

## Values Education for the Global Village

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### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Individual Human Condition

Humanizing humanity begins with nature. It puts love in our hearts, love for parents, siblings, spouses, children family and friends. Love is a positive emotion. It makes life worth living. It binds us with each other. It brings us together. It makes us care for and serve each other.

But the gifts of nature come in pairs, pairs of opposites. Along with love, we receive the emotion of envy; it makes us want what others have simply because they have it and irrespective of our need for it. It keeps us unhappy and dissatisfied. We feel jealous and we feel angry if we are not gratified immediately. Anger leads to loss of reason and negativity multiplies. We want to grab from others the advantages they enjoy. We become violent with anger and love is replaced by hatred.

Some of our emotions bring us together while their counterparts set us apart and keep us divided. Such is our human condition.

#### 1.2 Collective Human Condition

People need to be educated in values, morality and ethics to mediate between individual desires and those of the others. Religious institutions instill in us a code of behavior and social standards, lest we should trample on the pursuit of happiness by others in the community. Educational institutions also promote these social values. The underlying assumption is that we humans live our understanding and worldview. Observation of human behavior amply justifies this assumption.

Throughout history, humanity has lived in isolated communities. Means of transportation and communication were not well developed. Invariably, communities were homogenous. Spirituality, values, morality and ethics were intimately related with the community. The worldview of the community hardly extended beyond the community itself. A community worldview constituted a religion. Values were distinct and identified with the community. The world consisted of isolated communities which seldom interacted with each other except through some adventurous members who dared to travel far and wide.

Like individuals, communities are also subject to the conflicting love and hate emotions in their relationships with each others; they too are the product of the human condition in a collective sense.

#### 1.3 Beyond Communities

Religious value systems around the world help to mediate between the individual and the community. But no such system mediates between conflicting individual and community issues on one side and broader global concerns on the other. In recent years, some spiritual leaders

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.spiritualeducation.org>

have attempted to transcend religious differences, going beyond their boundaries to unite traditions.

However, except for those few, the community at large has no idea about relating with the world outside. For most people, we are 'us' and they are 'them'. We do not have to treat 'them' as we treat 'us'. The world is thus conditioned to live on the basis of this exclusive 'us' 'them' duality.

Now, modern science and technology have reduced the world to a global village. The spread of democracy has also contributed immensely to enlightened ways of governance that promote pluralism and equal rights. The principle of equal rights requires a worldview that recognizes all others as equals, regardless of the other's religious or moral views. Limited identities based upon religion, culture, nation, gender, ethnicity, or race must be secondary to the over-arching human identity. Failing that, communities exist in distrust of each other in an uneasy peace.

Today, limited identities run supreme. Traditional thinking regards spiritual development as synonymous with religious development and defines people and communities accordingly. We are too caught up in the religious paradigm, unable to think deeply enough to break free of its clutches to affect a paradigm shift. Either we teach religion or we exile it completely. We totally fail to notice that between barren secularism and segregated religious ideas, there is the third choice of teaching everyone in one integrated educational system human values based upon core spirituality which has the potential to unify us all in one global family.

Spiritual development is of prime importance in today's dangerous world. This article presents a structural analysis of religion and attempts to show that the traditional approach to practicing and teaching religion is divisive, while spirituality is not. Broadly speaking, what follows is the map to a possible human journey from the supremacy of limited identities to that of the global human identity.

We will argue that it is the responsibility of educational systems today to teach the core spirituality of religion without tainting it with religious doctrine. It can also help us reach deep into our consciousness and transcend our limiting human condition both individually and collectively. Educational institutions today have the potential to teach the core spirituality – the essence of what makes all the world religions more alike than different - countering the divisive influence of exclusive religious doctrines. Then only, will we develop to reach beyond our exclusive limited identities towards the inclusive global ones.

## 2 Terminology

Form characterizes matter. On the other hand, spirit is characterized by infinite subtlety and is without form. While spirit lies at the core of religion, religion has a definite form and form can be divisive. Although the unifying nature of spirit has the potential to build one global family, religion has expressed it in a limited way to serve its purpose of building like-minded religious communities.

Religion is a composite of spirituality and doctrine. Spirituality unifies and doctrine divides. Religion depends upon its core principles of spirituality to unify individuals in a community and then it indoctrinates them to maintain its own identity and that of its community. This duality of unifying spirituality and divisive doctrine characterizes the collective human condition of religious communities.

## 3 Anatomy of Religion

Isn't religion meant to promote good relations amongst people? Doesn't religion teach loving your neighbor as yourself? Let us look at the anatomy of religion in search of answers to such questions, see Figure 1.

All religions today have their origins in the peak spiritual experiences and insights of prophets, sages and seers long ago, who spent their lives studying the nature of humankind and its relationships in the universe. The insights of these sages, seers and prophets comprise the core spirituality of religion. Core spirituality is the essential oneness of all created beings, totally and purely unifying and completely without divisiveness. Spirit, unlike matter, is all inclusive. It is the root of our ability to perceive equality. This unifying face of religion is the nectar of love, life and justice.

The core spirituality is the heart of religion that knits people in a community. The universal truths inherent in it are perennial, beyond time, locale and environment. They do not need an appeal to faith or supernatural forces for their credibility.

The peak experiences at the center of core spirituality involve one underlying reality shared by all beings in the universe. This reality is unlike any being in the world and therefore ineffable. Since it underlies infinite diversity of beings in the world, it also is infinite. In addition, it is completely spiritual as compared to being material. Matter is particular and definite; spirit on the other hand is infinitely subtle without any definite characteristics.

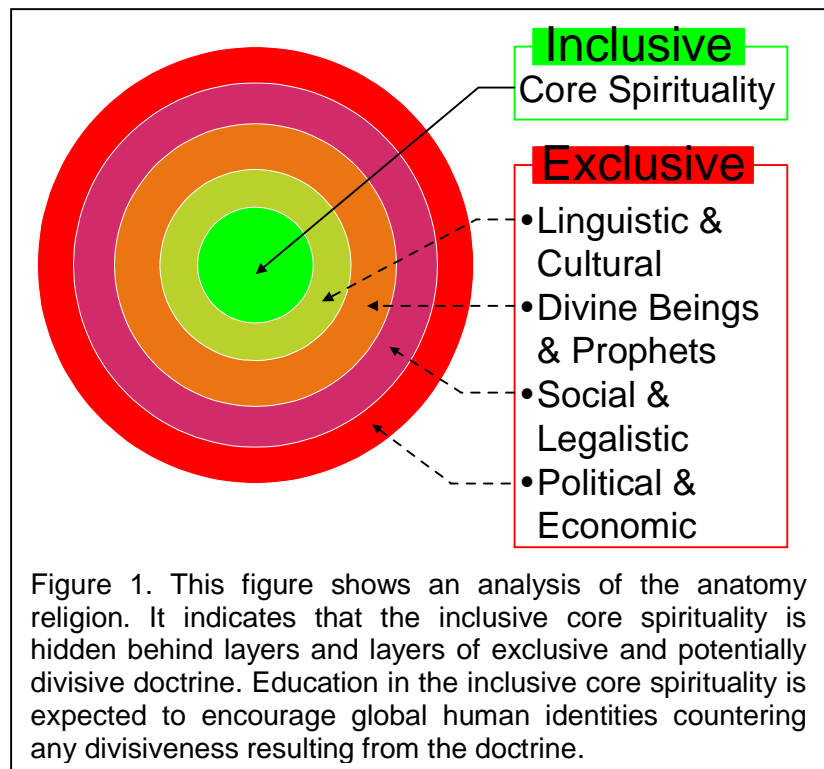


Figure 1. This figure shows an analysis of the anatomy religion. It indicates that the inclusive core spirituality is hidden behind layers and layers of exclusive and potentially divisive doctrine. Education in the inclusive core spirituality is expected to encourage global human identities countering any divisiveness resulting from the doctrine.

Having had their unifying experiences, the sages feel compassion toward the masses and feel compelled to share it with them. However, the challenge to communicate an infinite, ineffable reality using finite imagery, whether in words or forms, is problematic. That is where the potential of divisiveness begins. Religious leaders phrase their personal experiences in terms of the conceptual, cultural, and linguistic framework<sup>2</sup> available in their particular times and locales. Different narratives involve the use of imagery and language of the respective locales. The language that makes sense in one culture may not necessarily make sense in another, setting in motion a cycle of potentially divisive understanding.

The imagery used to point to the spiritual underlying reality is what is referred to as divinity. Divine images used by different religions must also reflect the needs of the viewer. People begin to identify their particular divine images, prophets and ideas with the underlying reality and quibble about whose "reality" is better and whose is not.

Having given one infinite reality, religion goes on to confine it in finite forms, in words, images and other forms. Describing the indescribable in their preferred ways, religion identifies the

<sup>2</sup> Maslow, Abraham H, Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences, The Viking Press, New York 1973, p. 20

underlying reality with its respective form. The form becomes the God. Suddenly, somebody's God becomes less Godlike, somebody's prophet less prophetic or un-prophetic, and somebody's community less righteous and deserving.

Prophets, sages and seers tend to align human life with their spiritual experiences by reforming social, moral and legal systems of the locale. This realignment is time, place and environment dependent. Social, moral, ethics and legal systems are subject to change with change in time, locale and the environment. But religious traditions tend to hold on to the original mores indefinitely irrespective of such changes. This causes untold social conflict and suffering.

In its drive to distinguish communities and demarcate territories, religion implicitly and explicitly encourages divisive thinking. This divisive face of religion can not only set communities apart but also in direct conflict., leading to many of world's most egregious inequities.

Religion is a monolithic aggregate of unifying spirituality and potentially divisive doctrine involving linguistic, cultural, divine, prophetic, social, legalistic, political, economic dialectics. The most deadly mark of religion is the fusion of politics and economics within its domain. Religions generally incorporate the political and economic aspirations and grievances of the community.

Perceived injustices by other religious communities, territorial ambitions of religious leaders, and prejudices between different groups often become the underlying causes of religious savagery, wars, rapes, murders and violence. One such act generates retaliation and instigates an unending cycle. The so called 'religious leaders' sit in their safe havens and incite savage acts by their followers against other communities in the name of religion. Even within the same religion, political and economic grievances between denominations and intolerance of differences between them lead to an explosive situations in different locales.

With clear understanding of the core human spirituality, people will not be easily misled by the so called 'religious leaders' into acts against humanity. Their conscience will prick not only when they infringe the norms of their own community, but also when they are directed to violate humanity or the global village at large.

#### 4 The Current Position

Identity is a worldview issue. Developing global identity is a journey from our limited worldview to an inclusive global worldview. It is related with the understanding of our shared spirituality - our origin; our existence: what and who we are; our relationship with each other, with the ground of our being and with nature at large; meaning and purpose of our lives; human ethics and values.

Teaching of such topics today is an unresolved problem because tradition has intimately linked them to religion. People talk of Christian perspective, of Islamic perspective, and so on. Today, the world is a pluralistic global society. So which moral perspective do we decide to teach in our schools and colleges?

##### 4.1 Separation of Church and School

Separation of religion and school is an outcome of the legacy of separation of church and state. United States is the staunchest champion of this heritage. Other countries including Taiwan are committed to the separation principle to different degrees.

Commitment to this legacy combined with the idea of inseparability of spiritual values from religion practically translates into no education in moral values at all, except in conjunction with citizenship and government. The lack of values education in schools except on the bases of secular social, health, political, legal and economic reasoning is incapable of deep psychological nourishment. Without an introduction to spiritual ideas during the educational years, the young,

evolving and impressionable human spirit is left seeking purpose and meaning. The method of teaching of humanities, social, natural and life sciences promote the idea that nature and natural facts have no connection to spirituality and are devoid of purpose and meaning. In fact, western educational practices teach that seeking spiritual meaning in natural and scientific truths is a misapplication of human reason.

Based on this legacy, many pluralistic countries have done away with education based on spiritual values altogether because they cannot imagine them apart from individual religion. Fairness also demands not to have any one system of religious values taught in the public school system. Neither can they imagine instituting different systems of religious schools in keeping with the legacy of separation of church and state. Additionally there is a fear of the anti-social effects of segregation.

Whereas separation of church and school is wise, keeping spiritual values out of the educational system is undesirable. Keeping spiritual concepts out of the educational system diminishes it as incomplete, unfulfilling and devoid of meaning.

#### 4.2 Religion Based Schooling

Traditional inability to separate spiritual values from specific religions expresses itself as separation of religion and schooling on one side and different religion based school systems on the other. Great Britain is the champion of the latter system of education.

In the British system, Hindus are taught Hindu values, Christians Christian values, Moslems Islamic values and so on. This model imagines a pluralistic country as a community of communities rather than a society composed of individual human beings and simply transplants what worked in homogenous communities into the pluralistic nations. It fails to take cognizance of the changed environment.

The world has been so conditioned in linking religion with spiritual values that it finds it hard to get out of this paradigm. Some countries have continued on their old ways of teaching values in the context of particular religions. To be fair to newer immigrants of other religions, they have expanded this system to include their religions as well. Thus they have a system of schooling in which different religions run different school systems for the children of their followers.

There are some major problems with this approach. Different religious schools, racial schools or schools for any particular group alone have the effect of isolating their pupils and preventing them from experiencing diversity. Faith-based schools can have the effect of reducing the importance of reasoning in the minds of the students<sup>3</sup>. The students do not interact with others leaving them without personal experience of learning how to respect differences. Also it runs the risk of building strong and exclusive identities which do not change status quo of divisive duality.

On the surface, especially in countries with homogenous populations, strong religious or racial identities may seem innocuous, but escalating conflict around the world testifies to the damage caused by the resulting lack of respect for others, inter-religious or inter-racial conflict and divisiveness. It is therefore important that the idea of faith-based or race-based schools to teach ethics, morality and values be laid to rest forever for the sake of general harmony and peace.

In India, for example, even after coexisting for over a thousand years, segregated growth of generations of Hindus and Muslims was responsible for religious identities that lead to the partition of the country on religious grounds in 1947. Degenerate human behavior followed. Religion based savagery included looting, burning, rapes, homelessness and murders of innocent children and women amounting to hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of

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<sup>3</sup> Sen, Amartya, Identity and Violence, Penguin Books, London, 2006, p. 117

refugees<sup>4</sup>. I was a child witness of the heinous crimes against humanity and the outrage of my parents at the wanton killing of innocents, whether Hindu or Muslim. This experience left a permanent mark on me and it has been constantly moving me to build bridges across the hearts and minds of people across the traditional lines of division. The need is no less now than back in 1947. Human condition has not improved in the intervening years. We were told that the savagery was an act of uneducated masses and things would improve with the spread of modern education. That promise remains unrealized.

Even within the same religion, Catholic and Protestant denominational schooling in Northern Ireland may be held responsible for the creation of denomination based identities strongly dividing the society in two opposing camps in conflict with each other (ibid, p. 13).

The U.K. had publicly funded Christian schooling before significant immigration of followers of other religions into the country. Then, in fairness to multi-religious immigrants, the country promoted the development of state financed Hindu schools, Muslim schools, Sikh schools and so on completely oblivious to the potential dangers of such an initiative. It seems that the British authorities responsible for religion based schooling did not learn any lessons from recent Indian history in which Britain was so intimately involved<sup>5</sup>. The potential of the British faith-based schools may be noted from the happenings of July 2005 involving British-born youth in suicide bombings in London. Self perception resulting from faith-based schooling was perhaps responsible for such dastardly acts.

Many provinces in Canada have loyally followed the lead of Britain and established religion based schools in misguided notions of promoting Canadian multiculturalism. Establishment of religious schools was the deciding issue in the 2007 provincial elections in the province of Ontario. Ontario had a state financed system of Catholic schools in addition to a 'public school system' for all the others. Fairness demanded religion based schools for the children of all the various religions in Ontario as if one historic wrong can be righted by another. The people of Ontario rightly voted the issue down causing a severe defeat of the party championing the issue, although the reason perhaps had more to do with the fear arising out of the events of September 9, 2001 than an enlightened and creative thinking.

### 5 Need of Modern Times: The Third Choice

For homogenous societies, the role of ethics and morality is to mediate between the individual and the immediate homogenous religious community. Today's pluralistic and democratic nations are microcosms of the pluralistic global village and the immediate community is pluralistic. How do you love your neighbor when the neighbor is different from you in race, religion, color, and sexual orientation, etc.? Today's values, morality and ethics must mediate between the individual and his/her religious community on one side and the pluralistic society and the global village on the other. Worldviews and values of today must expand the individual identity beyond the traditional limited identities to that of being simply human and help us shed the exclusive duality in favor of the inclusive unity.

This article highlights the third choice between the two extremes of segregated religion based education on one side and the stark secularism on the other. This alternative is the most suitable choice for the global village today. It is now time that we replace both the exclusive communitarianism and complete meaninglessness of the past with a futuristic globally inclusive system. Otherwise we run the risk of complete annihilation caused by the same science and technology which has rendered the world into a global village.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.2

<sup>5</sup> ibid, p. 13

This argument draws support from the Earth Charter<sup>6</sup>, an initiative of Maurice Strong of Canada and Mikhail Gorbachev of USSR with support from the Dutch government as a part of the unfinished business of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. The preamble to The Earth Charter opens with the statement: "... To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations." It goes on to emphasize that "The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life." and that "We must realize that when the basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more." It goes on to remind us of our responsibility saying "... we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities." The Earth Charter urges us all to affirm a set of shared principles as a common standard by which we conduct ourselves and one of the principles requires us to "Recognize the importance of moral and spiritual education for sustainable living."

I would also like to draw support from article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations<sup>7</sup> which says, "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

Why do different publicly funded religious schools run the risk of building strong religious identities? Why are strong religious identities thought to lead to lack of respect for others, inter-religious conflict and divisiveness? There are plenty of recent publications by Harris<sup>8</sup>, Dawkins<sup>9</sup> Hitchens<sup>10</sup>, et al presenting the history of savagery resulting from religious identities. Protagonists of religion counter this viewpoint pointing to all the good that religions have achieved. This article argues the validity of both of these opposing viewpoints. This paradox results from the very nature of religion which has an inbuilt potential of boundless love and harmony by way of its core spirituality on one side, and simultaneously an unlimited potential of doctrinal divisiveness and conflict on the other.

Can spiritual values be studied apart from individual religions? Is spirituality of meaning to secular societies and to individuals of faith and of no faith? How can spiritual values be brought to the academy without violating the legacy of separation of church and school? Can spiritual education address the challenges faced by humanity today? The answers to such questions emerge on a close structural analysis of religion itself, see Figure 1 above.

## 6 Spirituality Based Values Education

It is no wonder then that there are a large number of people in the world today who zealously promote and guard the principle of keeping faith out of the school systems. They also realize the importance of teaching spiritual values, morality and ethics. I too am a member of this group of people. We want the teaching of shared human spirituality, values, morality and ethics and we

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.earthcharter.org>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.un.org>

<sup>8</sup> Harris, Sam, *The End of Faith*, W. W. Norton and Company, New York: 2004

<sup>9</sup> Dawkins, Richard, *The God Delusion*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2006

<sup>10</sup> Hitchens, Christopher, *God is not Great*, McClelland Stewart, Toronto, 2007

reject the teaching of values and ethics specific to individual religions. But, we have been vague in the articulation of the specifics of what we would like to have taught perhaps because of our conditioning to think in terms of particular religions. Deep down, we feel the meaningfulness of shared values but when we can't separate them from specific religions, we rather reject them than have religion taught because of the historical savagery of religious identities.

The revelatory "spiritual" experience does not depend upon faith alone for its credibility; it falls well within the jurisdiction of today's social and natural sciences for its validation. It is equally applicable to people of faith and of no faith. There is a vast body of recent research showing the commonality of the unifying spiritual experience. In the words of Abraham Maslow<sup>11</sup>, "In addition, what seems to be emerging from this new source of data is that this essential core-religious experience may be embedded in either a theistic, supernatural context, or in a non-theistic context. This private religious experience is shared by all the great world religions including the atheistic ones like Buddhism, Taoism, Humanism or Confucianism. As a matter of fact, I can go so far as to say that this intrinsic core-experience is a meeting ground not only, let us say, for Christians and Jews and Mohammedans but also for priests and atheists, for communists and anti-communists, for conservatives and liberals, for artists and scientists, for men and for women, and for different constitutional types, that is to say, for athletes and for poets, for thinkers and for doers."

One notable example is a recent book entitled *Paths to Transcendence*<sup>12</sup> (Shah-Kazemi 2006, p. 3). It is based upon the doctoral thesis of its author Reza Shah-Kazemi at the University of Kent. He studied three seers from diverse backgrounds, Shankara from Hinduism, Ibn Arabi from Islam and Meister Eckhart from Christianity. Of note is the prime conclusion, "...that, based upon the pronouncements of the mystics studied here, one can justifiably speak of a single transcendent essence of spiritual realization, whatever be the religious starting point."

The experience is communicated as infinite love, oneness, compassion, goodness, beauty, truth, light and knowledge. The ultimate reality is expressed in terms of supernatural divinity, spiritual essence underlying perceptible reality, and the natural world. Some maintain that the ultimate reality, because of its ineffability, is not to be talked about, but only to be experienced in deep meditation.

The difference in religions is primarily due to the temporal, cultural, linguistic, social, conceptual, and linguistic framework in which the revelatory experience is localized for communication. Social, political and economic aspirations of the respective communities further cloud the communication issues. The resulting localization of the revelatory experience comprises an aspect of religion which implicitly and explicitly encourages divisiveness and conflict. It not only distinguishes communities and demarcates territories but pits them against each other. This aspect of religion should change to adapt to changing conditions. Failure to adapt is the result of a lack of discernment between core spirituality and its localization.

For the sake of humanity, religions ought to put aside their differences and acknowledge our spiritual commonality. It is imperative that they agree to discount their differences and teach that which is common to all of them in our educational system. Otherwise, modern scientific and technological developments may become instruments of destruction in the hands of communal divisiveness. World religions have not taken up this challenge. They neither have a viable

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p. 28

<sup>12</sup> Shah-Kazemi, Reza, *Paths to Transcendence*, World Wisdom, Bloomington IN, 2006, p. 3



platform, nor the will. To do so, they will have to forego their deep seated need to distinguish themselves from others. The claim of distinction is vital for strong religious identities.

The very foundation of a pluralistic society or nation is equal respect for all its citizens. Do we need strong religious identities to serve this basic need? Or, is it better served with human identities promoted by one school system that teaches the core spirituality of all religions and shared human values based on them?

## 7 The Crises Facing Humanity Today

Two major crises that are facing humanity today are increasing religious radicalization of the world population and global warming as a consequence of mindless exploitation of natural environment in turn resulting from our unchecked greed and selfishness on one side and desperate populations on the other. The severity of these crises is seen as threatening the very survival of humankind and the global environment. Our core spirituality enables the profound perception of the entire universe as an integrated and unified whole in which each one of its beings has its legitimate place. As a result, widespread education in the core spirituality has the potential for the resolution and the prevention these crises.

### 7.1 Reversing and Prevention of Radicalization

Amanda Ripley<sup>13</sup> considers the question, “Why do people leave terrorist groups?” She quotes research to the effect that educating “radicals about the gap between their religious ideals and the groups they follow” is helping them to leave radicalism in favor of peace. It is worth noting that the significant conclusion of Ripley’s article is that the realization of the bankruptcy of the radical narrative represents the turning point from radical pursuits. As a result, nearly a dozen countries have begun programs to educate radicals in religious enlightenment.

Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa<sup>14</sup> of Nigeria lead opposing militia groups in Kaduna resulting in great personal costs and costs to their communities. Wuye lost an arm and Ashafa lost two sons and a teacher in 1992. Now the two men are co-directors of the Muslim-Christian Interfaith Mediation Centre in their city, leading task-forces to resolve conflicts across Nigeria. The turning point came when a spiritual teacher of Ashafa enlightened him about what his religion truly teaches i.e., its core spirituality.

These studies are affirmations of our human condition; it is such that we suffer first and then look for a resolution of our suffering. Wouldn’t it be wise to use education in the core spirituality as a preventative measure as well?

### 7.2 Sustainable Development

Jeffrey D. Sachs<sup>15</sup> argues that our survival requires global solutions to the global problems facing us today. We have no choice but to end ‘our misguided view of the world as an enduring struggle of “us” vs. “them”’. According to Sachs, “What we call violent fundamentalism should be seen for what it really is: poverty, hunger, water scarcity, and despair.”

To address these crises, Sachs notes that we have made global commitments and treaties which remain unfulfilled and real solutions have failed to emerge because of a long list of barriers such as cynicism, defeatism, outdated institutions, competing nationalism and unchecked greed.

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<sup>13</sup> Ripley, Amanda, Reverse Radicalism, Time, Vol. 171, No. 12, March 24, 2008

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ftfilms.org.uk/imam.html>

<sup>15</sup> Sachs, Jeffrey D., Common Wealth, Time, Vol. 171, No. 12, March 24, 2008

Sachs suggests clear objectivity, new sustainable technologies, clear implementation strategy and sources of financing. He concludes with the crucial need of transcending the list of barriers which is related with our human condition. "We will need science, technology and professionalism, but most of all we will need to subdue our fears and cynicism," says Sachs. He emphasizes his conclusion by quoting John F. Kennedy in exhorting us to end our differences and to make the world safe for diversity.

Without saying it explicitly for reasons best known only to Sachs, he is in fact advising spiritual development on a global scale to transcend our human condition without which he sees no hope for global survival. Education in the core spirituality of humanity has the potential of the kind of transcendence required to address the grave global crises we face today.

## 8 Governance, Public Policy and the Role of Universities

Historically, education has been a matter of governance and public policy. Education in the core human spirituality therefore also is a matter of governance and public policy. Our universities and institutions of higher learning must be charged with the responsibility of transitioning education into the core spirituality of humankind.

We must approach the project with caution. It cannot be left to religions to teach what is of grave importance to the entire humanity. Neither can we simply throw the problem in the lap of the school system without adequate preparation. It is an issue of paradigm shift from religiosity or secularity to the core spirituality; religion unites individuals into communities, humanity at large finds the narrative of stark secularism as devoid of purpose and deep meaning, and only the core spirituality has the potential of globalizing human mind to build one world community. We simply cannot afford to miss fully realizing that unifying potential for the sake of our survival.

Before we jump right in, we must involve our institutions of higher learning in an ongoing basis in strategic research; development of curricula, teaching and learning resources; training and preparation of teachers.

As noted above, one infinite ineffable reality lies at the core of peak spiritual experience of sages, seers and prophets. Communicating the concept and the meaning of one inexpressible reality underlying its infinitely diverse creation is a massive challenge.

Fortunately today, the dialectics and technology of communication are far more developed than in earlier times. We have a variety of well developed knowledge disciplines in the fields of humanities, social, natural and life sciences. The peak experience of the sages falls in the domain of these disciplines. We must bring the collective force of all these disciplines to bear in facing this communication challenge and in taking the life changing spiritual understanding deep in human consciousness. Our universities must engage in an ongoing research effort towards this goal.

## 9 Concluding Remarks

Morality, ethics and spiritual values have significant psychological meaning for humankind. They are not the exclusive prerogative of a church or a religion. They do not necessarily need supernatural help for their validation. They are the basic responsibility of all humankind. They are well within the realm of critical, academic and intellectual investigation. Their teaching does not breach the wall between "church and state".

Religion has two aspects: one integrates and unites while the other differentiates and divides. Religious institutions propagate them both in their effort to create communities from individuals. Community identity is more expansive than individual. Similarly, we need to make concerted efforts to create global human identity as it is more expansive than the communal. Pluralistic

societies need human identity. Building human identity can no longer be left to chance. Explicit education in shared human spirituality and values is needed to expand deep human consciousness to build global human identity.

The calling of the academy is the unfettered search and dissemination of truth. Then, why does it overlook or at best underplay one vital truth, the truth of one reality underlying the infinite diversity of the universe?

Understanding of this truth can build bridges across the hearts and minds of people; engender understanding, respect and love for all humanity and diversity of others; and help visualizing the underlying oneness of all beings and the environment.

Just as self-centered thinking builds individual identity leading to individualism. Society keeps individualism in check by instilling community-centered consciousness. Communal thinking can lead to community identities or communitarianism. Who keeps a check on communitarianism? It must be checked by a more compelling imperative. All-inclusive thinking gives rise to global human identity with a potential of humanitarianism and global consciousness. We need humanitarianism and global consciousness in our endeavor to build pluralistic societies and the global village that the world has now become.

Religions have nothing to fear from the growth of global human identities. The core spirituality comprises the unitive face of religion. It enriches, deepens, and expands religious identities as it builds one inclusive family of all beings and addresses the human and environmental challenges faced by us today.

The need of teaching ethics and spiritual values within the framework of separation between "church and state" is shared by all pluralistic secular societies worldwide. Any country that takes the initiative of teaching the core human spirituality in its schools and colleges will assume the role of world leadership in this important respect.

## 10 Acknowledgment

The author is deeply indebted to his spiritual mentor, the late Brahmurishi Vishvatma Bawra for much of his spiritual education and his friend and colleague Elizabeth Ellis for her careful review and editing of the article.