new circumstances in ways that are not caused by the circumstances in which you are nor caused by your inner state but are somehow appropriate to the circumstances and coherent. Those are the rough facts about language, which have been observed for hundreds of years.

The next question is, How is it done? What's the nature of the initial state of the language faculty, the shared initial state, the genetically determined initial state? What are its properties? How do these get refined and shaped and modified in one way or another through interaction with the environment to lead to the mature state of what we call having a language? That's the topic.

In order to investigate it, there are some upper and lower bounds that have to be satisfied by the theory of the initial state. It has to be at least rich enough to account for the fact that a child does – on the basis of the scattered evidence around it – arrive at a state of knowledge which is highly specific, very articulated, extremely detailed, applies to new circumstances, and does so in a very rich and complex way, as you can demonstrate.

So the initial state has to be at least rich enough to account for that transition. But it can't be so rich as to exclude some of the options. So you can't for example, say, The initial state is my dialect of English, or somebody speaking Japanese. So the upper bound that you can't go beyond is as much complexity and richness as would rule out possible languages, not just actual ones, but possible ones that could be attained. The lower bound is that it has to be at least rich enough to account for the fact that in every linguistic community a normal child will acquire a rich, complex understanding and capacity to use the language of that community. In between those bounds lies the truth about the initial state. You study it by looking at those two problems. What principles must it have in order to be able to be articulated as a particular complex system? The study of languages of widely different typology puts a constraint on whether you are going too far in imposing internal structure. That's where the subject is.



About David Barsamian

David Barsamian is the founder and director of Alternative Radio - an award winning weekly radio program. Alternative Radio is broadcast to more than 125 public radio stations around the world and presents information and perspectives that are either ignored or distorted in the corporate-controlled American media. Barsamian is regarded as an "ace interviewer" and "an ingenious impresario of radical broadcasting", and was presented the award of "Top Ten Media Heroes of 1994".

UR On...



Noam Chomsky **An Interview for EDucate!**

BY
MASHHOOD RIZVI

When I wrote a tribute to Professor Noam Chomsky, for the first issue of EDucate!, I did not expect to meet the “indefatigable rebel” in person. But I was soon honored when he recently visited Pakistan on a whirlwind trip. It would be unfair not to admit that the anticipation of being in the same space with him did not unnerve me. It did, but upon greeting him, my apprehension gave way to a desire for taking as much of my share of knowledge from him as possible. This interview comprises of a series of discussions we had in Pakistan and ensuing ones after he left.

Q: *During your visit to Pakistan many who approached you were hoping to hear ready-made solutions to all the problems Pakistan is faced with. However, you seemed to be pressing them to think hard and think critically about the problems as well as the possible solutions. You held yourself responsible for taking certain measures and actions regarding the role of your country (US) and expected others to do the same. Is it true?*

Chomsky: It is definitely true. It is perhaps the most elementary of moral truisms, that we are responsible for the anticipated consequences of our own action, or inaction. It may be fine to study the crimes of Genghis Khan, but there is no moral value to condemning them; we can't do anything about them. There is not much I can do – in fact, virtually nothing – about the very serious problems internal to Pakistan. I'd like to learn about them, and to understand them as best as I can. And I don't refrain from saying what I think.

Q: *(a) Why is a moral value not attached to condemning the crimes of Genghis Khan? Don't you think that along with studying his crimes, it is equally important to continue to condemn them so that anybody who commits similar atrocities does not get away with it.*

(b) Also, as far as the existing imperial powers of the world are concerned, I think I am more than justified to condemn them, as their crimes are directly causing my people/country so much pain and suffering. The rise and rule of corporations in the West in so many ways is linked to Pakistan's economy vis-à-vis the poverty of our nation; therefore, I think that it must be condemned by Pakistanis.

Chomsky: I am basing my remarks on what seems to me a moral truism: the moral evaluation of what we do depends on the anticipated consequences – in the cases we are discussing, human consequences. If I publish a paper here reviewing and condemning the crimes of Genghis Khan, the human consequences are approximately zero; I'm joining in universal condemnation, and adding another pea to the mountain certainly doesn't help his victims, or anyone else for that matter.

Suppose in some part of the world, say Mongolia, his crimes were being suppressed or praised or even used as a model for current actions. Then it would be of great moral value to condemning his crimes there, because of the human consequences. Take your other example: condemnation in Pakistan of the impact of US corporate and state power in Pakistan. There is great moral value to condemn that in ways that affect the exercise of that power, which means

mostly here, in the US. For Pakistanis, if the condemnations have no effect on the exercise of that power, then in that respect the moral value is slight; if they have an effect in raising the level of understanding of Pakistanis, to enable them to act more constructively, then the moral value could be great. In all cases, we are back to anticipated human consequences.

Let's take a concrete case. For intellectuals in Russia in the Communist days, condemnation of US crimes had little if any moral value; in fact, it might have had negative value, in serving to buttress the oppressive and brutal Soviet system. In contrast, when Eastern European dissidents condemned the crimes of their own states and society, it had great moral value. That much everyone takes for granted: everyone, that is, outside the Soviet commissar class. Much the same holds in the West, point by point, except with much more force, because the costs of honest dissidence are so immeasurably less. And exactly as we would expect, these utterly trivial points are almost incomprehensible to Western intellectuals, when applied to them, though readily understood when applied to official enemies.

That's why, for example, I was critical of Pakistan's policies concerning Kashmir when speaking in Pakistan, and of India's policies there when speaking in India. But I cannot – and no one else should – have a great deal of confidence in what I say as a concerned outsider. And there isn't much that I can do about the very severe problems. In contrast, there is a great deal I can do about problems within the US, and about policy decisions of systems of power there. And for just that reason, that's my primary responsibility.

Of course, it is not quite that simple. Outsiders can sometimes have useful advice and influence, and should try to use such opportunities. Nonetheless, the moral truism remains just that: a truism. Quite apart from moral truisms, it is generally a

There is not much I can do – in fact, virtually nothing – about the very serious problems internal to Pakistan. I'd like to learn about them, and to understand them as best as I can...In contrast, there is a great deal I can do about problems within the US, and about policy decisions of systems of power there. And for just that reason, that's my primary responsibility.

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mistake to expect outsiders to have valuable advice as to how to deal with one's problems. That requires intimate knowledge and understanding. It's sheer arrogance for those who lack that knowledge and understanding to offer solutions. And it makes little sense to wait for rescue from outside. That's often just a way to evade responsibility.

Again, one shouldn't exaggerate. Sympathy and support from friends is of enormous importance in personal life, and

solidarity and mutual aid are of comparable importance over a broader sphere, including international affairs. Nonetheless, we ultimately have to take our fate into our own hands, not wait for salvation from somewhere else. It won't come.

Q: *Are these the reasons that your lectures in Pakistan (and to a great extent in India) were in reference with the historical role of US in the world rather than focusing on the issues and concerns of Pakistan vis-à-vis the war on Afghanistan, or for that matter role of Islam in a Pakistani society?*

Chomsky: These are exactly the reasons. Similarly, I would not expect a Pakistani visitor to the US to lecture us on US policy in Afghanistan, or on how to deal with quite severe problems internal to the US. If the visitor has something to say, well and good, but the strictures I already mentioned would hold nonetheless.

Q: *Very briefly, can you elucidate on the differences (audience's intellectual level, academia, media's role etc.) you experienced between Pakistan and India?*

Chomsky: I'm reluctant to comment on this. I spent 3 weeks in India, traveling widely around the country. I have visited India several times in the past, and have read quite a lot about India, including detailed studies of particular regions and much else. In contrast, I spent 3 days in Pakistan, and was able to see and experience very little. This was my first trip, and I have not read about Pakistan anywhere near as extensively. I have impressions, but am reluctant even to express them, and do not think that you should take them seriously if I did.

Q: *How difficult do you believe it has now become to educate people about critical issues as anything and everything which challenges the interest of the powerful is tagged as 'terror'?*

Chomsky: It has always been difficult. Just speaking personally, I have been writing and speaking extensively about "terrorism" for 20 years, ever since the Reagan administration proclaimed that the "war against terror" would be the core of its foreign policy; and of course about similar matters even before the "war" was declared. Over time, slowly, there has been increasing willingness on the part of much of the public to think seriously about the critical issues that you probably have in mind. I think that has improved further since Sept. 11. I am speaking about the general public, not elite intellectuals, who typically serve as doctrinal managers, and have their own agendas. Nothing novel about that.

Q: *Do you think that at times governments and nations strategically allow the existence of dissent (may be to trivialize truth), just to ensure some liberty of thought, for the masses to feel good, and not agitated. Or do you think that such space is a result of struggle?*

Chomsky: The space that exists was, mostly, won with difficult struggle. Nonetheless, it is true that when such space is opened, there will be efforts on the part of concentrated power to adapt it to their own purposes, and to try to constrain debate and discussion within narrow limits. If dictators were smarter, they would adopt the systems of indoctrination that are employed, often quite consciously, in more democratic societies: let debate rage, but within limits set by fixed presuppositions, which express the basic interests of power. For example, during the US wars in Indochina, the media and journals of opinion were happy to sponsor debates between "hawks," who argued that the US should resort to greater violence and destruction, and "doves," who argued that our effort to defend the Vietnamese from terror and foreign attack was becoming too costly, and that we should seek other means to attain our noble objectives. The more that debate rages, the less likely people are to ask the obvious questions: for example, are we defending Vietnam by attacking it? Fortunately, great numbers of people broke out of the hawk-dove spectrum, though very few intellectuals. Much the same holds on many other issues.

Q: *Do you think that simply informing the oppressed of the main sources of oppression can result in liberation? Or, it may, on the contrary result in mere decreasing or alleviating their feelings of being oppressed. All this, while the magnitude of oppression and the oppressor*

Over time, slowly, there has been increasing willingness on the part of much of the public to think seriously about the critical issues...

becomes greater and greater?

Chomsky: The oppressed typically understand their oppression far better than we do, and we should try to learn from them, not instruct them. Insofar as we have some understanding of the sources of their oppression, we should do our best to convey it to those who can use it to liberate themselves – with our assistance, to whatever extent we can provide it, honestly and without seeking dominance and control. It is perfectly true that understanding may not result in liberation, but absence of understanding is certain to prevent liberation. Those are the actual choices.

Q: *(a) I partially agree with you. But, we are in so many ways distinctively privileged as compared to the oppressed we claim to be fighting for. How important do you think it is for us to be in the exact social, economical and political state to join the struggle for social justice and a better world? What I mean is that, when you came to Pakistan, the oppressed had little or no access to you. You spoke English, which the oppressed do not understand. I go for fieldtrips in an air-conditioned car carrying mineral water bottles and have trouble convincing myself in front of the mirror, that I am fighting for social justice. Am I not required to let go of the material and social privileges to become a real part of the struggle?*

(b) I have met with so many extremely poor people who seem to think that it is their fate to be poor and oppressed. They have no clue whatsoever about the sources of their poverty. I work with illiterate people. Almost all of them suffer from serious self-deprivation to an extent that they consider themselves worse than animals at times. Then I come in the picture. I tell them that their poverty is not God's act on them, it is human creation. I tell them that being illiterate does not equate you with animals. I do not even instruct. I simply initiate a discourse. But I feel that so many of them, who seem to be feeling good, empowered and motivated by knowing that they have been regarded as real and dignified humans for the first time in their lives, immediately want solutions, answers, and explanations about what they can do and what I can do for them. I tell them that all I can do is to sit in that air conditioned car and go back home and they have to liberate themselves as my responsibility was to make them aware of the sources of their oppression. But Noam, honestly these people will be faced with such grave consequences if they

...think for yourselves and do not uncritically accept what you are told, and do what you can to make the world a better place, particularly for those who suffer and are oppressed.



were to liberate themselves from the social oppression they are faced with. Is this all I can do for them?

Chomsky: I don't see any grounds for disagreement. You are, correctly, not pretending that you can offer oppressed people magic answers to their problems. Their own immediate situation they comprehend much better than you can, and they have to struggle to overcome and remedy it, as people have done through the ages. You do come to them to try to participate in their struggle by contributing what you can, as you describe. That's exactly right. The choices are (1) not giving answers that we don't have, (2) doing nothing. You describe some of the ways in which privileged people can "come into the picture" and join constructively in popular struggles for social justice and liberation. There are many such possibilities.

It's also true that when I was in Pakistan I spoke only to a narrow elite. That's a shame, and I regret it, very much. In India that was partially true, though less so; and in Kerala, much less so. Similar problems and choices arise right where I live. We can work where we are, not where we are not. There's no general single answer as to where and how it is right and proper to focus our energies and efforts, no single answer that applies to everyone. We have to find our own ways.

Q: *Any message, reflection or thoughts for our readers?*

Chomsky: A philosopher friend once wrote a criticism of my work in which he said, with some annoyance, that the only "ism" I seem to believe in is truism. That's rather accurate. I don't feel that I have important messages to convey, beyond the obvious: in this case, think for yourselves and do not uncritically accept what you are told, and do what you can to make the world a better place, particularly for those who suffer and are oppressed.

WHAT HAPPENS TO DISSENT?

BY
DR. TARIQ RAHMAN



Professor Noam Chomsky was in Pakistan a few days back. His lectures were very well attended. It is possible that he was listened to because he was critical of American and Israeli policies of aggression in the world. However the essence of his views – that the powerful manufacture ‘consent’ and that ruling elites use force – goes against the interests of the elite everywhere. Why is it that they listen to radical intellectuals? What is dissent and what happens to it in a society?

Dissent in the modern world is, basically, a very rare combination of knowledge, ideas, cognitive abilities, moral courage and conscience. Most intellectuals, as Chomsky himself pointed out in his lecture of 26 November in Islamabad, serve the powers that be. They give excellent rationales for killing, maiming, raping and cheating people. They justify war, poverty and mismanagement. They

are on the side of the rich and the powerful. It is not because they lack either knowledge or brains. They do, sometimes at least, lack moral courage. Above all, however, they lack conscience and sympathy. What happens when a dissident is born?

It depends on the power distribution and the prevalent fashion in ideas. Take the case of a hunter gatherer society. In such a case he or she would hardly be noticed. The members of the itinerant society or group would be so preoccupied with gathering roots and hunting small animals that they would not have time to listen to somebody with strange ideas. If the idea was so strange as to forbid the hunting of animals then two responses would be in order. First, a kind of beatification. The individual is understood to be a saint, placed in a separate niche, and everyone else keeps doing what they were doing before. The second is

ostracization with or without criminalization. The individual is considered a deviant, either a non-criminal one or criminal one, and people either boycott him, drive him away or even eliminate him physically.

The same responses persist throughout history. If one belongs to the less powerful gender (women); less powerful class (peasants, laborers etc); less powerful social groups (untouchables in India and their equivalents elsewhere) then the chances of beatification decrease and those of ostracization increase. However, an individual from such groups cannot be heard to begin with. Society simply provides very few chances to such people to speak out so that the ostracization consists of the immediate family suppressing the dissident person early in her or his career.

It is only individuals from slightly more powerful groups who are recorded in history as being dissidents. During the agrarian era human beings as a species colonized the land and the animals. This event led to the production of much surplus wealth. Further, the male colonized the female. This created the stable male-dominated family. The surplus food was enough to sustain a military caste (the Rajas and Nawabs in South Asia and dukes and earls in Europe) as well as a priestly caste (all the priests, clerks, schoolmasters and so on). In time, a bureaucracy too was born and functioned to maintain the ruler’s power. The dissident who belonged to this elite living off the surplus produce of the

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peasants could in theory be heard, which the peasant himself could not. As the dominant discourse was religious the dissident addressed the world in terms of religious ideas. The establishment either suppressed him—women had few chances to be heard as we have seen — as a heretic or accepted him as a saint, a prophet or reformer of religion. Martin Luther comes to mind as just such a dissident intellectual. He was accepted because, as it happened, European princes wanted to break away from the hold of the pope and Luther provided them with the perfect excuse to do so. However, if one examines the history of religious reformers, saints, prophets and religious figures, one finds out that they were not always accepted. Indeed, they were resisted much more often than otherwise. Some were killed while others were imprisoned in order to suppress their views.

Those whom we do hear about in the history books are mentioned either in reverential terms or reviled. Those among the latter category are invariably called ‘heretics’ — this being the term for dissidents in the parlance of the established clergy. The ‘heretics’ are eliminated and their voice vanishes forever. What happens to those who are revered is even more interesting. They are contained, their ideas are defanged, their words become clichés. To begin with, they are placed in the saintly category. The values they preach are given lip service but whenever these values clash with the exigencies of power, they are ignored or travestied beyond recognition.

Thus we find people and states revering the Buddha, while paying lip service to peace and non-violence, actually engaging in war like other societies. We find Muslims, while preaching the equality of all Muslims, actually practice a kind of apartheid, which looks like the notorious caste system of Hinduism. We

find Christian societies talking about the Sermon on the Mount on Sundays in church but having no qualms about blowing up their ‘enemies’ to smithereens. The really humanitarian message of the great prophets, the genuine reformers, is taken over by the priestly establishment and the ruler’s bureaucracy and military so as to suppress the people even further and extract obedience and taxes out of them. It is, however, true that some values do pass by the priest and the king and they do produce some benevolent effects upon society too. However, if one takes the overall moral standards of medieval Europe (where Christianity was dominant) or those of the Muslim world today (which pays lip service to Islam as the dominant worldview), they are not very high. In medieval Europe they burnt old women as witches and the poor often froze to death or starved. In the Muslim world they are more interested in persecuting people for their beliefs and killing women for honor than in educating or feeding the children. In short, the noble values were travestied and twisted around to support the system and not to challenge it.

The modern world is better than the medieval one for the dissident. The dominant fashion now is relativism whereas the ages of faith were completely sure of everything. However, whereas one can be as relative as one likes about the old beliefs and moral systems, it is not equally easy to be skeptical about the state-sponsored philosophy of nationalism. Indeed, nationalism is

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the new religion of the modern world.

A dissident who goes against the concept of the nation, or the philosophy of nationalism as such is likely to be ignored. Nobody really pays any attention to him, except possibly a few starry-eyed students and maybe a few bald-headed philosophers. The establishment, if it is wise, pretends that it is very tolerant and allows him to pass his days in a corner of academia. However, when a dissident speaks up against the nation, especially in times of war, then the level of tolerance is much less. Bertrand Russell was, after all, locked up during the First World War. Chomsky, Edward Said, Robert Fisk and a few others are still free. Is it because the concept of tolerance is more deeply ingrained now than it ever was before or is it because the modern state, especially the United States, is so powerful that it can accept more dissident voices than ever before? I believe it is a bit of both though the exact ratio could never be known.

Another phenomenon worth pointing out is that dissident thought is rendered less threatening, less potent, less powerful by being patronized by the rich and the powerful. Look at the fate of the classical tales of lovers like the proverbial Heer and Ranjha, Sassi and Punnhun, Soni and Mahinwal and others in medieval India. Here were these stories celebrating love and claiming that true lovers cared neither for wealth nor society and its norms, nor for the family. Their aim is to obtain each other. And these stories were taught to boys who could be disinherited if they chose to marry anyone of their choice though they could, of course, secretly disport themselves with prostitutes if they liked. The literary classics were tamed, emasculated and as, it were, defanged. Similarly, the ghazal poetry, which also celebrated passion and nonconformism, was

made a convention; a mere artifice; a combination of beautiful sounds with substance. The poets themselves had to subsist on grants given by aristocratic patrons. And, obviously, anyone subsisting on grants – even if he is a genius like Ghalib – cannot really challenge the system.

The modern world too contains dissent in the same way. The great American universities pay Chomsky and Edward Said. The press barons pay Robert Fisk. By doing so they render them less potent. It is not that the dissidents do not say what they feel like. The greatest of them – like the people named above – always do. However, there is always a feeling among the hearers, the readers, that this is either not considered really dangerous or, if it is, then how fair and honest the managers of the system must be who allow this to be said.

In short by allowing dissident opinion to be expressed anywhere and anyhow, the managers of the system of power manage to hide their true face. Even worse damage occurs to the cause of the dissident when the elite turns out in large numbers to listen to him and appropriates him as an object of curiosity. This is what happened to Faiz in Pakistan. In time, even in his lifetime but mostly after his death, powerful bureaucrats took to quoting him and reading him. It became an index of a gentleman's erudition and good taste to refer to Faiz so that the poet's revolutionary message was lost in the process. This is what happened to Chomsky also when he lectured

The elite, as we all know, wants gratification of all kinds. It wants intellectual gratification and the gratification which comes of being confirmed as a member of an elitist group.

in Lahore on 24 and Islamabad on 26 November this year. The elite turned up in large numbers because Chomsky conferred status.

The elite, as we all know, wants gratification of all kinds. It wants intellectual gratification and the gratification which comes of being confirmed as a member of an elitist group. So, for the elite, the Chomsky lectures were acts of appropriation at par with the possession of a new car or branded shoes. This is also the fate of the mystic saints and Ghalib and even great religious thinkers. The elite wants the best of everything whether they are horses or cars; mansions or villas; degrees from brand name universities or acquaintance with intellectual figures of world standing. This, rather than the love of learning, explains the long queues of people when celebrities like Toynbee or Wolpert or Chomsky visit countries like Pakistan.

But when the elite listens to these great names, what happens to the message they want to give? If it is not a radical message it does not matter much. It is

forgotten in a few moments. If it is a radical message it may be retained as proof of one's broadmindedness. It may even be trotted out in conversations as a chess piece to defeat an opponent. However, it is always domesticated, defanged and contained. The whole of it is too dangerous to become a plan of action and steps are taken to put it in the realm of the impractical and thus diffuse its socially and politically disruptive potential. Despite all these arrangements to contain dissent, it is surprising that some of it still gets out and pervades minds. Had this not happened the world would never have changed at all.

But the world has changed and, at least in some ways, for the better. Even those who drop bombs on others do it in the name of peace not of the right of conquest. Even those who pay a pittance to starving workers do not call them slaves nor can they kill them when they like – at least not legally. These are humanitarian ideas, pro-people ideas, humane ideas – and they were propagated by the great dissidents of humanity. They were suppressed, ignored, travestied and defanged but still they survived and have changed the world. One can well imagine how powerful they must have been to survive and spread. And it is precisely because they are so powerful that the first reaction of those in power is to nip them in the bud. That, indeed, is the greatest reason why one should value ideas and the people who create them even if they seem to threaten whatever we hold dear.

About Dr. Tariq Rahman

Tariq Rahman, Ph.D., is an acclaimed Pakistani scholar specializing in linguistics. He is currently Professor of Linguistics and South Asian Studies at Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad, and was full professor at the University of Sana'a, Yemen and Fulbright research scholar at the University of Texas, Austin, USA. As head of the Department of English, he has the distinction of introducing a Masters program in Linguistics and English Language Training at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. He writes with simplicity and clarity and increasingly draws on the two disciplines of history and politics. Among his many published books, A history of Pakistani Literature in English remains a landmark.

RETHINKING DEVELOPMENT

THE MARCH OF THE MONOCULTURE

BY HELENA NORBERG-HODGE



“Around the world, the pressure to conform to the expectations of the spreading, Western consumer monoculture is destroying cultural identity, eliminating local economies and erasing regional differences. As a consequence the global economy is leading to uncertainty, ethnic friction, and collapse, where previously there had been relative security and stability”.

For many, the rise of the global economy marks the final fulfilment of the great dream of a ‘Global Village’. Almost everywhere you go in today’s version of that dream you will find multi-lane highways, concrete cities and a cultural landscape featuring grey business suits, fast-food chains, Hollywood films and cellular phones. In the remotest corners of the planet, Barbie, Madonna and the Marlboro Man are familiar icons. From Cleveland to Cairo to Caracas, Baywatch is entertainment and CNN news.

The world, we are told, is being brought together by virtue of the fact that everyone will soon be able to indulge their innate human desire for a Westernised, urbanised consumer lifestyle. West is best, and joining the bandwagon brings closer a harmonious union of peaceable, rational, democratic consumers ‘like us’.

This worldview assumes that it was the chaotic diversity of cultures, values and beliefs that lay behind the chaos and conflicts of the past: that as these differences are removed, so the differences between us will be resolved.

As a result, all around the world, villages, rural communities and their cultural traditions, are being destroyed on an unprecedented scale by the impact of globalizing market forces. Communities that have sustained themselves for hundreds of years are simply disintegrating. The spread of the consumer culture seems virtually unstoppable.

Consumers R Us: The Development of the Global Monoculture

Historically, the erosion of cultural integrity was a conscious goal of colonial developers. As applied anthropologist Goodenough explained:

“The problem is one of creating in another a sufficient dissatisfaction with his present condition of self so that he wants to change it. This calls for some kind of experience that leads him to reappraise his self-image and re-evaluate his self-esteem.” (Quoted, *ibid*, pp.111–112)

Towards this end, colonial officers were advised that they should:

- “1: Involve traditional leaders in their programmes.
- 2: Work through bilingual, acculturated individuals who have some knowledge of both the dominant and the target culture.
- 3: Modify circumstances or deliberately tamper with the equilibrium of the traditional culture so that change will become imperative.
- 4: Attempt to change underlying core values before attacking superficial customs.” (Bodley, p.112)

It is instructive to consider the actual effect of these strategies on the well-being of individual peoples in the South. For example, the Toradja tribes of the Poso district in central Celebes (now Sulawesi, Indonesia) were initially deemed completely incapable of ‘development’ without drastic intervention. Writing in 1929, A.C. Kruyt (Bodley p.129) reported that the happiness and stability of Toradja society was such that “development and progress were impossible” and that they were “bound to remain at the same level”.

Toradja society was cashless and there was neither a desire for money nor the extra goods that might be purchased with it. In the face of such contentment, mission work proved an abject failure as the Toradjas had no interest in converting to a

new religion, sending their children to school or growing cash crops. So, in 1905 the Dutch East Indies government decided to bring the Poso region under firm control, using armed force to crush all resistance. As a result of relocation and continual government harassment, mortality rates soared among the Toradjas. Turning to the missionaries for help, they were “converted” and began sending their children to school. Eventually they began cultivating coconut and coffee plantations and began to acquire new needs for oil lamps, sewing machines, and ‘better’ clothes. The self-sufficient tribal economy had been superceded, as a result of deliberate government action.

In many countries, schooling was the prime coercive instrument for changing “underlying core values” and proved to be a highly effective means of destroying self-esteem, fostering new ‘needs’, creating dissatisfactions, and generally disrupting traditional cultures. An excerpt from a French reader designed in 1919 for use by French West African school – children gives a flavour of the kinds of pressure that were imposed on children:

“It is ... an advantage for a native to work for a white man, because the Whites are better educated, more advanced in civilization than the natives ... You who are intelligent and industrious, my children, always help the Whites in their task. That is a duty.” (Quoted, *ibid*, p.114)

The Situation Today: Cultural Erosion

Today, as wealth is transferred away from nation states into the rootless casino of the money markets, the destruction of cultural integrity is far subtler than before. Corporate and government executives no longer consciously plan the destruction they wreak – indeed they are often unaware of the consequences of their decisions on real people on the other side of the world. This lack of awareness is fostered by the cult of specialization that pervades our society – the job of a public relations executive is confined to producing business-friendly soundbites – it is part of the job not to question the consequences of his or her corporation’s activities. The tendency to undermine cultural diversity proceeds, as it were, on ‘automatic pilot’ as an inevitable consequence of the spreading global economy.

But although the methods employed by the masters of the ‘Global Village’, are less brutal than in colonial times, the scale and effects are often even more devastating. The computer and telecommunications

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revolutions have helped to speed up and strengthen the forces behind the march of a global monoculture, which is now able to disrupt traditional cultures with a shocking speed and finality which, surpasses anything the world has witnessed before.

Preying on the Young

Today, the cult of Western consumer conformity is descending on the less industrialized parts of the world like an avalanche. ‘Development’ brings tourism, Western films and products and, more recently, satellite television to the remotest corners of the Earth. All provide overwhelming impressions of luxury and power. Adverts and action films give the impression that everyone in the West is rich, beautiful and brave, and leads a life filled with excitement and glamour.

In the commercial mass culture which fuels this illusion, advertisers make it clear that Westernised fashion accessories, equal sophistication and ‘cool’. In diverse ‘developing’ nations around the world, people are induced to meet their needs not through their community or local economy, but by trying to ‘buy in’ to the global market. People are made to believe that, in the words of one advertising executive in China, “imported equals good, local equals crap”.

Even more damagingly, people are encouraged to reject their own ethnic and racial characteristics—to feel shame at being who they are. Around the world, blonde-haired blue-eyed Barbie dolls and thin-as-a-rake ‘cover girls’ set the standard for women. It is not unusual now to find East Asian women with eyes surgically altered to look more European, dark-haired Southern European women dying their hair blonde, and Africans with blue – or green-coloured contact lenses aimed at ‘correcting’ dark eyes.

The one-dimensional, fantasy view of modern life promoted by the Western media, television and business becomes a slap in the face for young people in the ‘Third World.’ Teenagers, in particular, are made to feel stupid and ashamed of their traditions and their origins. The people they learn to admire and respect on television are all ‘sophisticated’ city dwellers with fast cars, designer clothes, spotlessly clean hands and shiny white teeth. Yet they find their parents asking them to choose a way of life that involves working in the fields and getting their hands dirty for little or no money, and certainly no glamour. It is hardly surprising, then, that many choose to abandon the old ways of their parents for the siren song of a Western material paradise.

For millions of young people in rural areas of the world, modern Western culture appears vastly superior to their own. Every day, they see incoming tourists spending as much as \$1,000 dollars – the equivalent of a visitor to the US spending about \$50,000 a day. Besides promoting the illusion that all Westerners are multi-millionaires, tourism and media images also give the impression that we never work – since for many people in ‘developing’ countries, sitting at a desk or behind the wheel of a car does not constitute work. People are not aware of the negative social or psychological aspects of Western life so familiar to us: the stress, the loneliness and isolation, the fear of growing old alone, the rise in clinical depression and other ‘industrial diseases’ like cancer, stroke, diabetes and heart problems. Nor do they see the environmental decay, rising crime, poverty, homelessness and unemployment. While they know their own culture inside out, including all of its limitations and imperfections, they only ever see a glossy, exaggerated side of life in the West.

Ladakh: The Pressure to Conform

My own experience among the people of Ladakh or ‘Little Tibet’, in the trans – Himalayan region of Kashmir, is a good, if painful, example of this destruction of traditional cultures by a faceless consumer monoculture. When I first arrived in the area 23 years ago, the vast majority of Ladakhis were self-supporting farmers, living in small scattered settlements in the high desert. Though natural resources were scarce and hard to obtain, the Ladakhis had a remarkably high standard of living – with beautiful art, architecture and jewellery. They worked at a gentle pace and enjoyed a degree of leisure unknown to most people in the West. Most Ladakhis only really worked for four months of the year, and poverty was an alien concept. In 1975, I remember being shown around the remote village of Hemis Shukpachan by a young Ladakhi called Tsewang. It seemed to me, a newcomer, that all the houses I saw were especially large and beautiful, and I asked Tsewang to show me the houses where the poor lived. He looked perplexed for a moment, then replied, “we don’t have any poor people here.”

In recent years, though, external forces have caused massive and rapid disruption in Ladakh. Contact with the modern world has debilitated and demoralized a once – proud and self-sufficient people, who today are suffering from what can best be described as a cultural inferiority complex. When tourism descended on Ladakh some years ago, I began to realize how, looked

at from a Ladakhi perspective, our modern, Western culture looks much more successful, fulfilled and sophisticated than we find it to be from the inside.

In traditional Ladkhi culture, all basic needs – food, clothing and shelter, were provided without money. All labour needed and given was free of charge, part of an intricate and long-established web of human relationships. Because Ladakhis had no need for money, they had little or none. So when they saw outsiders – tourists and visitors – coming in, spending what was to them vast amounts of cash on inessential luxuries, they suddenly felt poor. Not realizing that money was essential in the West – that without it, people often go homeless or even starve – they didn’t realize it’s true value. They began to feel inadequate and backward. Eight years after Tsewang had told me that Ladakhis had no poverty, I overheard him talking to some tourists. “If you could only help us Ladakhis,” he was saying, “we’re so poor.”

Tourism is part of the overall development, which the Indian government is promoting in Ladakh. The area is being integrated into the Indian, and hence the global, economy. Subsidized food is being imported from the outside, while local farmers who had previously grown a variety of crops and kept a few animals to provide for themselves have been encouraged to grow cash crops. In this way they have become dependent on forces beyond their control – huge transportation networks, oil prices, and the fluctuations of international finance. Over the course of time, financial inflation obliges them to produce more and more, so as to secure the income that they now need in order to buy what they used to grow themselves. In political terms, each Ladakhi is now one individual in a national economy of eight hundred million, and, as part of a global economy, one of over six billion.

As a result of external investments, local economies are crumbling. For generation after generation Ladakhis grew up learning how to provide themselves with clothing and shelter; how to make shoes out of yak skin and robes from the wool of sheep; how to build houses out of mud and stone. As these building traditions give way to ‘modern’ methods, the plentiful local materials are left unused, while competition for a narrow range of modern materials – concrete, steel and plastic – skyrockets. The same thing happens when people begin eating identical staple foods, wearing the same clothes and relying on the same finite energy sources. Making everyone dependent on the same resources creates efficiency for global corporations, but it also creates an

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artificial scarcity for consumers, which heightens competitive pressures.

As they lose the sense of security and identity that springs from deep, long-lasting connections to people and place, the Ladakhis are starting to develop doubts about who they are. The images they get from outside tell them to be different, to own more, to buy more and to thus be 'better' than they are. The previously strong, outgoing women of Ladakh have been replaced by a new generation – unsure of themselves and desperately concerned with their appearance. And as their desire to be 'modern' grows, Ladakhis are turning their backs on their traditional culture. I have seen Ladakhis wearing wristwatches they cannot read, and heard them apologising for the lack of electric lighting in their homes – electric lighting which, in 1975, when it first appeared, most villagers laughed at as an unnecessary gimmick. Even traditional foods are no longer a source of pride; now, when I'm a guest in a Ladakhi village, people apologise if they serve the traditional roasted barley, ngamphe, instead of instant noodles.

Ironically, then, modernisation – so often associated with the triumph of individualism – has produced a loss of individuality and a growing sense of personal insecurity. As people become self-conscious and insecure, they feel pressured to conform, and to live up to an idealised image. By contrast, in the traditional village, where everyone wore essentially the same clothes and looked the same to the casual observer, there was more freedom to relax. As part of a close-knit community, people felt secure enough to be themselves.

In Ladakh, as elsewhere, the breaking of local cultural, economic and political ties isolates people from their locality and from each other. At the same time, life speeds up and mobility increases – making even familiar relationships more superficial and brief. Competition for scarce jobs and political representation within the new centralised structures increasingly divides people. Ethnic and religious differences began to take on a political dimension, causing bitterness and enmity on a scale hitherto unknown. With a desperate irony, the monoculture creates divisions that previously did not exist.

As the fabric of local interdependence fragments, so do traditional levels of tolerance and co-operation. In villages near the capital, Leh, disputes and acrimony within previously close-knit communities, and even within families, are increasing. I have even seen heated arguments over the allocation of irrigation water, a procedure that had previously been

...economic 'development' not only exacerbates existing tensions but in many cases actually creates them. By breaking down human scale structures it destroys bonds of reciprocity and mutual dependence, while encouraging people to substitute their own culture and values with those of the media.

managed smoothly within a co-operative framework. The rise in this kind of new rivalry is one of the most painful divisions that I have seen in Ladakh. Within a few years, growing competition has actually culminated in violence – and this in a place where, previously, there had been no group conflict in living memory.

Deadly Divisions

The rise of divisions, violence and civil disorder around the world are signs of resistance to attempts to incorporate all cultures and peoples into the global monoculture. These divisions often deepen enough to result in fundamentalist reaction and ethnic conflict. Ladakh is by no means an isolated example.

In Bhutan, different ethnic groups had lived peaceably together for hundreds of years. In the last few decades, however, pressures of modernization have resulted in the widespread destruction of decentralized livelihoods and communities – unemployment, once completely unknown, has reached crisis levels. Just like in Ladakh, these pressures have created intense competition between individuals and groups for places in schools, jobs and resources. As a result, tensions between Buddhists and Bhutanese Hindus of Nepalese origin have led to an eruption of violence and even a type of 'ethnic cleansing'.

Elsewhere, Nicholas Hildyard has written of how, when confronted with the horrors of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia or Rwanda, it is often taken for granted that the cause must lie in ingrained and ancient antagonisms. The reality, however, as Hildyard notes, is that:

"scratch below the surface of inter-ethnic civil conflict, and the shallowness and deceptiveness of 'blood', or 'culture' explanations are soon revealed. 'Tribal hatred' (though a real and genuine emotion for some) emerges as the product not of 'nature' or of a primordial 'culture', but of a complex web of politics, economics, history, psychology and a struggle for identity."

In a similar vein, Michel Chossudovsky, Professor of Economics at the University of Ottawa, argues that the Kosovo crisis has its roots at least partly in the macro-economic reforms imposed by Belgrade's external creditors such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Multi-ethnic Yugoslavia was once a regional industrial power and economic success. But after a decade of Western economic ministrations and five years of disintegration, war, boycott, and embargo, the economies of the former Yugoslavia are in ruins.

Chossudovsky (p.1) writes:

"In Kosovo, the economic reforms were conducive to the concurrent impoverishment of both the Albanian and Serbian populations contributing to fuelling ethnic tensions. The deliberate manipulation of market forces destroyed economic activity and people's livelihood creating a situation of despair."

It is sometimes assumed that ethnic and religious strife are increasing because modern democracy liberates people, allowing old, previously suppressed, prejudices and hatreds to be expressed. If there was peace earlier, it is thought it was the result of oppression. But after more than twenty years of firsthand experience on the Indian subcontinent, I am convinced that economic 'development' not only exacerbates existing tensions but in many cases actually creates them. By breaking down human scale structures it destroys bonds of reciprocity and mutual dependence, while encouraging people to substitute their own culture and values with those of the media. In effect, this means rejecting one's own culture and roots—one's own identity.

Ultimately, while the myth makers of the 'Global Village' celebrate values of togetherness, the disparity

in wealth between the world's upper income brackets and the 90 percent of people in the poor countries represents a polarisation far more extreme than existed in the 19th century. Use of the word 'village' – intended to suggest relative equality, belonging and harmony – obscures a reality of high-tech islands of privilege and wealth towering above oceans of impoverished humanity struggling to survive. The global monoculture is a dealer in illusions – while it destroys traditions, local economies and sustainable ways of living, it can never provide the majority with the glittering, wealthy lifestyle it promised them. For what it destroys, it provides no replacement but a fractured, isolated, competitive and unhappy society.

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About Helena Norberg-Hodge

Helena Norberg-Hodge is a leading analyst of the impact of the global economy on cultures around the world. A linguist by training, she was educated in Sweden, Germany, England and the United States, and speaks seven languages. She has lectured and taught extensively around the world—from the Smithsonian Institution to Harvard and Oxford universities. Ms. Norberg-Hodge is founder and director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture (ISEC), which runs programs on four continents aimed at strengthening ecological diversity and community, with a particular emphasis on local food and farming. She also directs the Ladakh Project, renowned for its groundbreaking work in sustainable development on the Tibetan plateau. She is the author of numerous works, including the inspirational classic, *Ancient Futures: Learning from Ladakh*, which—together with an award-winning film of the same title—has been translated into more than 30 languages. She is co-founder of the International Forum on Globalisation and the Global Eco-village Network, and a recipient of the Right Livelihood Award, or "Alternative Nobel Prize".

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THE CHOMSKY ARCHIVE



Morality, Human Behaviour & Education

NOAM CHOMSKY INTERVIEWED BY TOR WENNERBERG

Tor Wennerberg: *One idea that I find extremely interesting and fascinating is the notion that just as our language capabilities are genetically determined, so is our capacity – as human beings – for moral judgment. What do you see as the implications of the idea that our moral capacity is innate?*

Noam Chomsky: Well, for one thing, I don't think it can really be much of a question. (That's not to say we understand anything about it.) But, the fact of the matter is that we're constantly making moral judgments in new situations, and over a substantial range we do it in a convergent fashion – we don't differ randomly and wildly from one another. Furthermore, young children do it, very quickly, and they also converge.

Of course, there are cultural and social and historical effects, but even for those to operate, they must be operating on something. If you look at this range of phenomena, there are only two possibilities: one is, it's a miracle, and the other is, it's rooted in our nature. It's rooted in our nature in the same sense in which language is, or for that matter, having arms and legs is. And it takes different forms depending on the circumstances, just as arms and legs depend on nutrition, and language depends on my not having heard Swedish when I was six months old and so on. But basically, it must be something that flows out of our nature, or otherwise we'd never use it in any systematic way, except just repeating what happened before. So, it's got to be there.

It's better to have a conscious understanding of what's guiding you, to the extent you can, than just to react intuitively, without understanding.

What are the implications? One implication is, we ought to be interested in finding out what it is. We'd learn something important about ourselves. You can't hope at this stage that we're beginning to learn anything from biology. Biology doesn't begin to reach that far. In principle it should, but right now it deals with much tinier problems. It has a hard time figuring out how bees function, let alone humans.

But I think we can learn things by history and experience. Take, say, the debate over big issues like slavery or women's rights and so on. It wasn't just people screaming at each other. There were arguments, in fact, interesting arguments on both sides. The pro-slavery side had very substantial arguments that are not easy to answer. But there was a kind of common moral ground in which a good bit of the debate took place, and as it resolved, which it essentially did, you see a consciousness

emerging of what really is right, which must mean it reflects our built – in conception of what's right. And that's something that we learn more about over time, we get more insight into what's coming out of our nature. The implications are very substantial, to the extent that we can understand them. It's better to have a conscious understanding of what's guiding you, to the extent you can, than just to react intuitively, without understanding. That's true whether you're a carpenter reacting to how to form wood artifacts or a moral human being reacting to how to decide between behaviors toward others.

If we just make the thought experiment that a whole generation of children were given the opportunity to grow up in a truly loving and respectful environment, through liberatory child – rearing, so that they would be able to fully develop their moral capacity, would it then, do you think, be impossible to uphold a social order based on vast inequality and elite rule?

I wouldn't say it's impossible, but I would think it would generate very considerable resistance. Actually, it always generates resistance. And it would generate even more in that case. It's a striking fact, if you look at the notion of equality, take our own history, from the Greeks to the present, it's very striking that just about every leading figure has regarded equality as an obvious desideratum.

Take the earliest serious work on politics, Aristotle's Politics. Well he points out that he's not a great fan of democracy, it's the best of a bunch of bad systems. But he said a democracy cannot function if there are extremes of wealth. Everyone has to be roughly equal – everyone has to be middle class, he said. And in fact, he called for a super welfare state. He said in any democratic

From ZNet, 1998

society, public resources will have to be used in ways that he outlines, like communal meals, to ensure that the poor are relatively well off and that there are no big differences. Otherwise, it's impossible to have a properly functioning democracy...I think this is a deep sentiment, and an understandable one, and we all recognize, at some core of our being, that there's something quite wrong with one person having superfluities and another person starving. You find that all the way through the tradition, in people's actions, in literature.

And now, just looking at the latest Human Development Report, the figures on the combined wealth of the 250 – something richest individuals in the world...

But you noticed that they criticized it. They don't say, isn't this wonderful? They say it's something wrong. In fact everybody says there's something wrong. The only arguments that support it are saying, really everybody benefits because it trickles down. The arguments are ludicrous, but it's interesting that they have to give the arguments. The arguments for defensive war are often equally ludicrous.

If we consider the likelihood that we as humans have an instinct for creativity and a moral instinct, what is it in the way our system of education is functioning, that perverts or inhibits these instincts from fully developing themselves?

A good educational system ought to nurture and encourage these aspects of human life and allow them to flourish. But of course that has problems. For one thing it means that you will encourage challenge of authority and domination. It will encourage questioning of powerful institutions. The fact of the matter is that honesty, integrity, creativity, all these things we're supposed to value, all run up dramatically against the hierarchic, authoritarian structure of the institutional framework in which we live. And since that structure is what sets the basic framework in which things happen, it becomes virtually contradictory to implement the values that you talk about in church on Sunday morning. So you put the values to the side, to the Sunday Service, and get on with existing the rest of the time. So Sunday is when you say, yeah, love and kindness and charity and equality and all that stuff are the soul of life. But the other six days of the week you're working within institutions of authority and domination and control and self-enrichment and so on and you must comply or suffer even graver consequences for not complying.

...how did I get to a good college myself? I was always very critical and dissident. But I got there by shutting up! I went through high school, thinking it was all really stupid and authoritarian and boring, but I was obedient, I was quiet, I wasn't a behavior problem, I didn't tell the teacher what I thought he was teaching was ludicrous when I thought it was. And I made it to a good college.

And schools are like that. So the way schools actually function – of course it's not 100 percent, because there is a contradiction, so all sorts of aspects show themselves depending on the teacher and so on – but, by and large, there's a very strong tendency which works its way out in the long run and on average, for the schools to have a kind of filtering effect. They filter out independence of thought, creativity, imagination, and in their place foster obedience and subordination. I think everyone knows this from their own history. Like, how did I get to a good college myself? I was always very critical and dissident. But I got there by shutting up! I went

through high school, thinking it was all really stupid and authoritarian and boring, but I was obedient, I was quiet, I wasn't a behavior problem, I didn't tell the teacher what I thought he was teaching was ludicrous when I thought it was. And I made it to a good college.

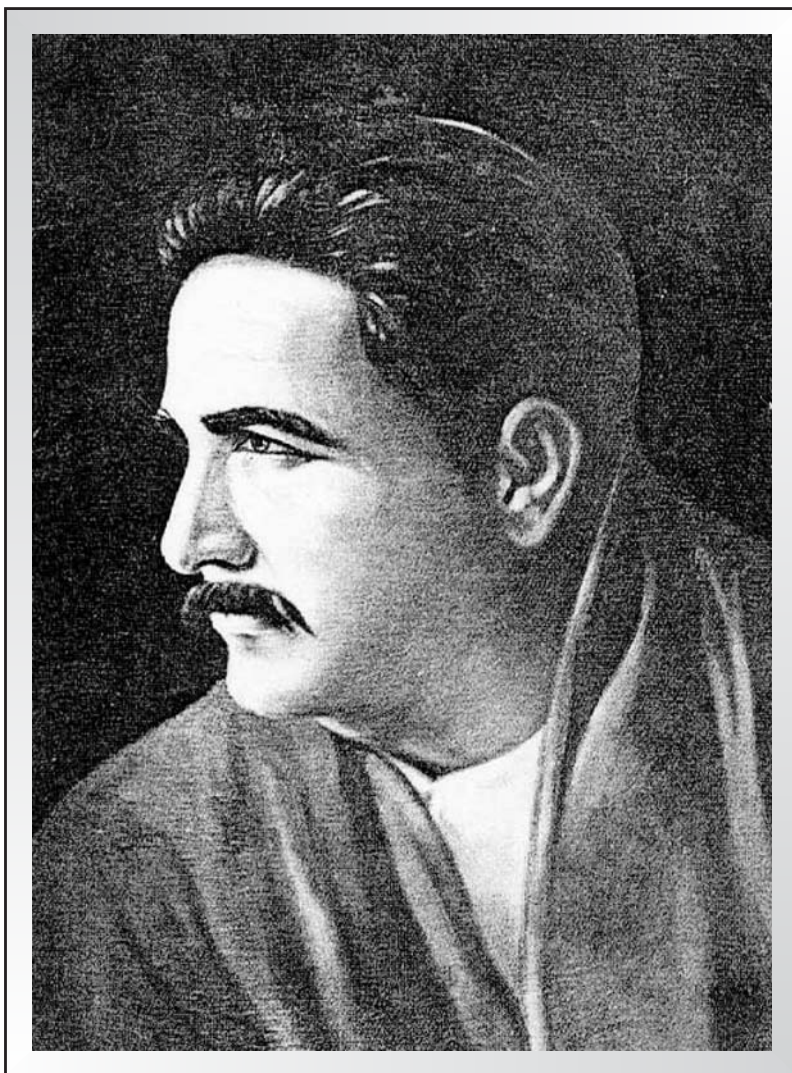
There are people who don't accept, who aren't obedient. They are weeded out, they're driving taxi cabs, they're behavior problems. The long-term effect of this is to reward and foster subordination; it begins in kindergarten and goes all the way through your professional or other career. If you challenge authority, you get in one or another kind of trouble. Again, it's not 100 percent the case, and there are some areas of life where it's dramatically not the case, but on average and overwhelmingly in the outcomes, it holds.

About Noam Chomsky

Noam Chomsky is one of the leading intellectuals of our time. He is also regarded as one of America's most prominent political dissidents. A renowned professor of linguistics at MIT, he has authored over 30 political books dissecting such issues as US interventionism in the developing world, the political economy of human rights and the propaganda role of corporate media. Chomsky has most kindly allowed EDucate! to reproduce from the plethora of his internationally acclaimed works. This section will therefore present from his writings and opinions every quarter.

"There is a campaign under way to essentially destroy the public education system along with every aspect of human life and attitudes and thought that involve social solidarity. It's being done in all sorts of ways. One is simply by under-funding. So, if you can make the public schools really rotten, people will look for an alternative. Any service that's going to be privatized, the first thing you do is make it malfunction so people can say, " We want to get rid of it. It's not running. Let's give it to Lockheed."

Noam Chomsky, *The Progressive Magazine*, September 1999



Muhammad Iqbal

A MANIFESTATION OF SELF-RECONSTRUCTION AND REFORMATION

BY
DR. ALI SHARIATI



If one were to reconstruct the form of Islam, which has been made to degenerate over the course of history, re-assemble it in such a way that its spirit could return to a complete body, and transform the present disorientated elements of Islam into that spirit, as if the trumpet of Israfil were to blow in the 20th century over a dead society and awaken its movement, power, spirit, and meaning, it is then that exemplary Muslim personalities like Muhammad Iqbal would be reconstructed and reborn.

Muhammad Iqbal is not just a Muslim mystic who is solely concerned with mysticism or gnosis as were Ghazzali, Muhyi Din ibn Arabi, and Rumi. They emphasized individual evolution, purification of the soul, and the inner illuminated 'self'. They only developed and trained a few people like themselves but, for the

most part, remained oblivious to the outside world, having been almost unaware of the Mongol attack and the subsequent despotic rule and suppression of the people.

Iqbal is also not like Abu Muslim, Hasan Sabah or Saladin Ayyubi and personalities like them who, in the history of Islam, are simply men of the sword, power, war, and struggle and who consider the exercise of power and the defeat of the enemy enough to effect reform and revolution in the minds of the people and in their social relationships.

Nor is Iqbal similar to those learned individuals like the Indian, Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, who imagined that no matter in what situation Islamic society is (even if it is under the domination of a British viceroy), it can be revived with modern scholarly interpretations or with 20th century scientific and logical commentaries on Islamic tenets and Quranic verses, as well as through profound philosophical and scholarly research.

Iqbal is not among some Western people who consider science to be sufficient for human salvation, for evolution, and for curing anguish. He is not one of those philosophers who thinks meeting economic needs is tantamount to meeting all human needs. Nor is he like his fellow countrymen, that is, the great Hindu and Buddhist thinkers who consider peace of mind and spiritual salvation to be transmigration, or who consider the cycle of karma to Nirvana to be the fulfillment of the mission of humanity, and who imagine that in a society where there is even one hungry person, where slavery, deprivation and disgrace exist, one can still develop pure, elevated spirits and disciplined, educated people who have attained well-being and even a sense of morality!

No. Iqbal demonstrates through his very being and through his School of Thought that thoughts which are related to Islam are thoughts which, while paying careful attention to this world and the material needs of humanity, also give the human being a heart. As he himself says, "I find the most beautiful states of life during the yearnings and meditations between daybreak and dawn".

The greatest advice of Iqbal to humanity is: Have a heart like Jesus, thought like Socrates, and a hand like the hand of a Caesar, but all in one human being, in one creature of humanity, based upon one spirit in order to attain one goal. That is, to be like Iqbal himself: A man who attains the height of political awareness in his time to the extent that some people believe him to be solely a political figure and a liberated, nationalist leader who is a 20th century anti-colonialist. A man who, in philosophical thought, rises to such a high level that he is considered to be a contemporary thinker and

philosopher of the same rank as Bergson in the West today or of the same level as Ghazzali in Islamic history.

At the same time, he is a man we regard as being a reformer of Islamic society, who thinks about the conditions of human and Islamic society, a society in which he himself lives and for which he performs jihad (i.e. struggles nobly in the way of God) for the salvation, awareness, and liberation of Muslim people. His efforts are not just casual and scientific or of the kind that Sartre called "intellectual demonstrations of political, pseudo-leftists" but rather of the kind exhibited by responsible individuals. He struggles and strives and, at the same time, he is also a lover of Rumi. He journeys with him in his spiritual ascensions and burns from the lover's flames, anguishes, and spiritual anxieties. This great man does not become one-dimensional, does not disintegrate, does not become a one-sided or one-dimensional Muslim. He is a complete Muslim. Even though he loves Rumi, he is not obliterated by him.

Iqbal goes to Europe and becomes a philosopher. He comes to know the European Schools of Philosophy and makes them known to others. Everyone admits that he is a 20th-century philosopher, but he does not surrender to Western thinking. On the contrary, he conquers the West. He lives with a critical mind and the power of choice in the 20th century and in the Western civilization. He is devoted to and a disciple of Rumi to an extent that does not contradict and is not incompatible with the authentic dimensions of the Islamic spirit.

Sufism says "As our fate has been pre-determined in our absence, if it is not to your satisfaction, do not complain". Or, "If the world does not agree with you or suit you, you should agree with the world". But Iqbal, the mystic, says "If the world does not agree with you, arise against it!" "The world" means the destiny and life of human beings. The human being is a wave, not a static shoreline. His or her being and becoming is in motion. What do I mean? It is to be in motion. In the mysticism of Iqbal, which is neither Hindu mysticism nor religious fanaticism, but Quranic mysticism, the human being must change the world. Quranic Islam has substituted "heavenly fate" in which the human being is nothing, with "human fate" in which the human being plays an important role. This is the greatest revolutionary, as well as progressive and constructive principle which Islam has created by its world view, philosophy of life, and ethics.

The greatest advice of Iqbal to humanity is: Have a heart like Jesus, thought like Socrates, and a hand like the hand of a Caesar, but all in one human being, in one creature of humanity, based upon one spirit in order to attain one goal.

The greatest criticism that humanism and liberal intellectuals have leveled and continue to level against religion is that religious beliefs have been interpreted as being founded on absolute determinism or Divine Will, and thus the absolute subjugation of human will, so the human being is logically reduced to being weak in terms of free-choice in relation to the Absolute. If this were true, it would be a disgrace. It would be servitude and a means for the negation of power, freedom, and responsibility. It would be to submit to the status quo, to 'whatever will be, will be', to accept any fate which is imposed upon the human being in this world and to admit to the futility and uselessness of life. As past, present, and future events have been and will continue to be dictated by fate, in this view, any criticism or objection, then, or efforts to attain our hearts' desires or to change the situation, must be subjugated to "whatever has been pre-destined for us". In this way, the human being's attempts to change, convert, and amend the status quo become impossible, unreasonable, and ill-advised.

But in the philosophy of Islam, although the One God has Absolute Power and is Almighty and although for Him is the Creation, Guidance, Expediency, and Rule over the universe, "His is the Creation and the Command," (7:54), at the same time, the human being, in this extensive universe, is considered in such a way that while one cannot dissociate oneself from the rule of God and from Divine Sovereignty, one can live freely. A Muslim has free will and the power to rebel and surrender. Thus, he or she is responsible and the maker of his or her own image. "Every soul is held in pledge for what he earns" (74:38) "And the human being shall have nothing but what he strives for" (53:30).

In his mystic journey with the Quran, Iqbal described this principle, that is, the principle of authenticity of deed and responsibility towards human beings, that which humanists, existentialists, or radicals endeavor to help humanity achieve by negating religion and denying God. These people, quite rightly, see the religion and the God conceived by the minds of human beings to be incompatible with human freedom, esteem, authenticity, and responsibility, whereas Islam, without resorting to philosophical justification and interpretation, clearly declares "the day when the human being shall see what his two hands have sent before" (78:40).

With his outlook, his orientation to faith and his Islamic mysticism, Iqbal passed through all the philosophical and spiritual states of this age. It can be said that he was a Muslim migrant who appeared in the depths of the Indian Ocean and rose to the highest peaks of honor of the majestic European mountains, but he did not remain there. He returned to us to offer his nation – that is, to offer us – whatever he had learned on his wondrous journey.

Through his personality, I see that once again Islam in the 20th century presents a model, an example, for the anguished but confused new generation which has some degree of self-awareness. A shining spirit, full of Eastern inspiration, is selected from the land of the heart of spiritual culture and illumination. The great thoughts of the West, the land of civilization, intellect, and knowledge with the power of creativity and advancement are placed in his mind. Then, with all of this investment, he becomes knowledgeable of the 20th century. He is not one of those reactionaries and worshippers of the past who have enmity towards the West and whatever is new; who oppose new civilization without a sound reason. He is also not like those who imitate and are absorbed by the West without having the courage to criticize and to choose. On the one hand, he employs science and, on the other, he senses its inadequacies and shortcomings in meeting the spiritual needs and the evolutionary requirements of humanity. He offers solutions for its completion. Iqbal is a person who has a world view, and he has developed philosophical-spiritual interpretations based upon it which he offers to the world and its people. Iqbal is a person who bases his social teaching upon his world view, and then offers his spiritual and philosophical interpretations of it. Based upon the culture and history with which he is associated, he develops the concept of a person based on the standard of an "Ali", to the extent that the material for developing such a human being in our century allows.

What does the "standard of Ali" mean? It means a human being with an Eastern heart and a Western mind. It means a person who thinks deeply and profoundly. It means a human being who expresses a beautiful and splendid love. It refers to a person who is well acquainted with the anguish of the spirit as well as with the sufferings of life. It means a human being who both knows God and the people. It is a devotee possessing the light of knowledge who burns with love and faith, and whose penetrating eyes never allow negligence and ignorance to prevail without questioning the fate of enslaved nations. It is a person who seeks reform, revolution, and a change of mental attitudes. As a thinker, he realizes that the spiritless eye of science (according to Francis Bacon) is incapable of seeing all the realities of the universe. He also feels that a lovesick heart attains nothing if it is only concerned with asceticism, self-abasement and purification, because a human being affiliated with society and affiliated to life and the material world cannot disentangle the "self" alone. An individual moves

Iqbal is a person who has a world view, and he has developed philosophical – spiritual interpretations based upon it which he offers to the world and its people.

with the caravan of society and cannot choose a way separate from it.

This is why we wish to have a School of Thought and action which both responds to our philosophical needs, and at the same time develops a thinking being who is accepted by the world, recognized by civilization and the new culture of the world, and not one alienated from us and our rich cultural resources. We wish for a School of Thought and action which nurtures a human being who is closely aware of our culture and all of our good spiritual and religious assets, who is not alienated from the times, and who does not live in the 4th or 5th century. We long for it to develop a human being who can think, who has a scientific mind, yet who does not remain negligent of the anguish, life, captivity, and hardships of his people. We desire the development of a human being who, even if he thinks about the real and material anguish of humanity and about the present confusions and difficulties of human society or his own society, does not forget the ideal human being or the significance of the human being or the eternal mission of humanity in history, and does not lower all human ideals to the level of material consumption.

All that we seek in these various domains can be found in Iqbal, because the only thing that Iqbal did – and this is the greatest success of Iqbal as a Muslim in an Islamic society in the 20th century – was that, based upon the knowledge he had of the rich new and old cultures, he was able to develop himself, based on the model which his ideological School – that is Islam – gave. This is the greatest success of Iqbal in an Islamic society in the 20th century. We do not say that he is a perfect human being. No. We do not say he is a symbolic person. No. He is a personality who, after his disintegration, had been reconstructed into a complete Muslim person and a perfect Islamic personality in the 20th century. This reconstruction is the starting point from which we Muslim intellectuals must ourselves begin. We must feel our greatest responsibility to be in reconstructing ourselves and our society. Sayyid Jamal was the first who produced such a feeling of re-awakening. Asking “Who are you? Who were you?”, Iqbal was the first fruit from the seed of the movement which Sayyid Jamal planted in this people. The first product is a great model, an example, and our very awakening. As Easterners, we are affiliated to this part of the world. We are connected with this history. We are human beings confronted by nature and by the West.

But what do we mean when we say Iqbal was a reformer? Can reform really save a society from all of its misfortunes, anguish, and difficulties? Must not a sudden, severe, deep-rooted revolution take place in thought and in relation to society? When we say Iqbal was a reformer, those present who are familiar

with the expressions prevalent among the educated class think “reform” means something which is the opposite of “revolution” in a socio-political sense. Most often when we say “reform”, we mean gradual change or change in the superstructure, and when we say “revolution”, we mean a sudden, abrupt change in the infrastructure, a total collapse and then total reconstruction. But when in these changes we say that Iqbal was a reformer, we are not referring to slow and gradual change in society. Our intention is not gradual change or external reform, but we use this word in its general sense, which also includes the meaning of “revolution”.

When we say Iqbal was a reformer or that the great thinkers after Sayyid Jamal are known for being the greatest reformers of the century in the world, it is not in the sense that they supported gradual and external change in society. No! They were supporters of a deep-seated revolution, a revolution in thought, in views, in feelings; an ideological and cultural revolution. Iqbal, Sayyid Jamal, Kawakibi, Muhammad Abduh, Ibn Ibrahim and members of the Maqrib Ijlama Association are great men who shook the East in the last one hundred years. Their reforms or, still better, “reforming revolutions”, stand upon this principle, for they believe that individual reform is no longer an answer. It is an altogether different matter if reform affects society. A person can no longer think and live in a way which he has chosen for himself, nor accept any influence from his age or his society, and still develop himself into a pure and real human being in a corrupt age and in a degenerate society, for if this were to be possible, then “social responsibility and commitment” would make no sense.

About Dr. Ali Shariati

Dr. Ali Shariati was born in Mazinan, a suburb of Mashhad, Iran. In his years at the Teacher's Training College, he came into contact with youth who were from the lower economic strata of the society and tasted the poverty and hardship that existed. At the age of eighteen, he started as a teacher and ever since had been a student as well as a teacher. After graduating from college in 1960, on a scholarship he pursued graduate studies in France. Dr. Shariati, an honor student, received his doctorate in sociology in 1964 from Sorbonne University. As a Muslim sociologist, he sought to explain the problems of Muslim societies in the light of Islamic principles – explaining them and discussing them with his students. For this reason, the regime felt obliged to discontinue his courses at the university. He was neither a reactionary fanatic who opposed anything that was new without any knowledge nor was he of the so-called westernized intellectuals who imitated the west without independent judgment. Dr. Shariati constantly fought to create humanitarian values in the young generation, a generation whose values have been defaced with the help of the most scientific and technical methods. He vigorously tried to re-introduce the Quran and Islamic history to the youth so that they may find their true selves in all their human dimensions and fight all the decadent societal forces. Dr. Shariati wrote many books. In all his writings, he tried to present a clear and genuine picture of Islam. He strongly believed that if the intellectual and new generation realized the truth of this faith, attempts toward social change would be successful.

We have entered a reality-zone already captured by its opposite: unreality. It is a world where nobody really wanted to venture. It is a world where order has given way to disorder, where reason has given way to unreason, where reality is compromised by truth, where the once noble search for explanations has been replaced by a dizzying vortex of plastic flags, stars and stripes rhinestone belts, coffee klatch war strategists, Sunday barbecue patrioteering, militant denunciations of war protestors, a generalized fear of whatever lies ahead, xenophobic hostility, and point-blank outrage.

It is world of pure intensity where to seek refuge in the sanctuary of reflection is to engage in an act of unpardonable treason. Where previously silenced realities are now guaranteed never to be heard. It is truly a world turned, in the words of Eduardo Galeano, "upside down". It is a looking-glass world that "rewards in reverse: it scorns honesty, punishes work, prizes lack of scruples, and feeds cannibalism. Its professors slander nature: injustice, they say, is a law of nature". Within this looking-glass world, that world that exists upside-down, there exists the "looking-glass school" that "teaches us to suffer reality, not to change it; to forget the past, not learn from it; to accept the future, not invent it. In its halls of criminal learning, impotence, amnesia, and resignation are required courses". It is the reverse mirror image of the democracy that we thought we knew, a democracy for which many had fought and some had died.

It is a world where it is safer to engage in rehearsed reactions to what we encounter on our television screens. After all, domestic dissent has now acquired a police state translation that equates it with terrorism. It is safer to react in ways that newscaster/entertainers big on acrimonious scapegoating and



Critical Pedagogy *in the* Shadow of Terror

BY
PETER McLAREN

short on analysis define for us as patriotic: applaud all actions by governmental authorities (especially those of the President) as if they were sacerdotal or morally apodictic. CNN has already declared it is "perverse" to focus on civilian suffering, exercising a racist arithmetic that deems civilian casualties in the US to be superior to those in Afghanistan. Death and destruction have become as faceless as a smouldering turban on the side of a dirt road.

We are living in a world in which the act of patriotism has been shamelessly downgraded by making it compulsory. According to novelist John le Carre, "it's as if we have entered a new, Orwellian world where our personal reliability as comrades in the struggle [against terrorism] is measured by the degree to which we invoke the past to explain the present. Suggesting there is a historical context for the recent atrocities is by implication to make excuses for them. Anyone who is with us doesn't do that. Anyone who does, is against us". Edward Said echoes a similar sentiment: "what terrifies me is that we're entering a phase where if you start to speak about this as something that can be understood historically – without any sympathy – you are going to be thought of as unpatriotic, and you are going to be forbidden. It's very dangerous. It is precisely incumbent on every citizen to quite understand the world we're living in and the history we are a part of and we are forming as a superpower."

As long as we live in an unthinking world where nations follow shallow ideologues and their corporate overworlder sponsors into the killing fields of last resort, there is not much hope for social justice and world peace. As Steve Niva notes, "Terrorism's best asset, in the final analysis, is the anger and desperation that leads people to see no alternative to violence".

Those stubborn enough to break away from the media's unrestrained boosterism and insist on understanding world events and their connection to the terrorist attacks of September 11 are implored to submit to the explanations provided by carefully chosen 'experts' hired by our corporately-owned-and-controlled media if for nothing else than fear of public humiliation via media – speak homiletics. It is a world best left to the experts to figure out. After all, who are we to question the people who, after all, must 'know things' that we don't – like CBC anchorman Dan Rather? Attempts to link September 11th to the crisis of global capitalism are left solely in the hands of a handful of leftist editors whose publications are marked by modest and diminishing circulation numbers whereas the mainstream media will be mining the entrails of academia for more comforting theories such as those offered by Harvard professor, Samuel Huntington. Huntington argues that the world is moving from a Cold War bipolar division to more complex

multipolar and muticivilization divisions with greater potential for conflict. Here Islamic cultures conveniently collide with Western ones with the force of tectonic plates.

If the comfort of easy explanations feels familiar it is because it is part of the wilful compliance to the conservative status quo that we were taught so well in schools? For those in danger of dissent, watchdog organizations abound. The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (founded by Senator Joseph Lieberman and Lynne V. Cheney) recently issued a report condemning the response of many university professors to the September 11 attacks. Titled "Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America, and What Can Be Done About It", the report itemizes 117 incidents that allegedly reveal a treasonous refusal on the part of radical professors to defend civilization. In other words, some professors have the temerity to be critical of Bush's war on terrorism. Manning Marable declares that "[w]e will inevitably see 'dissident profiling': the proliferation of electronic surveillance, roving wiretapping, harassment at the workplace, the infiltration and disruption of anti-war groups, and the stigmatization of any critics of US militarism as disloyal and subversive".

More than ever, today it is imperative that we understand why developing countries regard the United States with increasing cynicism. While on the one hand the US seeks cooperation from the world in its war on terrorism, it often refuses to cooperate with other nations unless it is in the direct interest of the United States to do so. As Dean Baker asserts, more than 35 million people in the developing world are HIV positive. In order to address this problem, the United States pledged \$200 million, which amounts to six hours of the Pentagon budget. At the same

Even when you are careful to denounce terrorism as a crime against humanity, these days it is dangerous to be a radical educator. This is because the corporations and big business, who control the media, will not permit a debate on the root causes of terrorism. They never have.

time, those countries who provide low-cost drugs by ignoring the patents of US pharmaceutical companies are threatened with severe trade sanctions by the US government. Most of what official aid does get distributed (approximately 0.15 percent of GDP) goes to reward political loyalty, with Israel and Egypt being the two largest recipients. Marable captures some of the root causes of this cynicism when he asserts:

"The United States government cannot engage in effective multilateral actions to suppress terrorism, because its behavior illustrates its complete contempt for international cooperation. The United States owed \$582 million in back dues to the United Nations, and it paid up only when the September 11 attacks jeopardized its national security. Republican conservatives demand that the United States should be exempt from the jurisdiction of an International Criminal Court, a permanent tribunal now being established at The Hague, Netherlands. For the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, the US government authorized the allocation of a paltry \$250,000, compared to over \$10 million provided to conference organizers by the Ford Foundation. For three decades, the US refused to ratify

the 1965 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racism. Is it any wonder that much of the Third World questions our motives?"

In the face of such a hawkish scenario, and in the midst of widespread apprehension about the motives behind the US war on terrorism among Third World peoples, is a particularly difficult time to call for rethinking the role that the United States plays in the global division of labor. The recent events of mind-shattering apocalyptic dimensions, the sudden unfolding nightmare that saw death and destruction unleashed upon thousands of innocent and unsuspecting victims in Washington and New York City, such that the gates of hell appeared to have been blown open, have made it difficult for many United States citizens to comprehend why their familiar world has suddenly turned upside-down. Those of us who practice critical or revolutionary pedagogy take a strong position against terrorism. Even when you are careful to denounce terrorism as a crime against humanity, these days it is dangerous to be a radical educator. This is because the corporations and big business, who control the media, will not permit a debate on the root causes of terrorism. They never have.

Many people reject the idea that the United States exports terrorism. Some no doubt find it difficult to understand why a powerful nation such as the United States would need to employ what are generally considered to be the weapons of the weak. Klare asserts that "Throughout history, the weapon of those who see themselves as strong in spirit but weak in power has been what we call terrorism. Terrorism is the warfare of the weak against the strong: if you have an army you wage a war; if you lack an army you engage in suicide bombings and other acts

of terrorism. (Remember: this is exactly what the American Revolution looked like to the British, the strong force in 1775.)"

Chomsky takes issue with this view of terrorism. He explains that, far from being a weapon of the weak, terrorism is primarily the weapon of the strong: That is the culture in which we live and it reveals several facts. One is the fact that terrorism works. It doesn't fail. It works. Violence usually works. That's world history. Secondly, it's a very serious analytic error to say, as is commonly done, that terrorism is the weapon of the weak. Like other means of violence, it's primarily a weapon of the strong, overwhelmingly, in fact. It is held to be a weapon on the weak because the strong also control the doctrinal systems and their terror doesn't count as terror.

Acts of terrorism can be as backward and horrific as acts of capitalist-driven imperialism and in no circumstances can they be justified. At the same time, the cruelly – imposed carnage from the repugnant and immoral terrorist attacks witnessed recently on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon must not be used by reactionary forces in the United States government and media to turn public sentiment against critics of social injustice or to curtail the civil liberties of citizens. Nor must critics of US capitalism, and I count myself as one of them, simply list all the horrible acts of imperialism engaged in historically by the United States – a long and bloody list, to be sure – as evidence of or a rationale for why these terrorist acts occurred. They occurred without demand, or proclamation.

These acts were demonic crimes against working people. For instance, hundreds of Latinos were killed in the attack on the World Trade Center, more victims than from any other nation outside of the United States. They worked

at Windows on the World, in the office cafeterias, cleaning services, and delivery companies and little media attention has so far been paid to them. And while we can gain a deeper understanding of these events by recognizing how the United States is implicated in a long history of crimes against the oppressed throughout the world – including interventions in post-cold war theaters – this history in no way justifies the terrorist attacks.

Such attacks have been propelled by reactionary religious fundamentalist ideology that represents only a small reactionary cadre of followers of Islam. As Edward Said remarks: "No cause, no God, no abstract idea can justify the mass slaughter of innocents, most particularly when only a small group of people are in charge of such actions and feel themselves to represent the cause without having a real mandate to do so". At the same time we must oppose in the United States the senseless xenophobic statism, militarism, erosion of civil liberties, and quest for permanent and indiscriminant military interventions overseas within the fracture zones of geo-political instability that have followed in the wake of the attacks, all of which can only have unsalutary consequences for world peace. This is particularly crucial, especially in light of another of Said's trenchant observations – that "bombing senseless civilians with F-16s and helicopter gunships has the same structure and effect as more conventional nationalistic terror".

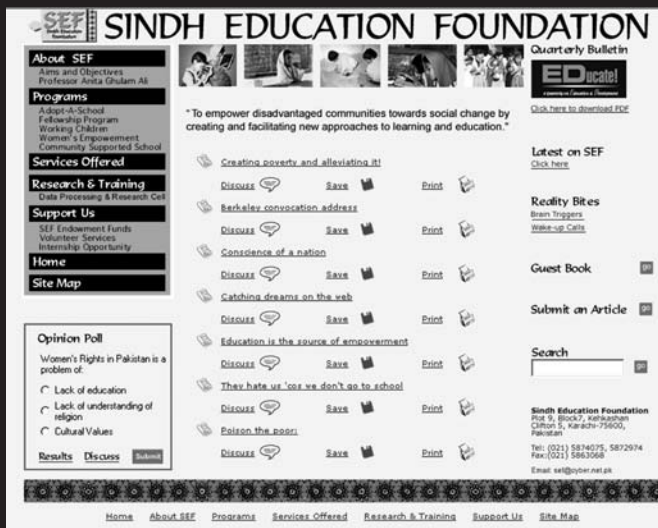
Acts of terrorism can be as backward and horrific as acts of capitalist-driven imperialism and in no circumstances can they be justified.

It is surely the case that US involvement in the Third World in general and the Islamic world in particular has created – and continues to create – the background conditions which are likely to lead to terrorism. The taproot of terrorism surely lies in the fertile soil of imperialism – both military and economic. It is nourished by capitalist greed and fertilised by the defeated dreams of the vanquished poor. The terrorism of 9–11 was rhizogenic – its roots and filaments interlaced with US foreign policy and practices. To say this is not to take a "hate America" position or a "chickens have come home to roost" position as it is to take a "wake up America and don't be misled by your leaders" position. We cannot divorce the recent acts of terrorism from their historical context.

At a time when media pundits and high level government leaders are patrioteering for the cameras, calling for more blood to be spilled in the name of democracy and freedom, and clamoring for the killing of people who are not even directly involved in the terrorist attacks, we need to join together in a renewed commitment to global justice.

About Peter McLaren

Peter McLaren is Professor Urban Schooling at University of Los Angeles. He began his teaching career in his hometown of Toronto, Canada, in an inner-city school. McLaren completed his Ph.D at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, in 1983. In 1985 McLaren worked with Henry Giroux to create the Center for Education and Cultural Studies, at Miami University of Ohio, where he served as both Associate Director and Director. While at Miami he was awarded the title of Renowned Scholar in Residence School of Education and Allied Professions. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and Commerce, and Associate of Massey College, Professor McLaren is the author and editor of over 35 books. He lectures world wide and his work has been translated into 15 languages.



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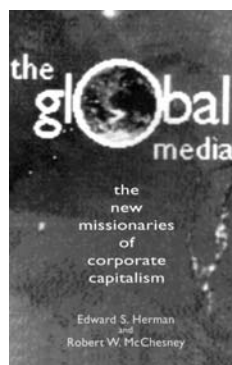
Societal Learning

**Books for a
BETTER
world**

Naureen Mushtaq

THE GLOBAL MEDIA

The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism
Edward Herman & Robert McChesney



Globalization and privatization have taken the world by storm. The global media system, mainly supported by the US, has branched in all countries and laid the ground for US dominated and controlled global media system. 'The Global Media', written by two prominent scholars of today, Edward S. Herman and Robert McChesney, outlines the emergence of the global media system and documents the political, social and technological events, which have led to its expansion and progress. The powerful content highlights how global

media facilitates global expansion by tracing it to its very roots of origin through a chronicle of events starting from the inception of the global era to its current rise.

The main players in the global media systems are exposed; the 10 largest transnational corporations which took the world by storm when they emerged after the Industrial Revolution in the 20th century. They created linkages and alliances and managed to establish themselves as global enterprises.

These corporations helped US control the films, book publishing agencies, newspapers, and television programs throughout the world. This global dominance of US and Britain made English the universal language of the world. These include: Hollywood's expansion of its exports along with the development of movie theatres around the world in the 60s, the flourishing of the book publishing business in the 1970s, emergence of television, the liberalization and privatization of enterprises due to the cross-border expansion of the transnational corporations in the 1980s, the dominance of three media industries; book publishing, film production and recorded music in the 1990s, expansion of films and multi-screen theatre complexes around the world, and the arrival of the Internet, digitalization of the global TV, establishment of the copyright protection laws and large company ventures in the mid 90s.

'Global Media' explains the establishment, working and holdings of the first and second tiers of global media firms, their joint ventures and their steps towards total domination of the world's media market. In the last chapters of the book, seven brief national and regional case studies have been presented. These studies are of four developed nations, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand and Italy and of three developing nations Brazil, Caribbean and India. These case studies depict how the local media evolved in these countries and what was the impact of US intervention and domination on their media industry. It also sheds light on the arrogance of US domination on Latin American media industry that has

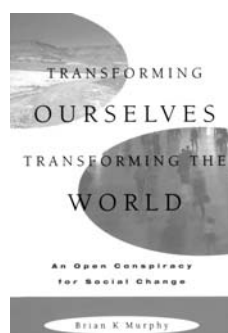
led to the implantation of alien cultures and values in other Third World countries.

This book will help the readers analyze the dynamics of media, how it controls emotions like hatred, love and amusement with its tactics, programs and commercialization. It elaborates how the Western culture and the 'Americanized' way of living have been ingrained, in the minds of people all around the world. It gives the reader a comprehensive insight of control – from media to mind.

Year of Publication: 1997
Published by: Cassell

TRANSFORMING OURSELVES TRANSFORMING THE WORLD

An Open Conspiracy for Social Change
Brian K. Murphy



Today, millions of social activists around the world, working for the betterment of society, are showing signs of despair and hopelessness. Many are expressing loss of hope and direction. The author describes the atrocities and injustices of the world, which have shown us high tolls of death rates, poverty, malnutrition and widening gaps between the rich and the poor. This huge disparity of globalization is highly prevalent all around the world and is worsening

on a daily basis. The poorest are becoming poorer and the richer are gaining more and becoming stronger. The carnage being committed on humans by humans is gaining steadily and violence has become the norm of human existence. Human freedom is being cruelly repressed.

'Transforming Ourselves Transforming the World' focuses on the activists who are struggling to confront these injustices. It refers to values such as peace, dignity and justice and proposes a framework for action and learning. This framework called 'political epistemology' explains that a positive and progressive social organization is not only possible but also natural whereby humans are inherently capable of resisting repression and oppression. It directly deals with the inertia in each individual that prevents him from taking a step towards change. It explores human capacities and capabilities to change the present situation and presents strategies that will help us initiate the transformation process. Individuals are guided to conspire together and assist individuals of our world with the right to choose freedom and make it a reality. This book is a wake-up call for the human spirit, which bestows upon us the liberation, to know, understand and change.

The book targets community organizers, potential activists, young adults and students, progressive educators, social theorists and scholars who have all their lives aimed towards gaining insights into a social struggle and who want to fight against the injustices of the world. It helps them bring their thoughts on struggle for freedom to reality.

Murphy has worked as a social activist focusing on areas such as literacy, poverty, gender, race and class issues especially the rights of immigrants and refugees. This book emerged from his adamant resolve to engage with people as mutual subjects of their own lives and history.

Year of Publication: 1999
Published by: Zed Books Ltd.

Societal Learning

By: Aziz Kabani & Somaiya Ayooob

Websites for a BETTER world

The website screams with many accusations in response to the severe policies of World Bank and IMF for the developing and poor countries. It features areas, which have been affected the most by the damaging schemes of these controlling institutions: education, women, health, debt, privatization and structural adjustment. This site caustically articulates the harsh realities that stem from the voracious greed of world powers to accumulate wealth and resources. The slogan at the top "Our dream is a world full of poverty" raises several questions in the mind of the viewer, regarding how dark the other side of the picture could possibly be. This question is soon answered. A section named "First Church of \$\$ Almighty Dollar" jovially informs the reader how spiritual values have been toppled by financial interests in today's society. "Online Banking" cautions poor countries that the intrusion of corporate giants such as Citibank, Coca-Cola, Domino, Shell, McDonald's, and Exxon Mobil would simply bring poverty and misery to them.

Other sections of the website contain debates and discussions on diverse issues related to development and the environment. They present the misery and despair of human society brought on through brutal globalization and the centralization of world resources. The site also provides startling facts and figures about the impairment of the ecosystem in India at the cost of the "Green Revolution" since the 1960s and the debt which has trapped Chad and many other African countries due to the rigid policies of leading global financial institutions. Serious protestors are urged to forge a legal battle against the inhumane and unjust attitude of the world powers which are interested more in protecting their vested interests rather than human and democratic values. The site also connects readers with several other articles discussing issues like education, women, health, debt, and the implications of policies in developing countries of the world.

This website will be very useful for critical readers who want to develop profound insights into the exploitation of resources and human rights by powerful institutions. One does not need to be an expert in financial matters or possess a degree in economics to understand the content of the website. The only thing required is 'critical consciousness'.

www.mcspotlight.org/beyond

beyond McDonald's

We are not for one moment saying that McDonald's is the only corporation in need of public scrutiny and debate. Due to its massive public prominence and indisputable arrogance it has simply been used as a symbol of all corporations pursuing their profits at any price. Many of the issues raised on McSpotlight can therefore equally be applied to any of the other big corporations, or even to entire industries.

Why choose McDonald's?

What's Wrong With Multinationals?

Introduction

McSpotlight on the Multinationals:

Oil introduction

Pharmaceuticals intro.

Baby Milk introduction

Chemicals introduction

Retail introduction

Food and Drink intro.

arms trade

exploiting workers

animal suffering

Backed by government institutions, big businesses constitute a fabric of exploitation and oppression to benefit the few with access to the profits and controls of decision-making. We all know the results – wage slavery, hunger, break up of independence and self-sufficiency of local communities, abuse of resources, despoliation of the environment and the suppression of people's genuine needs and desires.

This site entails the controversies faced by major corporations of the world. Named "beyond McDonald's", this site not only contains information regarding the giant food chain McDonald's, it also presents the real picture behind the façade of major corporations such as Shell, Body Shop, Nestle, Levers and Procter & Gamble to name a few. McDonald's, according to the website, is not the only corporation in need of public scrutiny and debate but due to its massive public prominence and indisputable arrogance it has simply been used as a symbol of all corporations pursuing their profits at any price.

Carrying information regarding various companies in the Oil, Pharmaceutical, Baby milk, Chemicals, Food, Drink and Tobacco sectors, it highlights how some of them have either supported oppressive regimes, conducted irresponsible marketing, forged links with the arm trades, initiated environmental destruction, caused animal suffering, exploited workers, and been responsible for land rights disputes or censoring critics. The debating rooms section is a global forum for discussion and debate about McDonald's and all that it stands for. It allows the participants to raise questions and issues which otherwise are not welcome to the media or other powerful groups. The viewers can express opinions about issues that range from a general discussion on McDonald's, its workers and policies to other multinationals, capitalism or anything else that a person feels like stating.

www.whirledbank.org

The Whirled Bank Group
Our Dream is a World Full of Poverty

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November 10-19, 2001

Mobilization against the World Bank and IMF in Ottawa, Ontario!

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► Multinational Corporations!
First from World Poverty! August 22, 2001

► Some Missions of Justice in response to the terrorist violence of September 11, 2001

► The Globalizer Who Came in From the Cold
Former World Bank Chief Economist Joseph Stiglitz wins the Nobel Prize in Economics

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NOAM CHOMSKY & THE STRUGGLE AGAINST NEOLIBERALISM

BY
ROBERT. W. McCHESNEY



Neoliberalism is the defining political economic paradigm of our time – it refers to the policies and processes whereby a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit. Associated initially with Reagan and Thatcher, neoliberalism has for the past two decades been the dominant global political economic trend adopted by political parties of the center, much of the traditional left, and the right. These parties and the policies they enact represent the immediate interests of extremely wealthy investors and less than one thousand large corporations.

Aside from some academics and members of the business community, the term neoliberalism is largely unknown and unused by the public at large, especially in the United States. There, to the contrary, neoliberal initiatives are characterized as free market policies that encourage private enterprise and consumer choice,

reward personal responsibility and entrepreneurial initiative, and undermine the dead hand of the incompetent, bureaucratic, and parasitic government, which can never do good (even when well intentioned, which it rarely is). A generation of corporate-financed public relations efforts, has given these terms and ideas a near-sacred aura. As a result, these phrases and the claims they imply rarely require empirical defense, and are invoked to rationalize anything from lowering taxes on the wealthy and scrapping environmental regulations to dismantling public education and social welfare programs. Indeed, any activity that might interfere with corporate domination of society is automatically suspect because it would impede the workings of the free market, which is advanced as the only rational, fair, and democratic allocator of goods and services. At their most eloquent, proponents of neoliberalism sound as if they are doing poor people, the environment, and everybody else a tremendous service as they enact policies on behalf of the wealthy few.

The economic consequences of these policies have been the same just about everywhere, and exactly what one would expect: a massive increase in social and economic inequality, a marked increase in severe deprivation for the poorest nations and peoples of the world, a disastrous global environment, an unstable global economy, and an unprecedented bonanza for the wealthy. Confronted with these facts, defenders of the neoliberal order claim that the spoils of the good life will invariably spread to

the broad mass of the population – as long as the neoliberal policies that exacerbated these problems are not interfered with by anyone!

In the end, proponents of neoliberalism cannot and do not offer an empirical defense for the world they are making. To the contrary, they offer – no demand – a religious faith in the infallibility of the unregulated market, drawing upon nineteenth century theories that have little connection to the actual world. The ultimate trump card for the defenders of neoliberalism, however, is that there is no alternative. Communist societies, social democracies, and even modest social welfare states like the United States have all failed, the neoliberals proclaim, and their citizens have accepted neoliberalism as the only feasible course. It may well be imperfect, but it is the only economic system possible.

In sum, neoliberalism is the immediate and foremost enemy of genuine participatory democracy, not just in the United States but across the planet, and will be for the foreseeable future.

In the 1960s, Chomsky was a prominent US critic of the Vietnam war and, more broadly, became perhaps the most trenchant analyst of the ways US foreign policy undermines democracy, quashes human rights, and promotes the interests of the wealthy few.

It is fitting that Noam Chomsky is the leading intellectual figure in the world today in the battle for democracy and against neoliberalism. In the 1960s, Chomsky was a prominent US critic of the Vietnam war and, more broadly, became perhaps the most trenchant analyst of the ways US foreign policy undermines democracy, quashes human rights, and promotes the interests of the wealthy few. In the 1970s,

Chomsky (along with his co-author Edward S. Herman) began researching the ways the US news media serve elite interests and undermine the capacity of the citizenry to actually rule their lives in a democratic fashion. Their 1988 book, *Manufacturing Consent*, remains the starting point for any serious inquiry into news media performance.

Throughout these years Chomsky, who could be characterized as an anarchist or, perhaps more accurately, a libertarian socialist, was a vocal, principled, and consistent democratic opponent and critic of Communist and Leninist political states and parties. He educated countless people, including myself, that democracy was a non-negotiable cornerstone of any post-capitalist society worth living in or fighting for. At the same time, he has demonstrated the absurdity of equating capitalism with democracy, or thinking that capitalist societies, even under the best of circumstances, will ever open access to information or decision-making beyond the most narrow and controlled possibilities. I doubt any author, aside from perhaps George Orwell, has approached Chomsky in systematically skewering the hypocrisy of rulers and ideologues in both Communist and capitalist societies as they claim that theirs is the only form of true democracy available to humanity.

In the 1990s, all these strands of Chomsky's political work – from anti-imperialism and critical media analysis to writings on democracy and the labor movement – have come together, culminating in work like *Profit Over People*, about democracy and the neoliberal threat. Chomsky has done much to reinvigorate an understanding of the social requirements for democracy, drawing upon the ancient Greeks as well as the leading thinkers of democratic revolutions in the seventeenth and eighteenth

centuries. As he makes clear, it is impossible to be a proponent of participatory democracy and at the same time a champion of capitalism or any other class-divided society. In assessing the real historical struggles for democracy, Chomsky also reveals that neoliberalism is hardly a new thing; it is merely the current version of the battle for the wealthy few to circumscribe the political rights and civic powers of the many.

Chomsky may also be the leading critic of the mythology of the natural “free” market, that cheery hymn that is pounded into our heads about how the economy is competitive, rational, efficient, and fair. As Chomsky points out, markets are almost never competitive. Most of the economy is dominated by massive corporations with tremendous control over their markets and which therefore face precious little competition of the sort described in economics textbooks and politicians' speeches. Moreover, corporations themselves are effectively totalitarian organizations, operating along non-democratic lines. That our economy is centered around such institutions severely compromises our ability to have a democratic society.

The mythology of the free market also submits that governments are inefficient institutions that should be limited, so as not to hurt the magic of the natural *laissez faire* market. In fact, as Chomsky emphasizes, governments are central to the modern capitalist system. They lavishly subsidize corporations and work to advance corporate interests on numerous fronts. The same corporations that exult in neoliberal ideology are in fact often hypocritical: they want and expect governments to funnel tax dollars to them, and to protect their markets from competition for them, but they want to be assured that governments will not tax them or work supportively on behalf of non-business interests, especially

Chomsky's critique of the neoliberal order is effectively off-limits to mainstream analysis despite its empirical strength and because of its commitment to democratic values.

the poor and working class. Governments are bigger than ever, but under neoliberalism they have far less pretense to addressing non-corporate interests.

Nowhere is the centrality of governments and policymaking more apparent than in the emergence of the global market economy. What is presented by pro-business ideologues as the natural expansion of free markets across borders is, in fact, quite the opposite. Globalization is the result of powerful governments, especially that of the United States, pushing trade deals and other accords down the throats of the world's people to make it easier for corporations and the wealthy to dominate the economies of nations around the world without having obligations to the peoples of those nations. Nowhere is the process more apparent than in the creation of the World Trade Organization in the early 1990s and, now, in the secret deliberations on behalf of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI).

Indeed, it is the inability to have honest and candid discussions and debates about neoliberalism in the United States and elsewhere that is one of its most striking features. Chomsky's critique of the neoliberal order is effectively off-limits to mainstream analysis despite its empirical strength and because of its commitment to democratic values. Here, Chomsky's analysis of the doctrinal system in capitalist democracies is useful. The corporate news media, the PR industry, the academic ideologues, and the intellectual

culture writ large, play the central role of providing the “necessary illusions” to make this unpalatable situation appear rational, benevolent, and necessary (if not necessarily desirable). As Chomsky hastens to point out, this is no formal conspiracy by powerful interests; it doesn’t have to be. Through a variety of institutional mechanisms, signals are sent to intellectuals, pundits, and journalists, pushing toward seeing the status quo as the best of all possible worlds, and away from challenging those who benefit from that status quo.

Chomsky’s work is a direct call for democratic activists to remake our media system so it can be opened up to anti-corporate, anti-neoliberal perspectives and inquiry. It is also a challenge to all intellectuals, or at least those who express a commitment to democracy, to take a long, hard look in the mirror and to ask themselves in whose interests, and for what values, do they do their work.

Chomsky’s description of the neoliberal/corporate hold over our economy, polity, journalism, and culture is so powerful and overwhelming that for some readers it can produce a sense of resignation. In our demoralized political times, a few may go a step further and conclude that we are enmeshed in this regressive system because, alas, humanity is simply incapable of creating a more humane, egalitarian, and democratic social order.

In fact, Chomsky’s greatest contribution may well be his insistence upon the fundamental democratic inclinations of the world’s peoples, and the revolutionary potential implicit in those impulses. The best evidence of this possibility is the extent to which corporate forces go to prevent genuine political democracy from being established. The world’s rulers understand implicitly that theirs is a system established to suit the needs of

the few, not the many, and that the many therefore cannot ever be permitted to question and alter corporate rule.

Neoliberalism’s loudest message is that there is no alternative to the status quo, and that humanity has reached its highest level. Chomsky points out that there have been several other periods designated as the “end of history” in the past. In the 1920s and 1950s, for example, US elites claimed that the system was working and that mass quiescence reflected widespread satisfaction with the status quo. Events shortly thereafter highlighted the silliness of those beliefs. I suspect that as

...Chomsky says, if you act like there is no possibility of change for the better, you guarantee that there will be no change for the better. The choice is ours, the choice is yours.

soon as democratic forces record a few tangible victories the blood will return to their veins, and talk of no possible hope for change will go the same route as all previous elite fantasies about their glorious rule being enshrined for a millennium.

The notion that no superior alternative to the status quo exists is more farfetched today than ever, in this era when there are mind-boggling technologies for bettering the human condition. It is true that it remains unclear how we might establish a viable, free, and humane post-capitalist order; the very notion has a utopian air about it. But every advance in history, from ending slavery and establishing democracy to ending formal colonialism, has at some point had to conquer the notion that it was impossible to do because it had never been done before. As Chomsky points

out, organized political activism is responsible for the degree of democracy we have today, for universal adult suffrage, for women’s rights, for trade unions, for civil rights, for the freedoms we do enjoy. Even if the notion of a post-capitalist society seems unattainable, we know that human political activity can make the world we live in vastly more humane. As we get to that point, perhaps we will again be able to think in terms of building a political economy based on principles of cooperation, equality, self-government, and individual freedom.

Until then, the struggle for social change is not a hypothetical issue. The current neoliberal order has generated massive political and economic crises from east Asia to eastern Europe and Latin America. The quality of life in the developed nations of Europe, Japan, and North America is fragile and the societies are in considerable turmoil. Tremendous upheaval is in the cards for the coming years and decades. There is considerable doubt about the outcome of that upheaval, however, and little reason to think it will lead automatically to a democratic and humane resolution. That will be determined by how we, the people, organize, respond, and act. As Chomsky says, if you act like there is no possibility of change for the better, you guarantee that there will be no change for the better. The choice is ours, the choice is yours.

About Robert McChesney

Robert McChesney is Research Professor at the Institute of Communications Research and the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His work concentrates on the history and political economy of communication, emphasizing the role media play in democratic and capitalist societies. McChesney has written and edited several books and articles, including the award-winning “Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of US Broadcasting, 1928–1935”.

WAKE UP CALLS



Nearly half of all Africans live on less than what we pay for cable television.



For just \$4 per year, spread over the next 20 years, each citizen of the industrialized nations can contribute to saving the lives of 1.3 million children in Ethiopia, nearly 600,000 children in Mozambique, another 475,000 children in Niger.



10,194,175: The number of years a person would need to work at minimum wage to earn as much money as Bill Gates.



In 1999, the richest 2.7 million Americans were expected to receive as much after-tax income as the 100 million people with the lowest incomes.



Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen.



Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are still chronically undernourished, almost two-thirds of whom reside in Asia and the Pacific.



7 Million children die each year as a result of the debt crisis. 8,525,038 children have died since the start of the year 2000 [as of March 24, 2001].



Despite all our technological breakthroughs, we still live in a world where:

- ⌘ a fifth of the developing world's population goes hungry every night;
- ⌘ a quarter lacks access to even a basic necessity like safe drinking water;
- ⌘ and a third lives in a state of abject poverty—at such a margin of human existence that words simply fail to describe it.



The seven largest economies of the industrialized North – the US, Japan, Germany, Canada, France, Italy and the UK – which make up less than 12 % of the world's population, consume 43% of the world's fossil fuel production, 64 % of the world's paper, and from 55 to 60 % of all the aluminum, copper, lead, nickel and tin.



Globally, 15.7 million adults with AIDS are women and 1.3 million are children below the age of 15.



Strike against war, for without you no battles can be fought! Strike against manufacturing shrapnel and gas bombs and all other tools of murder! Strike against preparedness that means death and misery to millions of human beings! Be not dumb, obedient slaves in an army of destruction! Be heroes in an army of construction!

Helen Keller



Power lies in the growth of awareness.

Herbert de Souza



If those in charge of our society - politicians, corporate executives, and owners of press and television - can dominate our ideas, they will be secure in their power. They will not need soldiers patrolling the streets. We will control ourselves.

Howard Zinn



Resistance to tyranny is man's highest ideal.

Emma Goldman



Humans are complex creatures. We have a demonstrated capacity for hatred, violence, competition and greed. We have as well a demonstrated capacity for love, tenderness, cooperation and compassion. Healthy societies nurture the latter and in doing so create an abundance of those things that are most important to the quality of our living. Dysfunctional societies nurture the former and in so doing create scarcity and deprivation. A healthy society makes it easy to live in balance with the environment, whereas a dysfunctional society makes it nearly impossible. Whether we organize our societies for social and environmental health or for dysfunction is a choice that is ours to make.

David C. Korten



Law and order exist for the purpose of establishing justice... when they fail in this purpose they become the dangerously structured dams that block the flow of social progress.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



The most effective way to restrict democracy is to transfer decision-making from the public arena to unaccountable institutions: kings and princes, priestly castes, military juntas, party dictatorships, or modern corporations.

Noam Chomsky

RETHINKING EDUCATION

RECLAIMING OUR CREATIVITIES FROM A READY-MADE WORLD

BY
MANISH JAIN

"The artist is not a special kind of man but every man is a special kind of artist."

Ananda Coomaraswamy, 1956

As we clear away all the celebratory hype of the 21st century, and sit down to figure out what it all means to be Here, we find ourselves in a very peculiar and paralyzing world. The processes of mass industrialization, technologicalization, and consumerization, while making life more 'efficient' and 'easier' (at least for some), have colonized our humanity and induced in us a psychological impotence which numbs our natural instincts for resistance and liberation. Today, Big Brother, Big Market and Big Religion supply us with ready-made clothes, ready-made food, ready-made homes, ready-made jobs, ready-made entertainment, ready-made transportation, ready-made spirituality, ready-made health, ready-made Nature, ready-made Education for All, etc. Soon, with the latest developments in genetic testing, we will have ready-made humanoids. There are ready-made solutions for practically all aspects of our lives. Even our 'problems' and 'needs' are pre-packaged, marketed and sold to us. We are so overwhelmed with these glamorous and superfluous needs (and a continual sense of scarcity in relation to them) that we have started to forget our real necessities (and the necessities of those inter-connected to us). Our role is only to mindlessly follow orders, to participate in consuming these ready-made needs and commodities – and to be open to being consumed by them.

Some may ask what's wrong with this kind of 'Progress'. Two points for deeper reflection immediately come to mind. First, we must try to understand what is required to feed and maintain this ready-made world – who wins and who loses, who is in control, and what exactly is destroyed or lost in the process? Second, we must peel away the skin of the proverbial Progress Onion to see what this ready-made lifestyle is doing to us as human beings. Seriously exploring both of these interconnected questions requires that we be willing

to break away from the compartmentalized, linear and short-term 'rational' planning frameworks that dominate most of our modern decision-making processes and development efforts.

For this ready-made world to flourish today, we have to rationalize away, in the name of Progress, all of the massive levels of violence against and exploitation of Nature, cultures/languages, and human relationships that have taken place throughout the world in the last 500 years. We have to flip the off switch of our moral consciences and pretend that selfishness, greed, domination, corruption, hatred and a 'survival of the fittest' mentality are the predominant characteristics of human nature. We have to keep coming up with new slogans to

convince ourselves that having increased purchasing power (albeit coupled with cancerous self-discontent) is a symbol of human advancement that someday will 'trickle-down' to everyone through the global marketplace, Western-style democracy, and/or the scientific establishment. Lastly, we have to discourage everyone else around us (particularly our youth) from believing that there are other options for meaningful living available. All loyal citizen-consumers must obediently adhere to the TINA principle. That is, what exists today is the 'only' and 'best' way. To resist it, to even question its totalitarian stranglehold over us, is to risk be labeled 'anti-modern', 'impractical', 'anti-national', 'romantic', 'crazy', etc. The recent events related to before and after September 11, serve to dramatically highlight how our spaces for expressing our dissent against illegitimate forms of power are shrinking day by day.

In South Asia today, it is very difficult for us to comprehend the kinds of damage that this ready-made progress has done to our whole beings;

The recent events related to before and after September 11, serve to dramatically highlight how our spaces for expressing our dissent against illegitimate forms of power are shrinking day by day.

our intrinsic motivations to struggle and search for our own truths, justices and meanings; and our abilities to be part of and contribute to the beautiful unfolding of the universe. James Scott (1998) describes that our "accommodation to deprived, bland, monotonous, controlled environments that are ultimately stupefying" has led to "a characteristic institutional neurosis marked by apathy, withdrawal, lack of initiative and spontaneity, uncommunicativeness, and intractability." Furthermore, all of our historical and cultural memories have been filtered through the colander of Western modernity – which simultaneously serves to portray all wisdom traditions as 'social evils' and to cut these from their nourishing roots (thereby effectively removing all possibilities for self-discipline and self-correction). As a result of this colonization of history, we are rendered totally dependent on elite external institutions and their experts to tell us how to take care of ourselves, what to value and how to live a success life.

The possibility of this civilizational decontextualization spiraling into planetary self-destruction has become particularly heightened in the virtual age of time-saving devices, where we have no time to reflect deeply or dialogue meaningfully on who we are or where we are going, individually and

Creativity enhances our ability to search with courage in the dense forest of the unknown and unpredictable, to co-create meaning and love in our everyday experiences...

collectively. As Eduardo Galleano (1997) describes, "The car, the television set, the video, the personal computer, the portable telephone and other pass-cards to happiness, which

were developed to 'save time' or to 'pass the time', have actually taken time over." Indeed, high technologies have begun to maim/reshape how we form our social relationships, how we communicate, how we even think, feel and sense. Today, it is naive to argue that all technologies are neutral, that their use only depends on the human beings who control them. Rather, we must seek to understand how each of the technologies have developed their own institutional logic, underlying economics and self-perpetuating momentum – how they not only control but re-define the meaning of humanity.

Is there a way out of this ready-made global death-trap? John Guare (in Zohar, 2000) suggests another possible path, "To face ourselves. That's the hard thing. The imagination [is] God's gift to make the act of self-examination bearable. [It] teaches us our limits and how to grow beyond our limits..." Expanding our spaces and capacities for creativity is essential to liberating ourselves from this ready-made world and its inherent violence, slavery and

perversion. Creativity enhances our ability to search with courage in the dense forest of the unknown and unpredictable, to co-create meaning and love in our everyday experiences (and prevents us from becoming bored of ourselves). It helps us to make valuable reconnections to Nature and to heal our whole selves. It creates the commitment for self-correction to help keep our traditions vibrant and flowing. It nourishes our moral instincts and gives us the strength and honesty to challenge injustices and exploitative relationships. Creativity generates new liberating avenues of power from which we can express our dissent, create new options, make ethical choices and undertake dynamic actions – to break away from the TINA principle. In short, critique, when coupled with creativity, opens up generative spaces for personal and systemic transformation. Critique without creativity leads us to nihilism and abject paralysis.

Unfortunately, by either co-opting, killing-off or commodifying many of our natural spaces and practices for authentic questioning, experimentation, and struggle, the ready-made world prevents us from engaging in activities which serve to replenish our collective creative energies. This is done by devaluing the diverse practical insights that emerge from each human being's personal, hands-on experiences in favor of abstract theories and elite intellectual jargon. Furthermore, because of the totalizing influence of the ready-made world, we are taught to wait for some one to hand us some bite-size pakoras of creativity on a silver thali. Today, these usually take the form of expensive formal creativity courses and creativity kits. However, reclaiming and regenerating our creativities is not about playing various mind games marketed by creativity gurus like Edward DeBono. At a certain point, these all become meaningless dead-end gimmicks, which tend to serve only narrow selfish interests while intensifying the control of the ready-made world. The liberating power of creativity ultimately rests in each of us seeing ourselves as creative beings and seeing how our creativity is interdependent with others' creativity. What is required for this to emerge is: 1) a critical understanding of what myths drain our creative energies and 2) a deeper understanding of how these forms of self-deceit are manifested in our institutional and personal spaces. The remainder of this essay will seek to explore these two questions.

EXPOSING THE MYTHS

Several myths exist today which serve to deepen institutional control over our lives and to prevent us from struggling to reclaim our creativity. As Edward Bernays (in Rampton and Stauber 2001) describes, "The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society."

MYTH 1: One must be super-gifted or a genius in order to be creative. Many people falsely believe that creativity is a gift from God. This myth is reinforced by repeated references to individuals such as Michaelangelo, Rabindranath Tagore and Albert Einstein as creative souls. This myth has led to a tiny percentage of people being supported in their creative quests, while the vast majority are told that they are not and cannot be creative. Underlying this myth are archaic notions of the human brain that view intelligence as genetically predetermined and stagnant and condemn it to narrow quantitative measurements such as I.Q. New research, however, indicates that we all possess a dynamic range of multiple intelligences by which we make sense of the world and that these intelligences can increase throughout our lives. Adults as well as children can develop their creativity. Furthermore, this research suggests that learning is a social, collaborative process rather than an individualistic and isolated one. This means that our own creativity is deeply linked to others' creativity.

MYTH 2: Creativity only occurs in the fine arts such as music, painting, dance. The Industrial Age has artificially separated work and leisure. All work activities, whether in the job or home or in school, have converted into tedious, routinized, and fragmented tasks. Activities that are imaginative, inspiring, and fun are relegated to the domain of leisure. This myth has meant that many people have stopped trying to be creative in their daily activities and interactions. Playful expressions of creative living were closely integrated into and emerged from the people's daily work i.e., performing household chores, farming, hunting, cooking, weaving, taking care of the animals, housebuilding, celebrating festivals, praying, etc. For creativity to be a transformative force, it needs to be re-integrated into all aspects of our life. This means that in addition to breaking down artificial categories of work vs. leisure, we must also challenge the socially constructed notion of childhood vs. adulthood which separates the world of children from that of adults.

MYTH 3: Creative living is something that only the idle rich can afford to indulge in. Because of the previous myth, creativity has become associated with the elite category of 'high culture'. This has created a misperception in the public eye that creativity is non-practical, frivolous and expensive pursuit. It has also led to the devaluation of very organic expressions of creativity by subaltern groups. We should understand that certain elite groups have tried to manipulate the idea of creativity to legitimize their power and privilege, and also to deny the masses from articulating their creative energies so that they could not resist or challenge the status quo. The ability to develop and articulate one's creative

energies is not dependent on one's economic class or caste background. There is no hierarchy of creativity between 'high culture' and 'popular culture.' Also, as discussed above, real creativity is not only 'practical', it is essential to our being human.

MYTH 4: One's creativity is measured by the 'products' they produce and the more creative are those who are able to sell their products for greater profit. This myth places a mistaken emphasis on the output that emerges from the creative process rather than on the lifestyle process itself. Success, which is often based on luck and one's position of privilege, is given more importance than effort. This myth discourages people from taking risks and from collaborating with others due to fear of failure. It also creates deforming and distorting

Creative living is something that only the idle rich can afford to indulge in. Because of the previous myth, creativity has become associated with the elite category of 'high culture'.

dependencies between our creativity and the vagaries of what the *market economy* and *State nationalism* deem as valuable. We should therefore understand that creativity is not about our output but rather about our lifestyle – our ways and means of exploring new places, people and ideas; of understanding ourselves and developing our infinite talents; of nurturing our sensitivity to others and Nature. It is about making ourselves vulnerable to the mysteries and struggles of life.

These four myths are perpetuated in both our institutional spaces as well as our understandings of our Self. Challenging these myths requires that we dismantle dehumanizing institutions, regenerate nurturing learning communities and personally engage in processes of unlearning and relearning.

RE-ASSESSING OUR INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Industrial Age has witnessed the overwhelming growth of institutions which are grounded in the logic of standardization/universalism, individualism, efficiency and profit. These 'modern' institutions range from factories to governments/UN bodies to armies to hospitals/mental institutions to schools to jails to NGOs to the large corporate media. The inherent form of these institutions serves to undermine our creativities by: enforcing rigid and sterile routines and procedures; demanding quick production of results and providing little room to make mistakes; dividing people and making them compete against each other by using extrinsic forms of motivation (rewards and punishments); and, labelling, sorting and ranking of

human beings. They are driven by a worldview which projects technological innovation as the highest form of human achievement – the ends by which to evaluate a civilization (Adas, 1989). Simultaneously, Nature is seen as separate from man and is therefore a resource to be violently manipulated and exploited. These modern institutions do not trust the judgement and common sense of human beings and seek to put in place ‘rational’ and ‘unemotional’ systems of management and planning that do all of our thinking for us. They call for us to enter into a state of ‘technological somnambulism’ in which we must put our absolute faith in science and technology to direct and protect us.

While challenging these dehumanizing institutions, we need to regenerate learning communities of reflective-action that have a different logic and form.

Factory-schooling is one of the clearest examples of these kinds of dehumanizing institutions. Most ‘school graduates’ have gone through schools learning

only about competition, rules, and control. They have never been given the opportunity to think about their own potentials for self-learning, much less to think about new kinds of educational, political, economic, or socio-cultural structures and relationships. They are told over and over again that they must passively fit into the ready-made system – their only purpose in life is to serve as human capital (or to be more politically correct ‘human resources’) to increase/protect GNP. Though factory-schooling has played a major role in suppressing our individual and collective creativities and perpetuating a colonized mind, it remains unquestioned in our societies and continues to spread itself under the seemingly innocuous façade of a ‘fundamental human right’.

The global media, such as the television and newspapers, has also emerged as a major force which stunts our creative growth. Neil Postman (1993) describes that, "We are driven to fill our lives with the quest to ‘access’ information. For what purpose, or with what limitations, it is not for us to ask; and we are not accustomed to asking, since the problem is unprecedented." Rote memorization for exams, the courses on G.K. in schools, and the emergence of TV shows such as Kaun Banega Crorepati? powerfully illustrate how info-glut monopolizes our attention while distracting us from regenerative processes of meaningful self-reflection. Factory-schooling and the global media turns us into voyeurs who prefer to watch others live life – to have reality shaped for us rather than be the shapers of our own realities.

While challenging these dehumanizing institutions, we need to regenerate learning communities of

reflective-action that have a different logic and form. Such learning communities are as socio-spiritual spaces in the sense that they nurture and connect each human being’s innate yet diverse search for truth and meaning. To do so, they should provide us with continuous opportunities for raising and exploring foundational questions around our notions of *progress, freedom, equality, peace and justice*.

These spaces must also:

- respect the diversity of each human being, particularly their different ways of learning, relating and growing;
- understand the ‘right scale’ of all activities, with an aesthetic preference for simplicity;
- encourage people to take risks and experiment while valuing their mistakes ;
- nurture intrinsic forms of motivation and caring;
- facilitate collaboration and sharing within a generative framework of (infinite) power;
- emphasize the discovery of and co-creation meaning around principles of self-discipline, trust and love.

Such learning communities have traditionally grown around work that features the use of the hands and the heart, community media, local knowledge and wisdom frameworks, oral and visual traditions of literacy, and various familial bonds. However, without the time, processes of meaningful questioning, intergenerational learning commitment, natural living environment, and resources to provide them nourishment, these reflective spaces are either stagnating or rapidly becoming extinct. The ready-made world has made very few attempts to generate new learning communities based on the above principles. Nor has the ready-made world made a serious commitment to dismantling those institutions which violate and mock the above principles.

RE-ESTABLISHING OUR AGENCY: UNLEARNING AND RELEARNING

Reclaiming creativity and regenerating various learning communities is not the exclusive responsibility of professional artists, industrial psychologists, art teachers, ministers of culture, etc. Each of us must actively participate in co-creating – not just observing or passively fitting into – these learning communities. We risk falling into another trap of the ready-made world if we expect others to make these learning communities for us.

Taking control over our processes of unlearning and re-learning away from factory-schooling and the global media and re-establishing our faith in processes of self-learning is one essential step in this larger process. In terms of our unlearning, we will have to understand that many of the obstacles to creativity

can be found within us. Such obstacles include: fear of criticism, lack of confidence, competitiveness, high stress, and big egos. Other obstacles stem from our 'schooled' inability to tolerate ambiguity, our reductionist forms of modern knowledge, and our 'manufactured' confusion between happiness and the acquisition of material goods. Our creativities also are burdened by certain labels that we attach to ourselves and others. These colonizing identity labels – most often based on professions, caste, gender, class, schooling level, nationality, etc. – create artificial barriers which cement certain power structures and limit our exploration and growth. We become afraid to interact with certain people because of whom we think they are (or we think we are). Unlearning will involve confronting these obstacles and barriers, and trying to liberate ourselves from them. Unlearning is essential if we wish to regain our faith in the goodness of others and in the belief that many new options are available.

In terms of re-learning, we need to try to understand our own individual learning styles, pace (learning things faster is not always better for our creativity), multiple intelligences, emotional states, experiences, etc. We must re-learn to see power outside the institutions of the State and the market. This calls for us to be able to recognize creative spaces and opportunities that are in front of our eyes but that we have never appreciated before. Simultaneously, we must understand how everyday acts of resistance to the ready-made world open up new possibilities and power. We also must re-learn how to see life holistically and relationally beyond the abstractions of isolated academic disciplines. Most importantly, we must re-learn how to connect knowledge and technology with wisdom and ethics. This will provide us with the humility to know our limits and with the common sense to understand that we should not do things just because we can (i.e., not all 'creative' scientific and commercial initiatives should be pursued). Re-learning is essential to fuel us with the inspiration to start dreaming our own dreams again (and not someone else's ready-made dreams) and with the self-confidence to put them into action.

Here, one may raise the ever-troubling 'chicken and the egg' dilemma. In other words, which must come first – the processes of regenerating learning communities or individual self-regeneration? Without regenerating learning communities how can we support individual self-regeneration? And without individual self-regeneration how can we support the process of regenerating learning communities? This is a dilemma which has plagued many spiritual movements in the world which have erred by focusing only on the individual as well as many activist movements which have erred on the side of focusing only on institutions. Addressing this dilemma requires that we reject the institutional schizophrenia,

alienation and babu-hypocrisy created by so-called modern institutions, and stop seeing the learning communities and individuals as separate from each other. We must see ourselves as part of these learning communities and they a part of us. Through such a relationship, there will be a dialectic process of mutual regeneration between the learning communities and us.

Facing this dilemma will also demand that we make conscious choices to try to dis-engage from the techno-economic system, or what I term as the 'dictatorship of convenience'. This will give the time and space to 'listen', 'share' and 'dream' again. To do this, involves trying to do things without money/market economy and without the interference of the State. This also involves consciously thinking about slowing down the pace of life around us – overcoming our modern infatuation with speed. These activities should not be reduced to mechanized rituals but rather be taken in the spirit of pursuing a path of meaningful struggle (and constructive confrontation). Implicitly, this means that we must learn how to use our hands (and feet) again. In this context, I am reminded of a recent episode with one of my colleagues in Shikshantar. He had to take a gift for a birthday celebration and wanted to buy it from a gift shop. I suggested that rather than buying a gift, he should try to make something with his own hands. He was reluctant to do so because of the 'imperfections of his own work'. Learning to appreciate the beauty of our own imperfections and messiness – while avoiding ready-made blueprints that tell us how to live our lives or fight for justice – represent the central challenges to reclaiming our creativity and challenging *global exploitation and devastation*.

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About Manish Jain

Manish Jain is the coordinator and a co-founder of Shikshantar—an institute engaged in 'rethinking' education and development, India. He can be reached at: manish@swaraj.org

AN ILLITERATE'S DECLARATION TO THE LITERACY PREACHER

BY SHRI DAYAL CHANDRA SONI

CHAPTER 4: *Learning is a Characteristic Not Only in Humans But it Also Pervades Nature*

45. It is wrong to think that learning is a feature only of human life. Nature itself is full of learning processes. Your fear that learning is absent or non-functional without schools is totally misplaced.
46. For the billions of years, Nature itself is undergoing a learning process. It is also engaged in continually educating its living and non-living creations.
47. Had Nature not been educated, it would not stick to any law of self-discipline. There would not be a day in the daytime and a night in the nighttime.
48. Tell me: where did the moonlight learn to raise the tides in the ocean? Who shows the meeting point with the sea to the flowing rivers?
49. Tell me: where do the twigs of a plant learn to express their joy through flowers? Who teaches the wasp to sing a hymn when it greets the flowers?
50. Tell me: where did the peacock learn to dance and the cuckoo learn its sweet musical song?
51. And tell me: who teaches a mother to lovingly nourish and raise her infant, which was once a burden in her womb and painful delivery! What sort of education converts the blood of the mother's body into the milk of her breasts!
52. You are wrong in thinking that the gardens are educated and the forests are devoid of learning. You do not know how well educated the forests are.
53. But prompted by misunderstanding, so moved by pity, you have undertaken the monumental task of 'gardenizing' all the forests.
56. The result? They would not have produced such great literature because they would not be able to attain the required mastery and self-confidence in English. And they would have considered it below their educational dignity to produce literature in their own language.
57. Spontaneous self-confidence can never be attained in an alien language.
58. The basic purpose of education is to allow the unique personality of each student to open up, to help the flower of his special genius bloom. But the school of today does not in any way fulfill this primary purpose of education.
59. The pillars of education lie in the local folk culture and the local language. But alas O' Preacher of Education, Missionary of Literacy, you have ignored and negated this basic principle of education.
60. In the older times there were crusades for religious conversions. Today's schools are also engaged in a vicious crusade against the people's own local culture and their own traditional and spontaneous forms of communication.
61. But, the local folk culture and the locally spoken language constitute the vital blood on whose power these illiterate and unschooled people thrive. This blood empowers them with hope and dignity to struggle against harsh physical conditions and deprived atmospheres.
62. The content of your school education sucks away the vital blood power of these deprived people. It also kills their self-confidence.

CHAPTER 5: *Your Schools are Concealed Enemies of My Local Language and My Folk Culture; There is No Common Ground for Our Coming Together*

54. O' preacher of school education and literacy! Let me ask which schools taught Prince Siddhartha to abandon his legitimate right to the throne. And also let me know which university conferred on him the title of 'Buddha'!
55. What would have happened if the great poets had been educated in the modern, English medium convent schools? What if they had accepted the English language to be preferable over their own?
63. In my local dialect lie the sacred herbs that protect and nourish my life. But you, O' Literacy Missionary, try to rob me of those very herbs that sustain me as a price to be paid for the few alphabetical symbols you teach me.
64. I know that ultimately you will desert me and join the English speaking team. You shall never keep company with me.
65. So, where is the common ground to come together? We belong to different classes and this class difference is not going to end. So, please enjoy the cool shades to which you can escape and leave me to suffer my own fate, to bear the heat of the shining sun.

PEOPLE-CENTERED DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Conventional versus Emergent Alternative Wisdom

BY
DAVID C. KORTEN



An important starting point in any discussion of sustainable development is to clarify the basic assumptions we each bring to the table. While the views on sustainable development cover a broad spectrum, the following contrast of the conventional wisdom and the emergent alternative wisdom on this subject helps to define the range. Most of the economists, governments and official agencies (including the World Bank, IMF, and the GATT) that define national and global policies profess the conventional wisdom. A growing number of alternative economists, independent thinkers, and citizen organizations concerned with economic justice and environmental issues are engaged in articulating and elaborating the alternative wisdom as the foundation for policies they hope will prove to be more people and environment friendly. Which best captures your view of sustainable development?

Sustainable Development

Conventional: Sustainable development is about achieving the sustained economic growth needed to meet human needs, improve living standards, and provide the financial resources that make environmental protection possible.

Alternative: Little of the growth of the past twenty years has improved the quality of human life. Most of the benefit has gone to the very wealthy and the remainder has been offset by the costs of resource depletion, social stress, and environmental health and other problems caused by growth. Sustainable development is about creating:

I) sustainable economies that equitably meet human needs without extracting resource inputs or expelling wastes in excess of the environment's regenerative capacity, and

II) sustainable human institutions that assure both security and opportunity for social, intellectual, and

spiritual growth.

Sustainable Lifestyle

Conventional: Adopting less resource intensive lifestyles means going backwards, accepting a lowered standard of living. Given the current trend towards declining rates of population growth, any apparent limits to growth will be eliminated by continuing technological advance and the operation of market mechanisms. Responding to ill-advised calls to end growth is not necessary and would be a tragic error condemning billions of people to perpetual poverty.

Alternative: Consumption of environmental resources already exceeds sustainable limits. The central task of development must be to reallocate the use of sustainable resource flows. This will require that current high consumers significantly reduce their per capita resource consumption. This may reduce their standard of living as defined purely by physical consumption, but it also offers opportunities for an improved quality of personal family and community life. Necessary reductions can be accomplished in part by reforming production systems to maximize recycling and minimize dependence on inputs from and waste disposal to the environment. Some nonessential forms of consumption may need to be eliminated.

Helping Poor Countries Become Sustainable

Conventional: Once poor countries are on the path to sustainable growth, an expanding economic pie will allow them to address a wide range of needs, including environmental protection and the elimination of poverty. Achieving sustainable growth in the South depends on accelerating economic growth in the North to spur demand for Southern exports and thus stimulate Southern economies. Of course, if it is to fully benefit the South, accelerated growth in the North must be combined with the removal of trade barriers and increases in foreign investment and foreign aid including environmental

Alending.

Alternative: Environmental problems are in large part a consequence of Northern countries exporting their ecological deficits to the South through trade and investment. The appropriation of environmental resources and sinks to service Northern over consumption, limits the per capita shares of these resources available in Southern countries to meet domestic needs and pushes the economically weak to marginal ecological areas. Much of existing foreign aid, loans and investment, create Southern economies that are deeply in debt to the North and dependent on the continuing import of Northern technology and products. This creates demands for ever greater foreign exchange earnings for imports, debt service and repatriation of profits by foreign investors that can be obtained only through further depletion and export of environmental resources. Sustainable development in poor countries depends on:

- 1) increasing the availability, accessibility, and quality of sustainable natural resource flows to meet the basic human needs of their own people,
- 2) and the political, institutional, and technical capacity to use their resources efficiently and to distribute the benefits equitably among all members of current and future generations.

Northern countries best contribute to achieving this outcome in Southern countries by:

- 1) limiting their own consumption to reduce Northern dependence on environmental subsidies extracted from the South and release resources for use by the poor to meet their basic needs,
- 2) and facilitating unrestricted Southern access to socially and environmentally beneficial technologies.

Responsibility for Environmental Problems

Conventional: Poverty is the primary cause of environmental problems. Because of lack of education and economic opportunities the poor have too many children and lack the sensitivity and resources to provide the care for their environment that wealthier people and countries do. Environmental quality is a low priority for people whose survival is in question. They will become concerned about and invest in environmental conservation only once a certain level of income is attained. Stimulating economic growth to increase employment opportunities and incomes must be the foundation of environmental protection.

[There is not a clear alternative consensus. Alternative

Environmental problems are in large part a consequence of Northern countries exporting their ecological deficits to the South through trade and investment.

I is the more prevalent among alternative thinkers, particularly in the South.]

Alternative I: The over consumption of Northern countries is the problem. Therefore Northern population growth is an issue because of the substantial consumption each additional Northerner adds. The poor consume very little so their numbers are not environmentally important and Southern population growth is not

a consequential issue.

Alternative II: Inequality is the fundamental cause of environmental problems. Because of their much greater relative power in a market economy, the wealthy are able to pass on the social and ecological costs of their over consumption to the poor. Since the poor are the first to suffer from environmental degradation, they are in many localities becoming leading advocates of more environmentally responsible resource management practices. Where poverty appears to be the cause of environmental destruction it is usually because the poor have been deprived of other means of livelihood and thus have been pushed in desperation to over exploit environmentally fragile lands. Often their lack of any other source of security creates an incentive to have many children. Eliminating inequality by distributing resource control more equitably is a fundamental condition for sustainability.

Population

Conventional: Population will stabilize naturally at somewhere between 12 and 15 billion people. While this will create some strains, with adequate economic growth it should not be a consequential problem.

Alternative: In the absence of radical economic reforms intended to rapidly accelerate reductions in fertility by increasing equity, social security, and investment in female education, female livelihood opportunities, health, and family planning services, the global population will be naturally stabilized well below 12 billion by catastrophic events as social and ecological stress result in mass starvation and violence. Given current dependence on the depletion of nonrenewable ecological reserves, it is doubtful that even the world's current population is truly sustainable if minimum acceptable levels of consumption are to be maintained.

Inequality is the fundamental cause of environmental problems.

Economic Management Goals

Conventional: The primary goal of economic policy is the efficient allocation of resources. The internalization of production costs is a precondition to efficient allocation by markets and therefore must also be a goal of policy. Equity is a secondary by-product of economically efficient markets.

Alternative: There are three basic goals that economic policy must seek to optimize. In order of relative importance these are: a scale of resource use, consistent with ecological regenerative capacities, a fair distribution of resources, and the economically efficient allocation of resources. Efficient market allocation requires the internalization of all costs of production, including the social and environmental costs.

Jobs

Conventional: Jobs are created through economic growth

Alternative: We have entered an era of jobless growth in which technology and reorganizations are eliminating good jobs faster than growth is creating them. The new jobs being created are often low paying, temporary, and without benefits, creating an underlying sense of insecurity throughout society that deeply stresses the social fabric. Furthermore, many of the jobs provided by the conventional economy are based on unsustainable rates of resource extraction and are therefore temporary in nature. We must begin to think in terms of providing people with sustainable livelihoods based on sustainable production for sustainable markets to support sustainable lifestyles. There is a great deal of useful, environmentally dirty work that needs to be done that could readily eliminate involuntary unemployment if we chose to do so. Furthermore, in most instances sustainable production methods and technologies provide more livelihood opportunities than do their alternatives.

Trade and the Environment

Conventional: Free (unregulated) trade increases economic efficiency through comparative advantage. Economic efficiency means better use of resources, which is environmentally advantageous. Increased trade also increases overall economic growth, thereby producing the resources needed for environmental protection. The greater the volume of trade the greater the benefit to the environment.

We have entered an era of jobless growth in which technology and reorganizations are eliminating good jobs faster than growth is creating them.

Alternative: Trade is useful where gains from comparative advantage are real. More than half of all international trade involves exchanges of the same goods, which suggests there is little or no comparative advantage involved. To be fair and economically efficient, trade must be carried out within a clear framework of rules: 1) internalize total costs (production, social and environmental costs, including the full costs of transport); and 2) maintain balanced trade relations. Free (unregulated) trade leads to competition between localities in need of jobs to reduce costs of local production by suppressing wages and allowing maximum externalization of environmental, social, and even production costs which is both inefficient and highly damaging to the environment and to social standards.

Markets and Governments

Conventional: Markets allocate resources most efficiently when there is the least government interference. Consumers express their preferences through their purchasing decisions, with the consequence that in the aggregate the market reflects the value preferences of the society as to how scarce resources are best allocated. When governments intervene they distort the price signals and efficiency is reduced. In performing any given function markets tend to be more efficient than governments. Therefore it is desirable to privatize functions wherever possible, while providing incentives to private investors to create jobs and increase foreign exchange earnings.

Alternative: The market is an essential institution in any workable economic allocation system. However, by its nature, the market reflects only the preferences for private goods of those who have money. Without the intervention of government and a vigilant civil society, a free (unregulated) market takes no account of optimal scale or of the needs of those without money, neglects essential needs for public goods, externalizes a significant portion of real production costs, and tends toward monopoly control of allocation decisions by the market's winners. When conventional wisdom calls for incentives for private investors, it is in fact calling for subsidies that commonly take the form of agreeing to let firms increase their private gain by transferring a larger portion of their production costs to the public. To achieve social justice and environmental sustainability, government must intervene to setup a framework that assures full costs are internalized, competition is maintained, benefits are justly distributed, and necessary public goods are provided. A vigilant and vigorous civil society is required to assure the accountability of both

government and market to the public interest and to provide leadership in advancing social innovation processes.

Scientific Foundation

Conventional: The conventional wisdom is grounded in accepted theory that has stood the test of time and been validated by extensive historical observation and measurement.

Alternative: The conventional wisdom represents an ideology, not a science, and largely contradicts both the theoretical foundations of market economics and empirical experience which contrary to the claims of the conventional wisdom strongly favor the alternative wisdom. Indeed, the conventional wisdom may itself be the single greatest barrier we face to progress toward sustainability.

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About David C. Korten

David C. Korten is Cofounder and Board Chair, Positive Futures Network, publishers of YES! A Journal of Positive Futures and Founder and President of The People-Centered Development Forum. He has over thirty-five years of experience in preeminent business, academic, and international development institutions as well as in contemporary citizen action organizations. His work in South East Asia won him international recognition for his contributions to pioneering the development of powerful strategies for transforming public bureaucracies into responsive support systems dedicated to strengthening community control and management of land, water, and forestry resources. Korten came to realize that the crisis of deepening poverty, growing inequality, environmental devastation, and social disintegration he was observing in Asia was also being experienced in nearly every country in the world — including the United States and other “developed” countries. Furthermore he came to the conclusion that the United States was actively promoting — both at home and abroad — the very policies that were deepening the resulting global crisis. He is the author of “When Corporations Rule the World” and “The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism”. His publications are required reading in university courses around the world.

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By
MUHAMMAD KHAN ZADA

VOICE *of the* VOICELESS

Muhammad Khan is an integral member of our team. Although not 'literate' in the conventional sense of the word or 'educated' by the standards of the privileged few, he has the brilliance and motivation to handle perhaps the most radical section of our magazine: 'Opinions of the Oppressed'.

Q What is the root cause of poverty in our society?

Results . . .

"The reasons for poverty in our society are firstly lack of education, secondly increasing population and finally education without skills. Education gives us consciousness and when education will be coupled with skills, only then students will be able to earn their bread."

Parveen Ghuryani, Social Organizer

"Lack of education is the biggest cause of poverty in our society. The second reason is absence of peace because due to the weak grip of law, terrorism (*dehshat gardi*) and destruction (*takhrib kari*) flourishes and investors avoid investing in the country. This is how unemployment rises and poverty increases."

Naheed Khan, Accountant

"One of the important causes is the tyrannical power of the feudal system. Similarly, in the tribal context, the chieftain system (*sardarana nizam*) is dominant. The despotic rulers in villages and tribes do not want to decrease the level of poverty in their domains to keep their control forever. Also, they are against the promotion of education amongst the masses."

Salma Khan, Social Organizer

"Another cause of poverty is the deficient (*naqis*) political system of our country. The majority of politicians do not want to eliminate poverty and, therefore, no government has given serious attention to this issue. Similarly, the bureaucracy also wants poverty to thrive. I would also like to say that one particular segment of our society wants to limit education to itself and does not want the elimination of poverty in order to maintain its influence."

Sumbul Khan, Housewife

"The deficient policies of the government are the root cause of poverty in our country due to which

wealth has been limited to a few families only. As a result, the rich are becoming richer while the poor are getting poorer. Also, the environment is not conducive to investment. Even those who had invested previously in the country are now shutting down their businesses and unemployment is on the rise. In my view, this is the root cause of poverty in our country."

Ghafar Khan, Semi-government employee

"I think the following are the reasons of poverty in our country:

1. Lack of education — even if education is accessible the fee in private schools is so high that it is beyond the reach of common people.
2. Refugees entering the country are far beyond our capacity to accommodate.
3. Particularly, in the case of Karachi, poverty is the result of the wrong policies of the government; for example the abolition of the mill area, the development of Port Qasim instead of a seaport, development of Gowadar and levying heavy taxes on industries incapable of paying them. For all these reasons poverty is increasing day by day."

Irshad Ali Khan, Clerk

"People do not get their rights, salaries are low and expenses are high. Poor families live in rented houses so how can these expenses be met? That is why people are so tense and poverty is increasing and resulting in evil and terrorism. Parents ask children to earn money but how they can do so when such conditions prevail?"

Ashfaq, Electrician

"First of all, unemployment, and secondly, those who are employed get very low salaries that cannot meet their needs. The government should decrease inflation and provide employment. I earn 3000 rupees per month, which means 100 rupees a day. In 100 rupees, I can hardly afford to buy vegetables and other basic necessities. We should at least get 6000 rupees a month, so that our basic needs can be met."

Mohammed Iqbal, Naib Qasid

"Poor people do not get employment. Banks give loans to big people and not the poor because they cannot give sureties. If people could get loans from banks and start businesses they would progress and this is how poverty would decrease."

Mohammed Hayat, Peon

"The root cause of poverty in our society is injustice. Investors fill their safes by sucking the blood of the poor and the poor are becoming tight-fisted (*tang dast*) day by day. Our present economic and education system is increasing poverty in society. Our population is increasing but our rulers have no clear (*wazeh*) economic policy. Plans are made but they are not implemented. We have a 55 years old education system, which only produces clerks and servants. We have separate education systems for the rich and poor. Technical education is beyond the reach of the poor that is why we are producing a force/an army of unemployed youth."

Ayoob Shan

"The root cause of poverty is that the education system in Pakistan is of two types. Children from rich families get education in wonderful schools and poor people do not have the resources to get education, their children do not even get bread, cloth and shelter. They are occupied with such problems so they cannot acquire a quality education, which the children of rich people have access to and that is why there is always a gap between the rich and poor. The deficient education system and the difference between the rich and poor are the reasons of economic difficulties. Only rich children get education in society and reach important positions. They easily take bribes and promote nepotism and evil."

Sardar Manzoor Hussein Khan, H.R.C.P.

"The root cause of poverty in society is that everybody wants to become rich by suppressing others. That is why everybody is worried. Secondly, as Prophet Muhammad (*Peace be upon him*) said if all Muslims would pay zakaat, which has been enjoined upon Muslims by God, poverty would eventually be eliminated from society. But today everybody is unaware of religion and nobody understands his or her way and everybody wants to become rich and accumulate more wealth."

Muhammad Sawab Khan, Showroom Owner

"The root cause of poverty is the deficient policies of the government. We work from morning to evening and just earn 150 to 200 rupees a day. The government does not think how we can meet expenses while fixing maximum wages up to 200 rupees or salary up to 3,000 rupees per month. They should calculate it before fixing the amount. How can a poor family survive in just 3,000 rupees a month?"

Mohammed Ishaq, Transporter

"Poverty is the result of the wrong policies of the governments which have failed to protect the interest

of the poor people. All governments have provided incentives and advantages to rich people. Similarly, rich people have benefited well-off people rather than the poor."

Shamim Khatak

"The first reason is that education is not common amongst the masses. Therefore, undesirable people come to power and are not questioned. They corrupt the system. If people are educated, they would elect the right people, poverty would be eliminated and our country would progress."

Shafiq

"The root cause is that our politicians have looted the country with both hands. Therefore, today our country is burdened with debts and poverty. If one percent of the dollars, which have so far come to this country, was spent on the public we would not have a single poor person in the country. We should catch all the politicians and hang them upside down and recover all the money from them. This is how we can get rid of poverty."

Mohammed Ashraf

"I think the cause of poverty in society is the violation of the rights of the poor. No poor person is given his or her rights completely and rich people control their rights like a dragon (*azdaha*). The salaried employees put in more work and time and yet only few of their rights are granted to them. This is the reason why poor people are becoming poorer."

Habibullah Beneri, Clerk

"One particular cause of poverty is unemployment. Because of the high population in the country, people do not get adequate opportunities to purchase more in less income. If there are good job opportunities, only those people get hold of them who have influence (*sifarish*). This increases unemployment in the country and results in poverty which in turn affects the majority of people in our country."

Ghulab, Social Worker

"As far as poverty in society is concerned, I think the first cause of poverty is lack of education. If people are not educated they will not be able to benefit from different sources. Secondly, economic stability significantly influences a society. Corruption, instability and chaos are negatively influencing the lives of the people. I think the third important reason is that without unity, society would never progress."

Shahid Ali

Development DIARY

By: KT

"Have you heard? Mr. Chomsky's coming to town."
"Chomsky who?"

"You know, the one who writes a lot."

"Writes a lot what?"

"A lot of things, this and that."

"You don't know do you?"

"Uh, um, of course I do, but he's so deep I need to be in the proper frame of mind to remember. Besides at least I know who he is. Now help me choose what to wear. EVERYONE in Islamabad is going to be there you know. It's the event of the season."

"Like who?"

"Well you know, MNA bhai, Minister baji, Secretary uncle, Deputy chacha, Senator aunty etc. etc. And oh, that famous cricketer also, what's his name?"

"And I assume these people all know who Chomsky is, right?"

"Of course they do! Well, some of them at least. But what does it matter anyway? He's a famous American and he's coming from India. Hmm, I wonder if I should wear my bandhni sari, just to help put him in perspective."

"What was he doing in India?"

"Oh the usual stuff. Talking and partying I suppose."

"What makes you think he was partying?"

"Well why wouldn't he? Everyone who goes on "tour" parties. What do you think, they work? Which reminds me, I must get an invitation for Kiki for the dinner as well."

"So what is he going to be talking about?"

"I don't know, something about rich people and poor people, I suppose. That's what these types usually talk about. Of course definitely something about America, since he's from there. I wonder if he can tell us something about the new visa rules. I need to renew my five-year multiple fast. Choochoo's son is getting married next month and I need to go and buy new shoes from Nine West."

"Do you think he is going to say anything about the war in Afghanistan, Pakistan's nuclear program, terrorism in Kashmir, the perils of globalization and America's domination of the rest of the world?"

"My God, how am I supposed to know? I just got Fifi to get me a VIP invitation. Seems like maybe you should go too since you seem to know so much about the "deep" stuff."

"Well I would definitely like to since I have only been

reading Professor Noam Chomsky's work for the past seven years and wrote a critique on his linguistic theory two years ago."

"On his what? And he's a Professor?"

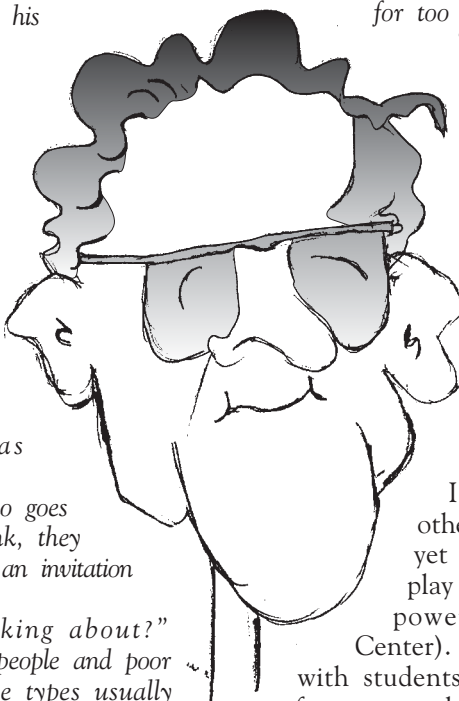
"Well, he's actually one of the most accomplished linguists and political activists in the world today. He's also a master of cognitive sciences, philosophy, history, social activism and politics. He's written hundreds of books and thousands of articles. Basically he is one of the most brilliant and radical, albeit ignored, intellectuals of the twentieth century. Oh, and I certainly don't think he likes to 'party'."

"Well the things you learn everyday. If you like I can ask Mimi to see if she can get you an invite. Of course, not in the VIP section, you know. That's already reserved."

"Oh I already tried that. But since I just happen to be a university student studying International Relations and Development Economics here, I was told I wasn't entitled to get an invitation. A security risk is what I think they said, or maybe it was because of the expensive Iftari the organizers have arranged and can't afford to pay for too many people..."

"Don't worry, dear, maybe next time.

Now what should I wear, the green dress or the red one?"



Afterthoughts:

I happened to attend the lecture given by Professor Noam Chomsky in Islamabad on November 26, by a hair's breath, which was preceded by a painful story of mismanagement on behalf of the organizers, which I had to endure along with many others like myself. It was tragic to see yet another case of selective elitism at play amongst our so-called corridors of power (or the octagonal Convention Center). Seats that should have been filled with students, activists and young professionals from our public universities, were instead filled with those who may or may not have anything substantial to say about Professor Chomsky (add to that 500 empty seats). A question of "quality rather than quantity" was how the organizers chose to put it. Quality of what, Kashmiri shawls and ministerial positions? Ironically, the organizers willingly chose to perpetuate an ethos which went against the teachings of Professor Chomsky himself.

It was equally tragic that the main impetus behind the event was associated with the largest university in Islamabad but the event did not even fractionally represent the students there. A personality as distinguished as the late Eqbal Ahmad (may he rest in peace), in whose memory the event was hosted,

would probably cringe with embarrassment in the afterlife. And what impression I wonder did Noam Chomsky himself get of this façade? Unfortunately, probably the wrong one (apparently Edward Said is our next guest – God help us!). We hope that at least, he gets the opportunity to meet the “real” people of Pakistan. The people who not only study him, but who envision equality, opportunity and justice in their country.

Those who are struggling for the day when we ourselves will be lifted out of oppression and American domination and can rightfully be acknowledged for our own intelligence and perseverance.

Professor Chomsky, you probably did not manage to



meet such people. But let me assure you, there are several of us here. With all your wisdom and experience, I hope you do not judge us too harshly. Two days in two cities (in all the wrong places) is hardly enough to form the correct impression.

Whatever Noam Chomsky's own impression was, we ourselves need to accept and rectify our faults and weaknesses. Hiding behind the rhetoric of intellectualism and

radicalism is not enough to justify our misshapen identity. I would have willingly sat on the floor of a stadium if need be, but how many of those sitting in the Convention Center on November 26 would have? It is that which we need to figure out before inviting the Noam Chomskys of our world to countries like ours.

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The Hope of Possibility

MASHHOOD RIZVI

'They' say that the world will not be the same after September 11 (9–11). I ask what was the world like before September 11 and what significant changes do 'they' want to bring about? I would like to ask 'them' what was so 'right' about the pre-September 11 world which is damaged and won't be the same? Let's refresh our memories about the beautiful world 'they' have created, whose solidarity, morality, freedom and justice was attacked on September 11:

- An estimated 13–18 million people, mostly children, die from hunger and poverty each year. That is about 40,000 people per day, or 1,700 people an hour...only 10–15 percent of hunger stems from emergency; most hunger 85–90 percent is born out of poverty.
- Half the world—nearly three billion people—live on less than two dollars a day.
- The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the poorest 48 nations (i.e. a quarter of the world's countries) is less than the wealth of the world's three richest people combined.
- Less than one percent of what the world spends every year on weapons would be needed to put every child into school.
- 51% of the world's 100 hundred wealthiest bodies are owned by corporations.
- 20% of the population in the developed nations, consume 86% of the worlds goods.
- The developing world spends \$13 on debt repayment for every \$1 it receives in grants.
- Approximately 790 million people in the developing world are still chronically undernourished, almost two-thirds of whom reside in Asia and the Pacific
- 7 Million children die each year as a result of the debt crisis 8525038 children have died since the start of the year 2000

Source: www.globalissues.com

At the end of the day, these are mere numbers. Numbers have limitations. Numbers can only tell us how many not how much. Numbers surely tell us that most of us have been faced with acts of terror and misery on a daily basis; but fail to convey suffering, despair and wretchedness. Numbers inform us that millions of innocent lives, mostly innocent childre, are lost to horrifying conditions of poverty and hunger; what numbers do not tell us is the helplessness and anger that such traumatic conditions trigger. These are brutal acts of terror concealed and committed in the name of development,

modernization and globalization. How many wars have 'they' planned and fought against economic terror and injustices? In the large scheme of things these are emotionally charged words, inconsequential and insignificant questions. So let's not have high hopes as the poor and oppressed don't count; the world was beautiful for those who matter and is even more so only for them.

As I sat down to write, I had no intention of discussing these issues. I planned to present the range of possibilities that are still there for people who want to do something constructive and meaningful about the prevalent situation of war and terror across the world. More than anything else, I wanted to start this year with rekindled hope and positivity not skepticism. But, honestly, how can you not see and feel the deplorable circumstances that surround most of humanity? How can you remain oblivious to the pain and suffering of your fellow humans? How is that possible? I believe that unless you make a concerted effort *not-to-see* the atrocities committed against your own species, you really cannot miss it. And, to me that is the distinguishing factor between *us* and *them*. 'They' do not want to *see* it, 'we' cannot *un-see* it.

Back to the main purpose of this essay – hope of possibility. Is there any? What I know and understood and learnt from our collective past, I am very hopeful. There is no denying the fact that we live in a world which is full of injustices. Yet there are those whose individual and collective efforts have repeatedly proven what Noam Chomsky regards as, "our innate ability to be free and constructive". He also says that there are scientific way of proving this but I think if we look around us, there are innumerable examples of that happening everyday.

Since the first issue of EDucate! I have interacted with a lot of people and am glad and relieved that most of us still have our humanity intact and want to do something good and hopeful for our collective future.

During the course of writing this essay, I read an article from one of my greatest teachers, whom I have never met as yet, Howard Zinn, which redoubled my hopes for good in this world. With his exclusive permission, I present excerpts from his inspiring essay:



The Possibility of Hope

HOWARD ZINN

I have tried hard to match my friends in their pessimism about the world (is it just my friends?), but I keep encountering people who, in spite of all the evidence of terrible things happening everywhere, give me hope. Especially young people, in whom the future rests.

I think of my students.

I think of my students at Boston University and of young people all over the country who, anguished about war in Vietnam, resisted in some way, facing police clubs and arrests. And brave high school students Mary Beth Tinker and her classmates in Des Moines, Iowa who insisted on wearing black armbands to protest the war and when suspended from school took their case to Supreme Court and won.

Of course, some would say, that was the sixties.

But even in the seventies and eighties, when there was wide spread head-shaking over the “apathy” of the student generation, an impressive number of students continued to act.

I think of the determined little group at B.U. (most of them had never done anything like this, but they were emulating similar groups at a hundred schools around the country) who set up a “shantytown” on campus to represent apartheid in South Africa. The police tore it down, but the students refused to move and were arrested.

In South Africa in the summer of 1982 I had visited Crossroads, a real shantytown outside of Capetown, where thousands of blacks occupied places that looked like chicken coops, or were jammed together in huge tents, sleeping in shifts, six hundred of them sharing faucet of running water. I was impressed that young Americans who had not seen that with their own eyes, had only read about it or seen photos, would be so moved to step out of their comfortable lives and act.

Beyond those activists, however, there was a much larger population of students who had no contact with any movement, yet had deep feelings about

injustice. Students kept journals in my courses, where they commented on the issues discussed in class and on the books they had read. They were asked to speak personally, to make connections between what they read and their own lives, their own thoughts. This was in the mid-eighties, supposedly a bad time for social consciousness among students.

In the spring of 1988 I made a sudden decision to quit teaching, after thirty-odd years in Atlanta and Boston and three visiting professorships in Paris. I surprised myself by this, because I love teaching, but I wanted more freedom, to write, to speak to people around the country, to have more time with family and friends.

News of my leaving Boston University seemed to spread; last class was especially crowded, with people there who were not my students, standing against the wall, sitting in the aisles. I answered questions about my decision, and we had a final discussion about justice, and the role of the university, the future of the world.

Then I told them that I was ending the class half-hour early and explained why. There was a struggle going on between the faculty at the B.U. School of Nursing and the administration, which had decided to close the school down because it was not making enough money, in effect firing the nursing faculty. The nurses were picketing that very day in protest. I was going to join them and I invited my students to come along. When I left the class, about a hundred students walked with me. The nurses, desperately needing support, greeted us happily, and we marched up and down together.

It seemed a fitting way to end my teaching career. I had always insisted that a good education was a synthesis of book learning and involvement in social action, that each enriched the other. I wanted my students to know that the accumulation of knowledge, while fascinating in itself, is not sufficient as long as so many people in the world have no opportunity to experience that fascination.

I spent the next several years responding to speak here and there around the country. What I discovered was heartening. In whatever town, large or small, in whatever state of the Union, there was always a cluster of men and women who cared about the sick, the hungry, the victims of racism, the casualties of war, and who were doing something, however small, in the hope that the world would change.

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact the human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

Wherever I was – whether Dallas, Texas, or Ada, Oklahoma, or Shreveport, Louisiana, or New Orleans or San Diego or Philadelphia, Washington...I found such people. And beyond the handful activists there seemed to be hundreds, thousands, more who were open to unorthodox ideas.

But they tended not to know of each other's existence, and so, while they persisted, they did so with the desperate patience of Sisyphus endlessly pushing that boulder up the mountain. I tried to tell each group that it was not alone, and the very people who were disheartened by the absence of national movement were themselves proof of the potential for such movement. I suppose I was trying to persuade myself as well as them.

Going around the country, I was impressed again and again by how favorably people reacted to what, undoubtedly, is a radical view of society—antiwar, anti-military, critical of the legal system, advocating a drastic redistribution of the wealth, supportive of protest even to the point of civil disobedience.

Especially heartening was the fact that wherever I have gone I have found teachers, in elementary school or high school or college, who at some point in their lives were touched by some phenomenon – the civil rights movement, or the Vietnam War, or the feminist movement, or the environmental danger, or the plight of peasants in Central America. They were conscientious about teaching their students the practical basics, but also determined to stimulate their students to a heightened social consciousness.

It is (this) change in consciousness that encourages me. Granted, racial hatred and sex discrimination are still with us, war and violence still poison our culture, we have a large underclass of poor, desperate people, and there is a hardcore of the population content with the way things are, afraid of change.

But if we see only that, we have lost historical perspective, and then it is as if we were born yesterday and we know only the depressing stories in this morning's newspapers, this evening's television reports.

It is (that) long-term change which I think we must see if we are not to lose hope. Pessimism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; it reproduces itself by crippling our willingness to act. There is tendency to think that what we see in the present moment we will continue to see. We forget how often in this century we have been astonished by the sudden crumbling of institutions, by extraordinary changes in people's thoughts, by unexpected eruptions of rebellion against tyrannies, by the quick collapse of systems of power that seemed invincible.

The bad things that happen are repetitions of bad

things that have always happened—war, racism, maltreatment of women, religious and nationalist fanaticism, starvation. The good things that happen are unexpected.

Un expected, and yet explainable by certain truths which spring at us from time to time, but which we tend to forget:

Political power, however, formidable, is more fragile than we think. (Note how nervous are those who hold it.)

Ordinary people can be intimidated for a time, can be fooled for a time, but they have a down-deep commonsense, and sooner or later they find a way to challenge the power that oppresses them. People are not naturally violent or cruel or greedy, although they can be made so. Humans beings everywhere want the same things: they are moved by the sight of abandoned children, homeless families, the casualties of war; they long for peace, for friendship and affection across lines of race and nationality.

Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment (beware of such moments!) but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag towards a more decent society. We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world.

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact the human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places – and there are so many – where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction.

And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

"The success or failure of what we strive for can never be predicted; the only thing that can be predicted is that if we do not try to do something about economic injustice, race and gender discrimination, nothing good will happen."

Howard Zinn on the future

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