

**THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF WORLD CULTURE**

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Transaction No. 100

**HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT**

*by*

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## FOREWORD

Mr. M. V. Rajashekar, Executive Trustee and Co-ordinator, Asian Institute for Rural Development, Bangalore, belongs to a laudable group of social workers committed to the growth and development of those sections of our community who, unfortunately, are still very disadvantageously placed in life. He is also the current Chair-person of ANGOC (Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development) located in Manila in the Philippines.

On 30th November, 1999, Mr. Rajashekar delivered, under the auspices of the Institute, this year's Bill Davinson Memorial Lecture. In his speech on "Holistic Development", he has rightly stressed that the concept of increase in the GDP Growth Rate would be inadequate unless dovetailed with cultural development, based on the value system prevailing in the community. Few will disagree with his observation : "Not lop-sided growth, but total and over-all development must be our aim."

We are issuing the script of Mr. Rajashekar's Bill Davinson Memorial Lecture as Transaction of the Institute for securing wider dissemination among those interested in development work.

We are once again thankful to MYRADA for meeting the cost of issuing this Transaction.

Bangalore  
3 January 2000

K.R. Ramachandran  
President, IIRC

**Bill Davinson Memorial Lecture on**  
**"HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT"**

delivered by:

M.V. Rajashekharan, Executive Trustee & Coordinator, Asian  
Institute for Rural Development, Basavanagudi, Bangalore

at:

The Indian Institute of World Culture, Bangalore  
on November 30,1999

I am indeed very happy to have been invited by the Indian institute of World Culture, Bangalore, to deliver this lecture on "Holistic Development" in memory of Mr. Bill Davinson, who was one of the Founder Members of MYRADA in 1968 and also its first Executive Director. He was a highly committed development leader who provided leadership both in the field of Resettlement of Tibetan Refugees in India, and in a number of development projects to improve the quality of life of the rural poor in Karnataka and other Indian States. I had the privilege of working with him as the first Chairperson of MYRADA.

Mr. Bill Davinson had commitment and dedication to development. He was very articulate. His clarity and perseverance in achieving the objectives set before him were commendable. It was during his time, MYRADA was able to achieve great strides in fulfilling the twin objectives of Tibetan Refugee Settlement in India, particularly in Karnataka, as well as in helping the rural poor around the villages where the Resettlement of Tibetan Refugees took place.

After achieving great success in his endeavour in Karnataka, he initiated similar development programmes in Tamil Nadu for the Refugees from Sri Lanka. He also initiated some development programmes in some of the North-Eastern States to help the rural poor, specially in the State of Meghalaya.

India has abundant natural resources both material and human. We have a culture which goes back to at least recorded history of 5000 years. But we are facing multi-dimensional crisis from low growth rate, inter-linked with poverty. This crisis cannot be solved individually or in an isolated way. The crisis has to be dealt with collectively and in a holistic manner.

In India, the development work for rural poor goes back to pre-Independence time. It was started by great visionaries and inspiring leaders of this country like Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji had always spoken about total development. He spoke about rural upliftment. He spoke about "Village Republics" involving the people in decision making process. Gandhiji always felt that the foremost duty of Independent India was to assure everyone who lives in a hut in village or in urban centre, basic necessities for sustenance for his/her livelihood. Gandhiji said : "Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man you may have seen and ask yourself whether the step you contemplate is going to be any use to him. Will he gain anything by it ? Will it help him gain control over his own life or destiny ? In other words, will it lead to freedom for the hungry and the spiritually starving millions?"

In the present global scenario, when Information Technology and Economic Reforms are sweeping countries all over the world, India stands out as an outstanding nation in offering lessons to the developing countries to follow in the field of Development. Today, we

are on the threshold of the next millenium. Though we have made great strides in the field of Development in spheres like Industry, Agriculture, Irrigation etc., we have not made enough advance in Education, Health & Sanitation, provision of good potable drinking water, and in meeting the needs and aspirations of vast majority of poor people. In spite of Planned Development in India after Independence, more than 40 percent of our population lives below the poverty line. According to the recent statistics of the Planning Commission, out of this 40 per cent population, about 20 per cent still live in a situation of utter poverty and hunger.

When we talk about Holistic Development, we have to identify a number of issues which are afflicting this great country, such as population growth, unemployment, inadequate educational facilities, health care, sanitation, potable drinking water supply and equitable distribution of resources. Perhaps, as you are aware, one of the major problems of this country, is the rapid population growth. In 1998, the India's population was 970 million. This is equal to 15 per cent of the World's population occupied by 2.5 per cent of the total land area in the world. Just before Independence, India's population was 300 million. This included both Pakistan and Bangladesh. As we are entering the next millennium, our population is going to be one billion. Therefore, sustained and committed efforts have to be made by the leadership of this country, not only to reduce the rate of population growth, but also to find employment and livelihood opportunities for the millions of poor people who live below the poverty line. Efforts have also to be made to produce enough food for providing food security not only to the rural poor, but also to the urban poor, apart from meeting the general demand of food requirement of the entire population.

Today in India, the availability of land for food production is decreasing, because of various factors such as productive land being lost for infrastructural development such as roads, buildings, establishment of industrial complexes, housing and other facilities. Due to environmental degradation, water is becoming more and more scarce. This is specially so in the case of potable drinking water which has to cope up with the demands of the growing millions. Our country has to make all efforts to increase the unit production from land that we have. According to statistics, we have little over 140 million hectares of arable land, producing nearly 200 million tonnes of foodgrains. China, which has more or less 140 million hectares of arable land, is today producing more than 440 million tonnes of foodgrains. Therefore, India has to make every effort to increase the unit of food production in every inch of arable land. It should also stop the degradation which is growing at a fast rate due to neglect in the field of environment.

It is said that building a society is not like building a factory or a workshop. It requires men and women of commitment and dedication. It calls for leadership not only by the Government and voluntary institutions, but also by individuals like Mr. Bill Davinson.

Any living being needs certain natural environmental facilities to be satisfied for survival. It includes soil with microbes, and bacteria; use of more chemicals and pesticides degrades the soil and kills the bacteria which are so essential for the life-system of the soil. Therefore, every effort has to be made to stop the damage already done which is occurring due to environmental degradation and unfriendly development work which has been initiated in the name of development. One has to give utmost attention to protect the livelihood system particularly when we are seeing around degradation which is taking place in our environment. Therefore, when we talk of Holistic Development, the existing life-style of the people has to be changed and it should move towards sustainable livelihood to build a life style free from hunger and poverty, taking care of the basic needs of the people such as

having clean environment, adequate supply of potable drinking water and balanced diet both for the children and adults providing needed calories and protein, so that they contribute to productive life. Other essentials include enough clothing, shelter for the family to live, health & sanitation, and basic energy needs for preparation of food and lighting. Also there should be at least minimal infrastructural facilities for linking villages to towns and markets, educational facilities for improving intellectual capacity and for taking care of the spiritual and cultural needs. Improving spiritual and cultural needs of the people does not require massive financial investments. But it requires a change in personal mind set and attitude towards fuller and holistic life.

Our natural resources like forest, soil, water resources, mangroves which are providing life sustenance, are depleting, causing great concern to the Planners. Therefore, the present system of growth-oriented economy at the cost of human development needs to be drastically revised. This system is not congenial to a country like India, which has its own heritage of culture, and which has sustained for centuries based on holistic approach to life. This approach includes spiritual, material as well as physical growth of human personality. According to a recent Human Development Report brought out by the UNICEF, India with all its skills in planned development, still suffers from want of potable drinking water, health care, education, housing, clothing and inadequacy of food.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, provide an opportunity for the Local Self-Governments to realise the dream of "Gram Swaraj" propagated by the Father of the Nation. Gandhiji emphasised that it is only through Gram Swaraj, we could remove most of the impediments and obstacles to planned development. One also needs to give more attention to the value of such life-style in promoting human development through traditional values and traditional cultural practices. Therefore, our great sages, saints and seers have always advised us to avoid self-indulgence and extreme self-mortification. Today, because of the extravagant life-style, limited resources are being squandered to satisfy a greedy few, at the cost of providing livelihood to vast majority of people who are in dire need of resources which sustain them with livelihood.

In India, millions of children including new born babies are suffering from malnutrition and blindness. Due to shortage of nutritious food, millions of children's brains are affected, apart from their natural growth. This is going to make them unproductive in their participation in the country's development - oriented programmes, be it industry or agriculture or science & technology, or any other activity including Government service.

In recent times, there has been increasing social tension because of caste, creed and cross-border disputes based either on geographical boundaries, or natural resources such as river water sharing. We are reaching a stage, where enforcement of Rule of Law has become increasingly difficult, with the result, para-military and police forces are being increased to maintain internal security and provide protection to the life of the people.

There have been communal tensions all over the country in recent months. Unless this malaise is contained, it may harm the very fabric of our society which is known for its tolerance and peaceful living for centuries and generations in the past.

The economic concept of increase in the GDP Growth Rate and the parameters which have been set to measure industrial and agricultural growth at the cost of human development, is causing great concern not only to the Planners, but also to the political leaders and the civil society.

Millions of young people are unemployed today and their number is increasing every

year, with the result, very soon we are likely to face a very explosive situation in the country from the unemployed youth, it may explode at any point of time leading to heavy toll, resulting in destruction and damage. Though India has got one of the largest pools of scientific and technical manpower, it is still unable to find concrete solutions to eradicate poverty and hunger. Though we have made significant break through in terms of defence preparedness, almost equal to developed countries in the manufacture of defence equipments like ballistic missiles, other weapons of mass destruction like nuclear devices, we have yet to provide basic necessities of life sustenance to millions of poor.

Holistic Development in India has to be rooted in its history and culture, based on its value system, looking forward with vision, protecting at the same time the old values which have sustained human development in this country for centuries.

Therefore, let us dedicate ourselves to build a society which is free from fear, poverty and hunger, based on equity for sustenance of livelihood with vision, which lays stress on the concept of caring and sharing. So, I strongly feel that time has come now to commit and dedicate ourselves to a Holistic approach to Development which takes care of the social, political, economic and spiritual development of human personality.

It is India that has given the concept of "Sarve Janaha Sukhino Bavanthu" and "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" to the world which is struggling hard to find its feet on the ground in spite of making gigantic strides in the field of Science & Technology and now in Information Technology.

Let us dedicate ourselves and take a pledge to rebuild a new society based on equity, justice, human and spiritual values free from hunger and fear. Not lop-sided growth, but total and over-all development must be our aim.

I would like to close my brief talk with a quotation from one of our greatest poets and Nobel Laureate, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore :

"I felt I was poor, and from door to door went with my hunger. The more they gave me from their careless abundance, the more I became aware of my beggar's bowl.

Till one morning I awoke from my sleep at the sudden opening of my door, and you came and asked for alms, in despair, I broke the lid of my chest open and was startled into finding my own wealth."

I thank you for the opportunity provided to me to share my thoughts with you.