



Introduction

Every seed contains the blue print for its purposeful expression as its ultimate manifestation. Every natural manifestation is part of a larger purposeful expression. Within all such expressions are ineffable aspects. How can the beauty of the rose be found in the genetic code of a rose seed? Similarly there is an ineffable and most wonderful dimension in the seed of our personal and collective humanity. How can the majesty of being human be found in the biology of our bodies? How can our personal humanity be divided from our collective human unity or, indeed, from the very web of life of which we are each a part?

The rose has no choice as to whether it will live and grow in harmony with the purpose secreted in its seed. Human beings do have choice. And, if the rose seed was burned to give off heat and light it would be reasonable to describe the purpose of the rose seed as being giving off heat and light and then becoming carbon. Would that be sufficient?

As human beings we can choose how we will fulfill our purpose. We can reject or affirm love, beauty, justice, and peace. We can express our inherent dignity. We can destroy ourselves or create beautiful lives, communities and nations. The direction we take is largely dependent on investigating diligently our purposes and intentions.

The purpose of our individual lives and our collective endeavors constitutes our "why." For a human being why" must certainly include the spiritual dimension, that aspect of our being from which love, compassion, dignity, and meaning arise. The ethical expression of these values is "treating other lives as we wish to be treated." Pursuing these values to their source is wisdom.

If we forget these values we can become lost in the "how" of our activities and ultimately end up with improved means to unimproved ends, for example, economic systems that destroy the ecology of the planet, religious dogmas that lead to divisiveness and violence, and weaponry that reduces security and stimulates threats. We can end up with institutions that do not serve useful purposes and individual lives unworthy of our core humanity.

*At the Millennium Summit the heads of state and government gathered at the United Nation. A limited edition book was published and distributed through the initiative of Ambassador Kamlesh Sharma, then the Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations and now serving as Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations. The book contains essays by numerous eminent persons, such as then Secretary General Kofi Anna who contributed its opening essay. The book is titled *Imagining Tomorrow*. The closing essay is "The Forgotten Why."*

The Forgotten Why

We have forgotten why we are here, who we are and how to pose and answer these most important questions. I believe we are here to learn and know through essential love. This process can guide our actions and reveal the birthright of being human.

We are deeply inquisitive creatures sent into this creation to discover something which may not look like anything we can see. We are to learn of something which we cannot control, measure or own. We are able to know through love, and that knowing helps make us human. To know the mystery of that which sent us into the world we must know the self, the consciousness within the body, that is knowing. We must inquire into who we are. If we do not gain this knowledge then what have we gained?

Measuring

*Weighing ink on paper
the size and structure of
each letter
even the paper's fabric itself
Will we know the meaning of
the words?*

*Measuring the bones, the skin,
the blood, the house,
the nation, the planet,
the solar system,
all the galaxies
Will we know the meaning of the measurements?*

*Will we find and know
soul?*

*Measuring all these gestures
will it be known --
this immeasurable
love?*

By observing the outside, the portion understood with the senses, mind and desire, the essence will not be known. By observing with wisdom we can know ourselves, and through such understanding, know the one who is observing all. When wisdom dawns in the fullness of love, it brings a tranquillity that the intellect cannot measure and leads to knowing without symbols and thought. It is such wisdom that governs the investigation of the unchanging, that which is real, that which neither comes nor goes, the mystery which sent us in the first place.

Purposes

Would you follow a fast sports car with a bumper sticker that said, "I may be lost but I am really moving"? What is the purpose of our social institutions? What is the purpose of an economy? Does it help create communities of human beings or is it a kind of Stuff Olympics? US Senator Byron Dorgan questions whether "the gold medal goes to the nation that consumes the most stuff and racks up the biggest GDP."

What is the purpose of art? Does it awaken beauty in the beholder? Or, does it become only a technique of commenting on human techniques of expression without a meaning?

What is the purpose of law? Does it establish justice? Or, is it only a social procedure for controlling economies, and people who do not fit in?

What is the purpose of medicine? Is it an art for healing, and all that implies? Or, is it only a high technology business to keep people breathing indefinitely?

What is the purpose of religion? Is it to improve human hearts and qualities so that wisdom, love and compassion might awaken? Or, is it a kind of theater of rituals that only define groups from one another and increase their respective sense of security in feeling special?

What is the purpose of philosophy? Is it to stimulate inquiry into the good? Or, is it only an intellectual technique to criticize the limits of intellectual techniques?

What is the purpose of education? Does it include drawing out the self knowledge of students and improving character? Or, is it only to train workers for the institutions that help rack up a large GDP?

How are we to judge the success of institutions if we do not know how to judge the success of our individual lives? Without a standard of being human, without a human purpose how can we determine what direction our institutions should go? We live in a time in which the pursuit of the good and the pursuit of the real are divided. The hard sciences claim the epistemological high ground, relegating all other methods of knowing to mere aesthetics. What cannot be measured is marginalized. The self, love, compassion, consciousness and the soul are not part of "truth discovery" since they are not amenable to measurement and control, criteria for scientific knowledge. The real and the good need not be separated. In human traditions of wisdom the pursuit of virtue is the necessary condition for understanding the real.

If original purposes are lost the important questions cannot be answered. If what it is to be human is not first understood all the efforts expended lack purpose. Procedure overcomes purpose. The how overshadows the why. When there is no why and nihilism grows, the human is reduced to a mere pleasure seeking creature with no limits of appetite. Economy becomes greed and security can never be obtained for no inner awareness or peace is nurtured. There is never enough and ignorance leads us into apocalyptic futile attempts to obtain security by ever increasing destructive capacities.

Lacking the courage to face our own inner inadequacies we project all unease upon the external environment and attempt to own and control it entirely. It is our own ignorance, our own qualities of egoism and arrogance, that bring about the most suffering.

The Quest

It is tragic if a king sends a messenger to bring back a particular thing and he brings back hundreds of extraneous items of no value to the king. It is glorious when that which is most valuable is obtained.

There was a king who instructed his prime minister as follows, "There is a kingdom to which I will send you. I understand there is a king there whose beauty and knowledge is without compare and above whom there is none and below whom there is none. I give you this book to use when instructions to

know this king become necessary. Use it carefully. Come to know this king and report back to me of his wonders.”

The minister set out for the kingdom. He travelled across a dangerous expanse where he carefully walked along a one foot wide plank. On the right was quicksand and on the left was swamp. He looked up and saw that on the walls of the kingdom were cannons. Should a cannon shoot at him he knew he would fall off into his demise.

At the gate of the kingdom he asked the keeper, “I hear there is a tavern within the kingdom which contains all taverns. Within this tavern is a story teller who contains all the stories of the kingdom. Please direct me to this place.”

At the tavern he asked the storyteller who said, “Beware this is a dangerous kingdom where your greatest treasures can be taken if you are not diligent. Yet the ruler is beautiful and just. If approached correctly, all can and will be understood. Make your way in this kingdom, work with its inhabitants and you will learn your story.”

The minister entered into business with five attractive partners. They robbed him of the goods he had brought. They conspired and cheated. They deceived him at every juncture and when he took them to court they changed evidence, prevailing at the first level.

The minister was diligent and appealed to a higher court where he was instructed that his case could only be resolved at the highest court of the kingdom.

The parties appeared there together and the minister could not see the judge, the king himself, for he was hidden behind a veil. Frustrated he began, “I entered into a partnership with these five and they have lied at each step, stealing me of my most valuable property. Justice has been denied me in the courts below and now I cannot even see you.” He began to become angry but remembered the book he had been given at the outset of his journey.

He opened the book and the page was a clear mirror in which he could see his own qualities in his face. He abruptly realized his condition and reflected openly, “A king of wisdom would indeed hide his beautiful face from those who cheated and abused. Such a king would only show himself to the appreciative. Those who know how wonderfully the kingdom is ordered and

whose hearts have gratitude might behold his face.” His heart filled with gratitude and peace.

The veil opened and the king appeared. His beauty and grace was so overwhelming that the five were stunned and rendered senseless. The king handed the minister a book and said, “This book is to be brought back to the king who sent you as evidence of our meeting. Look at it carefully and know your fulfillment.”

He opened the book and it too was a mirror, the tilt of which captured an effulgence of light such that neither an image, a reflection or even the mirror itself could be seen. Only light in its most beautiful essence could be seen. The minister knew then that indeed the king whom he had found was the same king who had sent him at the beginning.

The king is the great mystery from which we all arise, beyond gender or description, known through mercy as infinite light and love, with names numerous and exalted such as God, Allah, Yahweh, Siva, Unnamable. The minister is the soul, the spark of light and consciousness sent into this world to discover itself and its source. The Prophet said, “God said, ‘I was a hidden treasure loving to be known and so I made creation.’” He further stated, “The one who knows himself will know the Lord.” Knowing oneself is fulfilling the divine purpose of the great mystery of life.

To do this wisdom is needed. Wisdom grows where the heart is filled with human qualities of love and compassion.

The plank is the path of clarity and determination. The quicksand is the mind which generates infinite images and symbols and the swamp is desire which can never be satisfied. We can all fall into these traps and only through grace do the cannons of worldly sorrow such as sickness, old age, and poverty for example not overwhelm us.

The gatekeeper is reflective inner awareness that directs us to the heart where conscience explains to the soul the nature of this world. It warns us and explains that each of us has a personal story to discover. The five partners are the five symbolic elements which disguise our identity and steal our most precious gift, time. We identify with earth as form and weight, fire as energy, air as thoughts, water as emotions and the pull of attachments and sensuality, ether as dreams and spiritual realms. These elements pose as ultimate reality in the realm of the five senses. When the soul tries to claim back its heritage and

goes to the court of the intellect, the intellect which is unable to transcend the five senses cannot even find the soul and thus rules against it.

With determination, wisdom directs the quest deeper and in the court of the inner heart where the mirror of wisdom shows us our true qualities we can purify ourselves. When the attitude of pure gratitude dawns the king can show himself. The book of wisdom that the king grants reflects the infinity of pure illumination which is the wonder of the source of our being which sends us here in the first instance in order to know ourselves and to know and love him.

Helpful Ways

There are ways helpful to this kind of knowing, which enhances all human endeavors. It begins with supplication and prayer. The evidence of prayer is love and compassion. The evidence of love and compassion is service for these qualities sensitize us to the suffering of others. The evidence of service is clear conscience. The evidence of clear conscience is inner peace. The evidence of inner peace is wisdom. The evidence of wisdom is knowing oneself. The evidence of knowing oneself is knowing the great mystery from which the self arises. The evidence of this knowledge is a life of prayer, love, compassion, service, conscience, and wisdom. This deeper life brings richness to human civilization. It involves another kind of knowing.

The Sufi Guide Bawa Muhaiyaddeen stated in The Resonance of Allah:

“Oh Man! You think you can know all things solely by your investigation. There is, however, a Truth that governs such knowing. That Truth is this: The State of Silence will be invaluable to you. Let the form of Divine Luminous Wisdom grow from this inner Silence. See yourself as the consciousness within the form of Divine Luminous Wisdom. It will appear as One. That form is That. And That is you. That State is One. It is That which is the All-pervading Radiant Effulgence.”

Principles and Values

Numerous individuals from time immemorial have come to a deep state of communion with the ineffable mystery from which we arise and have experienced a profound sense of the inter-relatedness and sanctity of all life.

They have expressed this realization in values and ethical principles which serve as the foundation for codified laws. One such ethical principle is that of reciprocity which is often called the Golden Rule: "Treat others as you wish to be treated." This principle is an ethical and moral foundation of all of the world's major religions.¹ Multilateralism is the logical outgrowth of this principle.

The Commission on Global Governance emphasized the importance this perspective:]

"We need a set of common values around which we can unite people, irrespective of their cultural, political, religious or philosophical backgrounds...Foremost of these values must include the duty of care for one's neighbor. In a neighborhood, all are neighbors. In our global neighborhood, therefore, the duty of care is owed to all who share the planet. This duty, of course, is more compelling the more a neighbor needs care."

The Golden Rule rests upon the value of compassion which, when practiced, affirms our underlying unity. In the Vishnu Purana, the world enters into dissolution when Vishnu causes the waters to dry up. It is the failure of humanity to exercise compassion that causes the Divine to end creation. The Vishnu Purana says that in the end days, "The minds of men will be wholly occupied in acquiring wealth and wealth will be spent solely on selfish gratification...The people will be almost always in dread of dirth and apprehension of scarcity." It is the attitude of fear that drives the dynamics of divisiveness on the planet today.

There is much to support the bleak fearful view. A brief observation of almost any period of human history is replete with horrors; adequate justification to believe the world is an unredeemable place. In the last fifty years alone there have been over 200 wars with more than 25 million killed. Yes, there is evidence that greed and violence underlie human affairs and there are reasons to rely primarily on the threat and use of violence for security.

But, this rationale is incomplete; it is flawed in its denial of our humanity and the numerous examples of self-government and justice arising from our capacities of enlightened self-interest, reason and compassion. Because we have the capacity to behave with ignorance, we are not condemned to do so. The UN Charter is a collective proclamation of humanity's commitment to rise above ignorance and to move from the law of power to the power of law.

As Congressman James Leach stated so eloquently in his Introduction to Defining Purpose: The UN and the Health of Nations, The Final Report of the

United States Commission on Improving the Effectiveness of the United Nations (Sept. 1993):

“In assessing the UN today, policy makers must apply perspective by reference to philosophic possibilities as well as historical experience. Whether peoples and nation states can ever come to have confidence in the UN and the international system it has come to signify depends in the final measure on assessments, not only of power relations, but also of human nature.

Only an optimistic assessment of human nature makes the prospect of greater world law and order imaginable. For philosophers like Hobbes, self centered man cannot put himself in the shoes of others; he cannot find his way out of the jungle where life is nasty, brutish and short, because he has no capacity for mutual accommodation. For Marx, malleable man, the tool of determinist forces, needs to be controlled; he could never take responsibility for forging his own destiny. For Locke and his philosophical stepson, Jefferson, man’s fate can be viewed more optimistically. Individuals are not only presumed to be born with rights no legitimate state can take away, but with a rational nature capable of developing institutional arrangements to protect and preserve those rights.

For the world to cope with old problems of war and new problems of arms control and environmental poisoning, the optimist assumption must hold: that just as man’s propensity to maximize self interest makes the establishment of civil society a survivalist imperative, so man’s capacity for compromise, for reasoned give and take, makes a civilized community possible... Never in the course of human events has it been more important for individuals in public life to appeal to the highest rather than the lowest instincts of the body politic... The stakes are too high.”

There are two dynamics at work on the planet. One is based on fear and the apprehensive of scarcity. It is that attitude, which constitutes a failure of faith that brings about policies in which multilateral cooperation is inconceivable and the pure quest for political, economic and military dominance is asserted as normal. It is an attitude incompatible with what is most precious to us - our humanity. In the nuclear age it is a lethal attitude.

In all of the natural creation we can observe the intricate interplay of the delicate balances of life acting in harmonious patterns which stun the mind in their complexity and beauty. Should not the human community recognize its own exalted potential? Is not this realization a matter of survival in this age? Banding together with solid ties of family and community, humans throughout history have demonstrated cooperative and organizational abilities and

capacities for caring. Upon reflection we can each discover that the concerns we feel for others are not driven by self-interest or external authority. They arise from the very core of our being and make us human.

The Persian poet, Saadi, of the 13th century sang;

*“The human family is one body with many parts.
Creations arising from one unseen essence.
Any harm to any part summons an awakening
A dis-ease and a healing response from all parts.
You who fail to feel the pain of others cannot be called truly human.”*

When we determinedly create institutional arrangements and legal order based on our highest values humanity flourishes. Are the countries with the best or worst human rights policies the most stable?

TIME TO CHANGE

When the principle of reciprocity is brazenly abrogated, instability ensues. Several modern states sincerely believe that this principle can be ignored and security obtained by the threat of massive destruction. The Canberra Commission highlighted the impracticality of this posture: “Nuclear weapons are held by a handful of states which insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, and yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable; it cannot be sustained. The possession of nuclear weapons by any state is a constant stimulus to other states to acquire them.”

Cooperation strengthens the well being of all. States must begin to practice this attitude in security matters. Maintenance of the implicit threat posed by the horrific destructive power of nuclear arsenals is incompatible with the cooperative environment needed for our increasingly interdependent world safe passage through the 21st century. It is time to move on.

The Cold War was characterized by a cycle of fear wherein armaments spread insecurity and insecurity bred more armaments. The nuclear arsenals are the most destructive outcome of this paradigm. By cooperatively addressing the crisis identified by the World Summits of the 1990s we can hope to create a new cycle wherein trust, confidence and cooperation can reinforce disarmament which, of course, in turns, strengthens trust, confidence, and cooperation. That process of cooperation is multilateralism.

The World Summits of the 1990s, which addressed environmental protection, sustainable development, the gross disparities of wealth, human

rights, protection of children, gender equity, overpopulation and human settlements set forth an integrated human security agenda which requires multilateral cooperation in order to be fulfilled.

It is the cooperative application of our highest values that will help develop ethically, spiritually and ecologically sensitive individuals able to form the basis of communities with the ability to direct the awesome powers that science, technology and modern social organization provide.

ICONS

We are given choices and in this day and age they could not be clearer. There are two icons that our grandparents didn't have. An icon is a picture of something greater than the picture or symbol itself. It's like a window revealing greater meaning. One icon is the mushroom cloud. It simply did not exist as a meaningful image for our grandparents. The destructive, horrific vision that cloud awakens in our hearts is one icon of human creativity of our time.

The other icon is the picture of the planet Earth from outer space. Our grandparents did not have that vision because human ingenuity had not allowed us to step outside the stratosphere and take that photograph. Who has not been moved by that majestic photograph of this mysterious blue marble? It lets us see a living miracle without borders in which all of the saints and all of the sinners, all of the nations and all of the dramas of history, all of the small dramas of our lives and all of the vanities and all of the greatness of humanity have taken their places and played out their dreams and moved on. I believe it is sacred. Surely no state could create this. Without the photograph, without the icon, none of us could envision that vision. That icon is a gift to remind us as surely as the mushroom cloud is a gift to warn us.

It shows us Earth as an interrelated organic whole, a single globe of remarkable beauty and unity, a concrete symbol of the emergence of global cooperation.

We are the first generation that must choose whether life will continue. This living sphere may be the only such place in the entire infinite universe where this gift of life, this gift to love, exists. We surely do not have the right to place it at risk through our collective ingenuity and in the service of something we have created. We can, we should and we must do better. For the sake of our children and that wondrous living mystery called Earth, let us do better.

Endnote:

¹ *Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." Udana-Varga, 5:18; Christianity: "All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them." Matthew 7:12; Confucianism: "Do not unto others what you would not have them do unto you." Analects 15:23; Hinduism: "This is the sum of duty: do not unto others which would cause you pain if done to you." Mahabharata 5:1517; Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself." Hadith; Jainism: "In happiness and suffering, in joy and grief, we should regard all creatures as we regard our own self." Lord Mahavir 24th Tirthankara; Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow man. That is the law; all the rest is commentary." Talmud, Shabbat 31a; Zoroastrianism: "That nature only is good when it shall not do unto another whatsoever is not good for its own self." Dadistan-I-Dinik, 94:5.*

*Respectfully,
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