

*Asia-Arab Inter-regional Philosophical Dialogues:
Philosophy and the Crisis of Civilization*

**Thursday, 28th May
9:00-12:00**

**Session 1:
Principles and Methods for Inter-regional
Dialogue**

**UNESCO Asia-Arab
Inter-regional
Philosophical
Dialogues
Conference:
Philosophy and the
Crisis of Civilization**

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**Imperial Tara Hotel,
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Abstract Book

*Guidelines for Philosophical Understanding in
the Different Cultural Traditions*

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The study of philosophy in Indian Universities and colleges has dwindled over the years after independence like other subjects under the Humanities. This is mainly because philosophy does not lead to any specialized profession (except the teaching of philosophy), though it could lead, like any other subject, to any general administrative job. At the same time, we find society waking up to a sense of values at the sight of increasing impropriety among individuals. We hear of demands for value-based social activities like politics, economic management, education, medicine, and so on. It is little realized that the special study of values belongs to the realm of philosophy.

Philosophy has three broad areas of inquiry – metaphysics, epistemology, and philosophy of values. Metaphysics is inquiry into the nature and scope of reality. Epistemology is inquiry into the methods of knowing about reality. And philosophy of values is inquiry into the goals of human life. The study of values is closely related to metaphysics. A value is anything which one considers to be valuable, worthy of pursuit. The conception of values in schools depends on its conception of reality. For example, materialism has no place for salvation in its scheme of values, but a school that recognizes the soul naturally admits of the idea of salvation. Just as one thinks of reality, so does one conceive of values.

Philosophers differ in the solutions they offer to questions in all the three areas. Which solutions are to be accepted is a matter of choice for individuals. In any case, the general impact of philosophy on the pursuer is a widening of his perspective. So far as values are concerned, one gets to compare the different types of values and assess their relative importance. There are materials values, cultural values, and spiritual

values. Are all these of the same importance? Can we afford to pursue one type of values in disregard to other types? Such an enlargement of perspective would make our judgments safer. In the present period of rapid material development, the philosophical question facing society is the moral impact of development on the character and well-being of human society, on the lives of other organisms, and even on the security of inanimate nature. Our moral circle is so wide, and we cannot afford to be indifferent to it.

There is a need for understanding philosophy in the context of global problems. No person is an island. Humans are social beings. Concern for others and care of building up the community and peaceful co-existence and peace and harmony are the central aim philosophy and religion. This is the ideal of lokasangraha. This means that people in different religions and philosophical thoughts have not mutually exclusive, but different and complementary roles and talents. The unity of the community depends on the focusing and interaction of the various roles and functions of the persons making up the community.

What should be the response of philosophy to the problems that are faced to day? The great religions of the world always retain a level of myth and ritual. Often there is a tension between the mythic, ritualistic archaic substratum, which is based on faith on the one hand and logical reasoning on the other. Starting from the Greek philosophy, we see the tension between mythos and logos. It was heightened with the development of modern science and the philosophy of Enlightenment. Philosophy in the West during the last century, due to the influence of Logical Positivists and later by Russell and (early) Wittgenstein, approached the metaphysical issues and problems to "dissolve" them and rejected the role of revelation and faith in the philosophical debates and discussions.

India is justly proud of its long tradition or religious tolerance from Asoka, through Akbar, to contemporary ideals of a secular democracy. What has acted as a unifying force contributing to the evolution of Indian culture is the spirit of tolerance. In the contemporary political discourse, secularism occupies a central stage in intellectual discussion. Philosophers, historians, socialists, jurists, political scientists -- all give variant interpretations to the term "secularism".

Secularism is, an alien idea envisaging separation of the Church and the State. But in the Indian context, the term acquires some other meaning quite different from that of the original one. Our architects of the constitution, namely, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru used the same word "secular" as long as it suited their temperament of keeping religion away from politics. But reality demands a new conceptualization, if at all the word was to be so habitually used. At the political level, the idea of "secular" has been a prisoner of perceptual distortion and semantic overtones to the extent that the very meaning and content of this term has been lost. Equal treatment of all religious communities by the State, Sarva-dharma-samabhava is the central idea of Indian secularism. The Indian constitution articles 15, 16 and 23 specifically provide non-discrimination as the essence of secularism. But what is happening in reality is something different.

What do these different emerging frameworks signify? They explain that there is a need for the spirit of tolerance, catholicity of outlook, respect for each other's faith and willingness to abide by rules of self-discipline. This has to be both at individual as well as group level. It should be understood that different religious communities are all part of one nation is not its strength and glory, and should not, in any way, detract from national unity. It would be a tragedy if for lack of tolerance and deviance from the essential of strength and glory into a bane of weakness.

In the broad context, there are some fundamental concepts that we must accept, if philosophy and religion are not to become increasingly peripheral to the vast majority of human beings but, on the contrary, develop into a dynamic force for a new integration. The first is the concept of the unity of the human race. The second concept of vasudhiva kutumbakam (the world as a family) is now becoming a reality. The second concept is the divinity of man. The third is the essential unity of all religions. Finally there is the reconstruction of society. It is our duty to work for the betterment of society. We must realize that as long as millions in the world go without adequate food and clothing, shelter and education, our theoretical postulations

regarding the divinity of humans have little relevance.

Philosophy consists of reflection on human experience in relation to each others. But a reflection on one's experience is based on what type of philosophy one is subscribing to. By "type of philosophy", we mean whether one is rooted in one's own tradition or rooted in "borrowed tradition" of the west. If a person develops their reflection on a borrowed tradition, then one must also see how far this will help. K. Satchidananda Murty in his book, *Philosophy in India*, argues that there were three different conceptions of philosophy prevailed in India at different periods. (i) Philosophy as the rational, critical and illuminating review of the contents of theology, economics and political science and also as the right instrument and foundation of all action and duty, which helps one to achieve intellectual balance, (ii) Philosophy as a system of ideas comprising epistemology, metaphysics and ethics, and (iii) Philosophy as the intuitive network of views regarding man, his nature and destiny, nature and the Ultimate Reality or God (popular philosophy). Of these, the second conception is found in Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit sources and the third is expressed in other Indian languages. Philosophers in India are concerned with all the three conceptions of philosophy though philosophers choose their conceptions based on their interest. But a total understanding of Indian philosophy becomes complete only through the understanding of all three conceptions of philosophy taken together.

***Toward Fusing the Philosophy of Science with
Social Space to Bring Asian-Arab Societies
Closer in the Early 21st Century***
- **Osama Rajkhan**

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This paper suggests that if coming closer is important for their mutual economic prosperity, then it may be helpful for Asian-Arab philosophical dialogues to exchange on how to prepare both societies to accept each other more. By doing so, philosophy becomes continuous with high and ordinary efforts to bring these two regions together. One approach is to promote

more convergence of values in terms of scientific knowledge to better bridge their unique "philosophies of life" and harmonize contradictory perceptions of one another. The assumption here is that scientific tuning of varying positions that inform on how the world works can clarify *fuzzy* perceptions. In doing so, philosophers can deliberate on supplementing the large body of information in both regions with the knowledge and evidence of scientific communities, hitherto the domain of the State and the Private sectors, but not the sector of Citizens. No two cultures are exactly alike yet many would consider historically located similarities, like the lingering shadow of colonial experiences, a dialogue-aiding feature common to both.

Moreover, if Anglophonic "instrumentalism", Continental "naturalistic ambition", and the emerging *international philosophy* are seen as boxes of tools, these can help philosophers in formulating particular yet more positive answers to their societies' paradoxical problems; for example those arising from the impact of sickness, care, migration, building knowledge societies, innovation and climate change. In taking modern knowledge to the public it may be worthwhile to discern how these advances fit with the social epistemology of existing norms, norms that invite both respect and skepticism in the ICT age. We can thus identify epistemic norms to weigh and square against the desired benefits of accommodating what is valuable science in the social domain, such that linked to life extension, lessening physically exhausting and emotionally dilapidating ways, and improving the environment when applied effectively.

***Modernization and Cultural Identity in East
Asia***

- **Insuk Cha,**
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As all cultures and civilizations share a history of mutual borrowing as well as accommodation and assimilation of one another's ideas, beliefs and customs, most metropolitan areas of the major new industrial

societies in East Asia have now moved into the information technologies of cyber-age, thus creating a new class of citizens, dubbed “netizens.” Netizens are those in the Internet’s world of trading and gathering who spend their days and nights in cyber-pace, communicating in cyber-time with other netizens from around the world. Here arises the question: What are consequences of operating and living in a world devoid of nature, where time and space take on different realities, and problems are those that are solved through finding the right information, where not only knowledge but also the very act of knowing, are reduced to the possession of information? First of all, it seems necessary to point out that what the computer screen presents becomes the only reality one knows and is inclined to perceive as real. This “totalitarian” tendency to be found in the cyber-age shows that those newly industrializing societies would eventually pass through a critical juncture in their path toward modernity.

Open Universalism and the Principle of Charity
- **Luca Scarantino**

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At the end of the paper presented in 2008 at the Hiroshima AAPD meeting, we referred to generosity as a major epistemic feature in the way of constructing an intercultural dialogue. We will develop and precise some aspect of this approach by discussing Quine-Davidson’s principle of charity. We will discuss the role this principle can play to build a non-dogmatic philosophical universalism. To do so, we will criticize the logical conception of this principle and try to define what a wider than logical scope of the principle might be. To this effect, we will borrow some key ideas developed by Alfred Schutz in his classical essay “*The Stranger*”.

The Transformation of the idea of god(s) through time: Joseph Campbell’s mythological approach

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The problem of the “idea of a god(s)” is one of the main issues in philosophy of religion. The idea of god(s) has been defined and explained in various ways and approaches. Even the numbers of gods could be a huge concern and can cause a division among religion and belief systems. So this paper will discuss the problem of the existence of a god(s) as an idea that transformed through time and human history.

With the hypothesis that “idea of god(s)” has been experienced in human history and affected the way of living and human society, the researcher would like to propose a thesis statement as “the idea of god(s)” has been experienced in the past and that same idea has been transformed and conveyed through human history till present period in various concepts and understandings which significantly showed in mythology. So, the researcher will explore and focus myths that related to the idea of god(s) which are the expression of human perception and understanding of the transcendental idea which gradually called “god(s)”.

In order to accomplish the focus on exploring the transformation of the idea of god(s) through time, the researcher will use the mythological approach by Joseph Campbell to demonstrate that the idea of god(s) has transformed through time, the researcher would like to use the historical approach according to Armstrong (2005) presents in her comprehensive account on “*A short History of Myth.*” By doing so, it will give us a clear picture of the development of the idea of god through time.

The researcher believe that through exploring the common theme of the idea of god(s) in myths will increase the awareness of this single idea in human history and the possibility for religious dialogue and mutual understanding among theistic belief system.

*Meta Narrative versus Indigenous Narrative:
the Importance of Dialogue*

- **Azizan Baharuddin**

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In parts of the Asian and Arab world, indigenous (eg: the Islam and the autochthonous) worldviews, especially as they pertain to the meaning of concepts and relativeness or otherwise of values, are deemed as not having a place in the world or in critical discourses shaping peoples' lives globally. This creates a feeling of distrust towards what are perceived as the dominant groups/ systems (as exemplified in the Instruments of international politics, trade, education, entertainment etc) and those who are looked upon as possessing hegemony. The presentation tries to elaborate this phenomenon first of all. An example of how and Indigenous Narrative might operate (The Malay-Muslims of Malaysia) is given as a case study of how Civilisational Dialogue could take place between the meta and indigenous narratives.

Translation as a Phenomenon of Intercultural Dialogue

- **Aktolkyn Kulsariyeva,**

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The main aim of the paper is to examine the cultural basis of translation (interpretation) as a phenomenon of intercultural dialogue. The deep cultural analysis of interpretation as a phenomenon of intercultural dialogue, and interpretation as a civilization reality, are situated on the borders of two or more cultural-linguistic worlds. Interpretation is the transformation from one discourse to another. Determination of interpretation as phenomenon of civilization based on the considering the civilization as undeniable stage of dialogical development of culture in the conditions of qualitative changing and complicated of main means of communication.

I think real intercultural dialogue led to dialogue of worldview, dialogue of languages. Conceptual foundations are built on mental

conceptions which are grounded in a mental framework, called "worldview". We shall define worldview as the conceptual totality within which the mind operates, and without which it cannot function at all. Therefore, it is mental framework with the totality of concepts and mental attitude developed by the individual throughout his life, that we call "worldview". Since every related concept and event is evaluated within a certain worldview before a decision is taken to perform the action, it must be the prior most condition of any action.

Linguistic-cultural analysis of various philosophical, linguistic theories reveals the interpretation essence of the language, as language constantly transform what was seen, was heard, was felt by human into sign system, consequently, interpretation in macro context is a natural skill of human as well as language. Language and culture enrich and develop by the interaction between each other. Language has the key role to understand the greatness of that culture as well as interpretation has the important influence to intercultural dialogue.

A Study of Buddhist site of Taxila; The Meeting Point of Arab and South Asia Culture

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Taxila is situated about 32 km north west of Islamabad. It is bounded by the Muree Hills running from North to South. It was an outstanding city on the South-Eastern fringe of the celebrated Gandhara region and mentioned in almost all the important literary and historical sources. The remains from Saraikhola and Hathiál remains have indicated that the history of Taxila is about 5000 years old.

Hathiál, Bhirh Mound, Sirkup and Sirsukh are four fortified sites in Taxila. Numerous Buddhist monuments have been found all over the valley. Hathiál and Bhirh Mound are pre-Buddhist sites. Sirkup replaced Bhirh Mound as the main settlement of the city around the 2nd century B.C.E. It continued to be in occupation under the Sakas, Parthians and early Kusanas. In Parthian times during the 1st century B.C.E. there was a south ward extension of the settlement. It has been proposed that this change

was brought by military rather than by civic authorities. An attempt has been made in this paper to examine this hypothesis.

13:00-15:00

Session 2:

Challenges of globalization to philosophy and democracy

Three Ways of Conceptualizing the Global: The Universal, the Holistic, and the Macrocsmic
- Philip Cam

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Globalization is often seen as a relatively recent economic process, involving such things as the growth of multinational companies, the increasing interdependence of the world's financial systems, and the progressive reduction of trade barriers. As is generally acknowledged, however, it can also be more broadly conceived as neither an entirely recent phenomenon nor one confined to the economic sphere. Something similar existed in the ancient empires, and by means of such things as ancient trade routes, and there is obviously a social dimension to globalization associated with such things as mass migration and cultural diffusion, as well as a political one instanced by the export of democracy and global responses to conflict around the world.

In this paper I wish to take an even broader view of the process known as globalization by turning to some notions that are cognate to the global—the universal, the holistic, and the macrocosmic. Each of these notions occupies a significant place in the history of philosophy, and each implies one or more contrasts: the universal contrasting with the particular; the holistic with the individualistic or reductive; and the macrocosmic with the microcosmic. By exploring something of the history of these notions I hope to show that the history of ideas has something to teach us about how to conceive of globalization, as well as helping us to see it as related to phenomena that are common in human affairs. Given this, intellectual history also may

have something to teach us about both the promise of globalization and its dangers.

Between Cultural Exchanges and Globalization: a Reading of Islamic Mirrors for Princes.

- Syrine Snoussi

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The tradition of the Mirrors for Princes is universalistic given imperialism is an antic and holistic phenomenon. Mirrors for Princes appeared as a tradition in the Arabic empire in the context of a great movement of translation. It is the result of important cultural exchanges and it is related to the constitution of an empire.

Globalization is the name of the current internationalisation of culture under the spread of the intensification of the economical exchanges. The result, as consequences or reactions, of the globalization in the Muslim societies, is the constitution of a frequent reference to an essence of Islam, as a transnational community with its particular political and religious essence. We would question this reference to a political and religious essence of Islam in the first Ages taking the tradition of the arts of government as a mirror of these first ages, hoping to contribute to the deconstruction of this ...confronting modern globalization with ancient internationalization.

Mirrors for princes appeared in the Arabic empire as a result of an important cultural exchange. Globalization can define the modern internationalisation of culture under the spread of the intensification of the economical exchanges. Cosmopolitanism can be the link between the two periods. But, the relation is redoubled by the contemporary Islamic reference to a trans-national community with its particular reference to a political and religious essence of the First Islam. One of the challenges of philosophy is to investigate on the genesis of this conception.

The reference to a transnational Islamic community is one of the challenges of democracy. The image of this transnational community seems to be a consequence of

globalization. This imaginary community constantly refers to a Golden Age and invokes a religious essence of the Islamic policy. One task of philosophy is to investigate the genesis of this conception. One of the major interests of the *Mirrors for Princes*, which appeared as a result of an important cultural exchange in the 7th century, is to shed a different light on the reality of the political practice of the first ages.

The Philosophy of Civil Consciousness

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The concept of this article is in the re-comprehension of philosophy valuables as a means of cultural education, upbringing and formation of contemporary humanity. In the 21st century the main problem is: “what the human is and is not?”. Our world suffers from large-scale collapse violence and terror. Conflicts happen not only on a local level but within whole civilizations. However, we deny the concept of American scientist Samuel P. Huntington about collision of civilizations that it proves its conformation in reality. In conditions of transformation of existence and consciousness of majority of people the problem of safety of conscious and humane man.

The contemporary world is not a dynamically developing system only, but it is a world of polylogue and polylingual cultures also. Humanity proceeds along the path of broadening the correlation and interdependence of different states and nations, which finds its reflection in rapid growth of cultural exchange and direct contact between national institutes, social groups, public movements and separate individuals of different states and nations. The global world speaks different languages and the ambivalent essence of globalization concludes the fact that uniting different cultures it at the same time activates self-identification processes of keeping the distinctive culture and national language.

Certainly, the peculiarity of each culture is determined by language, customs, traditions and values, but on the other-hand the level of civility and maturity of cultural community depends on

the extent of openness, inter-operability, ability for realization and for establishing dialogue.

Under conditions of global processes the philosophy as World outlook (*Weltanschauung*) projects as the defense mechanism (cultural defense) to relationships to others. Philosophical wisdom gives three blessings – to correctly think, to correctly speak, to correctly behave. The challenge of civilization demands the philosophical comprehension of existence, and philosophical wisdom.

Our contemporary consciousness produces negative reactions, and only philosophy, as love of wisdom, can “humanize” human existence, consciousness, attach human character to globalization, and establish in people faith and social optimism.

Overlapping Consensus, ijma', shura : Towards a Global Concept of Democracy

- Soumaya Mestiri

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My aim is to try to reconcile western conceptions of justice and democracy with typical southern concerns (especially Arabic and Asian ones) on such matters. Whereas it was hardly possible to think about such a questioning thirty years ago, the global context in which we live today makes it, at least, worth to address: the fluidity of the word, that is to say, its porous nature, requires, indeed, to build bridges between faraway (and perhaps) antagonistic thoughts and traditions.

Put in a nutshell, the purpose here is to wonder whether the theory of justice as fairness, as promoted by the American philosopher John Rawls, has something to say to Southern people. It seems that the idea of an overlapping consensus — according to which it is possible for persons having reasonable disagreements on metaphysical doctrines of the good life to share some political norms — is able to help us to make our way to a reconciliation between western modernity and eastern traditions.

Indeed, the notions of *ijma'* and *shura*, typical of the Arabic and Muslim tradition, can make us seize the possibility of “a common universality” where differences and particularities peacefully coexist. Naturally, such

an approach calls for an epistemological concern, that's to say the calling for an enlightening of the conditions under which this kind of compromise would become properly thinkable. This is what we will try to elucidate, especially through the works of Sen and Derrida.

***Justice and the Concept of Globalization,
North-South Dialogue***

- Ali Hussein al-Jabiri

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Today one can deal with the concept of Globalization only within the perspective of the Globalization motto, which is "Knowledge is the power" and through dialogue between the citizens of the North, which constitutes 10 per cent of the world's population and that of the South, which constitutes the remaining 90 per cent on the condition that dialogue should be based on the exchange of interests, expertise, ideas and benefits away from custody, hegemony and marginalization.

An objective view (a rational and critical view) by the thinker of the nature of relations among the population of our large village, the earth, in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st reveals harm inflicted on the countries and the people of the South, specially Arab and Asian countries caused by injustice in distributing wealth produced in the fields and mines of the South and by its poor people.

The achievement of justice indicates rationality, law and order that govern relations among people and countries in order to achieve a better world for millions of people based on equal living opportunities.

The achievement of justice indicates harmony between the needs of the people and their riches.

United Nations' documents indicate that the North gets 90 per cent of the wealth, leaving just 10 per cent for others, and in particular to the people of the south including Arab and Asian people. Therefore where is the desired justice that can mitigate reasons of conflict between the North and the South?

Furthermore, the well-known French thinker Roger Garodi talked about the imbalance of the

equation and the absence of justice between the north and the south from a civilized – geographical basis, despite the fact that the south is more productive Garodi says "Each citizen of the north consumes what is equal to 150 citizens from the south, therefore no wonder that the south becomes a hotbed of terrorist and vengeance attacks motivated by the feeling of injustice.

The concept of globalization and the technology revolution have achieved four benefits for the whole population of the world, namely: reduction of effort, cost, distance and time.

So, there is a gap on practical level among the population of the earth at a time where there is a dire need for the essence of justice and human dignity.

From a philosophical, rational and critical view we can say that there is an absence of social meaning of the wealth and benefit, a matter which needs a serious scientific, cultural, political and media effort from specialized agencies and organizations, international universities and civil society organizations to open dialogue between the South and the North to bridge the existing gap between developed world and the developing world.

This is the main issue that the people of the South and the philosophers should discuss with the prosperous people of the North in order to attain economic security, social peace and philosophical and religious dialogue which will help create a better future for the human beings and eliminate all the forms and justifications of terrorism. This is an important issue that makes it imperative on wise people to enlarge their address for the benefit of the whole people.

15:30-17:30

Session 3:

The roles of philosophy in war and peace

*Philosophical Dialogue on Peace among
Christians, Muslims and indigenous peoples in
Mindanao*

- **Zosimo E. Lee**

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The island of Mindanao, the second largest in the Philippines, has been in conflict since 1970 mainly propelled by a secessionist movement from the Muslims claiming their homeland. Since 1971 there have been two main armed insurrections by the Muslims; first led by the Moro National Liberation Front, that led to a peace agreement signed in 1996, and a second one led by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front that has been engaged in peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines since 1996 until 2008, where a memorandum of agreement was supposed to be signed but fell through. The root issue is tenure over land and resources, and the roots of historical injustice (the minoritization of the Muslims and indigenous peoples) go way back to the American regime and the policy of Filipino settlements. Presently, Muslims, Christians and indigenous peoples are using peace education and conflict transformation as a way of rebuilding communities affected by the conflict but also proposing new and alternative arrangements to tackle the root issues.

The philosophy of war in Islam

- **Makram Abbes**

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Since the events of September 11, 2001, war in Islam is often considered throughout religious definition which encloses it in the imagery of holy war, terrorism and violence. In this conference, we aim to underline the diversity of Islamic traditions on war, including legal approach on war, and the tradition of political science which is called "mirrors of princes". This approach reach to deconstruct notions like

"jihâd", "fitna", "dâr al-harb", and other fundamental terms which are currently put forward to discuss this issue.

*Is It Permitted to Me to Hope for a Peaceful
World?*

Naïma Hadj Abderrahmane

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Human beings are different from all other beings. They are different by language because they are fundamentally a being of relationships.

We live in a world of difference; and among the forms of multiplicity, there is the war that is a relationship between beings outside the totality." Currently, humanity saw war more than peace and years ahead will be more painful and harder. Therefore, it is time to ask some questions:

What is the origin of evil? Are humans inherently evil? Can I therefore feel entitled to expect a return to the well? Can I therefore feel entitled to expect a world of peace? What is the role of philosophy to establish peace in place of war?

*The Role of Philosophical Education in
Promoting Peace in Korea*

- **Jin Whan Park**

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After the cold war period, domestic social and political conflict problems have become the main social issues in Korea. Since the collapse of authoritarian government, authoritarian way of conflict resolution could not work. Educating peace became difficult and these difficulties increased by democratization. Confucianism teaches social conflict comes from lack of cultivating moral character and it can be solved by moral training. Marxism teaches social conflict is the moment of historical development and only class struggle could solve social conflict. Liberal democracy assumes individual selfish desire inevitably leads to social conflict.

What we learned from this experience was that we must cultivate building a culture of peace for complex democratic societies. What is the condition of peace culture? How can we

construct a culture of peace? Peace education must start from these philosophical questions. We need to inquire each group's ideological position and their assumptions. We also can practice community inquiry for conflict resolution. It belongs to philosophical approach. Philosophical approaches have opened a new horizon for promoting peace in Korea.

The Question of Violence in Buddhism

- Suwanna Satha-Ansary

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This paper outlines three major moments related to the question of violence in Buddhist philosophy and historical manifestations. The first moment is illustrated in Prince Siddhatta's decision to leave behind temporal power in quest for enlightenment. The second moment is indicated in the conversion to Buddhism by King Asoka after his engagement in bloody wars and later created a Buddhist empire of peace and religious tolerance.

The third moment is reflected in the long history of the patron-client relationship between Buddhism and the Thai state. This last moment will be the major focus of the paper, explicating the roles of Buddhism as a "national" ideology of the Thai state. It will be argued that Thai Buddhism as a state ideology has played a major role in defending peace and national identity while at the same time, justifying war, violence and limited religious tolerance. A major sermon on "national defense" by the most powerful Supreme Patriarch in Thai history will serve as a key focus of analysis, together with contemporary publications by a leading monk scholar in Thai Buddhism.

Education in Philosophy and its Role in Reducing Disputes and Violence

- Sakhan Khom, CAMBODIA

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Beginning in the 7th century B.C with Thales the first recorded philosopher, philosophy is considered one of the world's oldest subjects of study. From its first conception, philosophy

developed to encompass all fields of study and was generally referred to as the father of all sciences. However, from the 16th century physics followed by other subjects separated themselves from philosophy. This led philosophy to scale down its scope of study to focus mainly on metaphysics, logic, ethics and epistemology.

Although its subject areas have been reduced, philosophy still plays a very crucial role in helping us to address contemporary global and day to day issues. The realization of the limitation of science in responding to all human problems, specifically in the area of relationships, reinforces the significance of philosophy in the promotion of a good and meaningful life.

This presentation will demonstrate why philosophy as a subject should be studied by a wider range of people and how educating students in philosophy can contribute to the reduction of disputes and violence in the world today.

Friday, 29th May

9:00-12:00

Session 4: Human Dignity and Philosophy

Human Dignity, human rights and bioethics

- Ali Benmakhlouf

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The value of life in Asia and Pacific cultures

- Darryl Macer

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Bioethics is love of life, which implies life has a high value. What are the images of life among different persons. This paper will first discuss results of research looking at the descriptions of life among different persons in Asia and the Pacific. The paper will also examine the ways that life is valued in traditions in the region. The images of life are critical to

discussions of the concept of life, dignity of different organisms, and to questions over the use of life.

Several examples of the application of the agreed high value placed on life in different areas of bioethics will be given. Conclusions on the value of life and dignity are necessary to develop policy in all spheres of social governance that value the life of humans and other entities in the environment, and of ecosystems themselves.

Building Philosophy from the Ground

- **Rainier Ibana**

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Sources of Human Dignity

- **Soraj Hongladarom**

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This paper investigates the sources of human dignity that have been proposed in various religious and philosophical traditions. In the monotheistic tradition, the source is derived from the belief that human beings are "mirror images" of God. This has a number of profound implications. However, in a non-theistic tradition such as Buddhism, the source of human dignity stems from the belief that human beings are unique among all the sentient beings in that they alone are capable of "making a choice" -- either to go toward the supreme goal of Buddhahood, or otherwise. In this sense being a human offers a really unique opportunity, a rare freedom, to realize what is taken to be the Goal of existence.

These pre-modern sources of dignity has then been supplemented by the modern conception of human dignity derived from the capacity of humans to engage in reasoned activities. These include understanding, expressing oneself and engaging in argumentation and deliberation. Humans are alone among the animals to possess such an ability. This incurs a significant responsibility for human beings.

I will put these sources together in order to show that there are indeed deeper similarities and a common ground among them. A

consequence of this is that there can be a commonly accepted terrain where both the pre-modern and the modern conceptions can share their understandings of the sources of human dignity without having to get into conflicts with one another.

***Reclaiming and Championing Human Dignity
@ Anti-Globalization Protests? - Reositioning
New Advocacies for Economic, Social and
Cultural Rights in Global Crisis***

- **On-Kwok Lai**

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Thanks to recent global financial crisis, the profit-maximization *modus operandi* for capitalism is structurally collapsed, if not dead. Also humanist ideals for social development are being rediscovered, echoing the decade-long glocal callings from anti-globalization protests: transnational advocacies for human dignity are visibly influential, shaping the 2005 (21st March) United Nations' calling for *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights For All*.

This presentation attempts to draw the contours of human dignity in a globalizing world, with an examination on the UN sponsored human rights regime in general, the advocacies for Economic, Social and Cultural (ESC) Rights in particular, the recent anti-globalization protests organized by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), onto the landscape of the globalization project as championed by international financial institutions (IFIs), IMF, World Bank and WTO alike.

The paper starts with the dynamics and contradictions of the globalization project, threatening ESC rights; followed by a discussion of human rights movement within a wider context of global new social movements in Part 2. Part 3 discusses new strategies and critical engagements of NGOs, articulating new values and norms for a new modernity. The paper ends with critical remarks on global calling and local struggles for human rights – a proxy for human dignity in a peculiar modern epoch.

Globalization Can Solve Refugee-problem of Democracies

- Jitendra Nath Sarker

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The refugee-problem is one of the burning problems of many democratic nation-states. The aim of this paper is to uphold the view that this problem, in fact, is being created in and by nation-states themselves. Besides natural calamities, deceptive 'nationalism' and 'majority rule' in the name of democracy are mainly responsible for giving birth to this problem and democracy itself faces it. To solve the problem we need either to reform democracy or to welcome globalization in the wide sense of the term.

Democracy as it is being practiced all over the world is generally understood as nothing other than majority rule. It is being misinterpreted and misused to satisfy selfish desire and narrow interest of the powerful majority of nation-states. Majority rule is not only different from self-government, rather repugnant to it as well. It goes against the democratic principle of popular sovereignty. Moreover, the concept of nationality is deceptive, because in most cases it is determined according to the language, religion and racial culture of the majority. Traditional party-based election is an evil contrivance to recommend and thereby to establish numerical majority rule that deprives the democratic rights of tribal, racial, religious or linguistic minorities of nation-states.

Deceptive nationality as an inevitable consequence of wrong practice of democracy gives birth to social turmoil, civil-war and to the war of liberation. Those who have to suffer the bitter experience of defeat, they either get well prepared for further fight or leave their country for shelter in neighbouring nation-states. Even those who win the battle against the government of the majority and achieves independence, they themselves too give birth to the Refugee-problem due to their neo-colonial attitude towards the minorities if any. But those who are able neither to get involved in war nor to leave their country, they have to suffer the most bitter tyranny of the majority. Their social life is worst than any other. They also have to lead refugee-life being exiled in their own mental world.

The United Nations and earlier League of Nations tried to solve the minority problems in some nation-states, but failed due to strong opposition of some powerful nation-states on the excuse that no international higher organization can violate the state-sovereignty of an independent country. But this excuse could easily be refuted on the grounds of its deceptive nationality and wrong practice of democracy. Moreover, UNO's declaration with regard to Refugee-problem fails to cover the large-scale movements of refugees. Moreover, this declaration is concerned only with the protection and security of the refugees but not with the prevention of their problem.

Globalization, in its wider sense, means the process of bringing all nation-states under one-world-government. It aims at solving political crisis and reducing economic disparity among existing nation-states with a view to bring about moral and social harmony among the people of different cultures and communities of the world. If it is so, a good solution of the problem can be expected in globalization.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) by law enforcing personnel and other service providers

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Violence and child abuse are common in Bangladesh in many different forms, as reported in several studies and reports. This study provides an overview of the Commercial Sexual Experiences of the children and violence related to the Child Protection Law with various law enforcing personnel and social service providers, knowledge of CRC and effectiveness of existing laws in Bangladesh. In this study, 60 girls (aged 10-18 years) from two major cities of Bangladesh either exposed to or at risk to commercial sex, sexual harassment and violence participated in weeklong consultation with

trained interviewers to share experiences through in-depth interview, FGD, role-play, group work and poster presentation. Girls reported experiencing sexual abuse by police (93%), lawyers (69%), and health care professionals (51%). Common assaults and other types of physical violence were being forced for sex with police (83%) and health care professionals (29%), beating (93%), hair-pulling or pushing (35%), burns (40%), electric shocks (23%), touching private-parts (86%), rude behavior by police (98%), judiciary (93%), doctors (61%), felt insecurity in custody and court (89%). 91% of girls were not aware about legal protection. 90% girls have positive experience about NGOs regarding counseling, healthcare, legal protection and rehabilitation support.

Sexual abuse of the children is very common in police, judiciary and doctors by violating all ethics, which sometimes turned into violence due to ignorance of Child rights and Child Protection Law and defenselessness. To prevent this inhuman practice and promote the safety of this vulnerable group and raising awareness, immediate programs should be taken by authority concerned.

What Does Human Speech Imply for Human Dignity? The Theravadin's Perception

- Phinith Chanthalangsy

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In the classical texts of Theravada Buddhism of Pali tradition, is there any concern to protect or to preserve what we use to commonly call today "human dignity"? Is there even any sense at all to ask this question? Indeed, since one of the fundamental statements of Buddhism is that individuality has neither real essence, nor is it a substance, what understanding of "dignity" is implied? This does not lead, however, to deny inter-personal relations and interactions among men; these relations are on the contrary widely described and analysed.

This paper will focus on one of the modalities by which human beings can relate to others, knowingly through their speech. Through the analysis of the moral prescriptions regarding the manners in which people speak or should

speak to others, an attempt is made to understand whether the concept of "human dignity" has a philosophical meaning within this particular Buddhist tradition. Why, in Theravadin perspective, is it necessary to edict several rules with the purpose of keeping human speech under control and avoiding inter-personal aggression? Is it aimed at preserving human dignity or, paradoxically, is it aimed at annihilating human subjectivity?

The paper analyses the *Speech* category within the basic triad *Body – Speech – Mind* that constitutes what is commonly called "men" in Buddhist conception. More than a mere matter of wording and of voicing, Speech is conceived as an action that can influence one's Body and Mind. This particular characteristic of Speech should shed light on our understanding of both inter-personal relations, and the "Self" in relation to the "Other". Indeed, in the way one speaks or does not speak his/her spiritual state and knowledge are revealed. Thus, the analysis of human speech allows to raise this question: is it not that "dignity" is more adequately measured by means of human *action* – through Body, Speech and Mind – than by means of some *transcendental essence*?

Understanding Buddhist philosophy through the alphabetical order in Thai language: a conceptual framework

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This paper attempts to introduce a new approach for understanding Buddhist philosophy in the 21st Century. The task relies heavily on chronologically reviewing the evolution and development of communicable skills of all human kind, i.e. from *Homo erectus* to *Homo sapiens* (especially the Neanderthals), until we have reached a certain degree of success in the Indo-Aryan languages and thinking skills at our early civilizations. Finally there was Buddhism around the 6th Century BCE.

Strictly speaking, Buddhism is not a philosophy nor a religion. Because the Buddha did not give any detailed statement of revolutionary philosophical theories. Besides the Buddha did not attempt to create a new material

science nor cosmic science as Albert Einstein once tried to understand. Generally speaking, the Buddha revealed the unique Path of Deliverance and explained *what is within* and *what is without* in order to liberate all of us from servitude.

My inspirations for this crucial task derived from the Royal Initiatives of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) during the last quarter of 19th Century. Therefore I would like to propose a researchable question: *which parts of the human body are of crucial and original to the design of our 44 alphabets in the Thai language?* Consequently, in order to understand the Buddha's noble mission in revealing a unique Path of the Enlightenment, I think it is about time for us to inductively and deductively verify his unique Path of Deliverance rather than focusing on the terminological differences between philosophy and religion.

For my concluding remarks, understanding Buddhist philosophy means understanding the interrelatedness between our *hands, tongue, and brain*. If we agree to improve our human dignity, may be we can find a ready made pattern of discovery from this proposed alphabetical order and its crucial role in today's international dialogues.

13:00-15:00

Session 5:

**Philosophy Facing the Challenges of Modern
Technology, and Bioethics**

Technology for Health and Peace
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The question about technology and humans has long been discussed, if we look at Plato's *Phaedrus and Letters VII & VIII*, the story was told by Socrates about Theuth, the God of inventor was showing Thamas, the Great King of Egypt, of his invention which was the knowledge in writing. Thamas commented that writing will lead humans to degrade themselves, such as people will cease to exercise their memory and become forgetful; they will depend on the external signs instead of their own internal

resources. Also their wisdom only comes from reputation without the reality, they will receive a quantity of information without proper instruction and in consequence be thought very knowledgeable when they are for the most part quite ignorant. Then they will be the burden to the society because of this conceit of wisdom. Plato was aware of what technology can do to humans, even in writing.

Recently Richard Layard wrote in his book, *Happiness: Lesson from a New Science* about the king of Bhutan, the small kingdom announced 1998 about the Gross National Happiness, which seems to be the great ideas in this capitalistic world at this present moment. But in 1999 the ban on TV was lifted, after that the Bhutanese could see the usual mixture of violence, sexual betrayal, consumer advertising, etc. Which soon after the TV show everyone noticed a sharp increase in family break up, crime and drugs including school violence among their children.

It seems that we have to go on with great inventions of humankind, we invented many things that we think they are useful, but it has other sides as well. How can we use technology for the best of humankind? If we believe in the 'Greatest Happiness Principle', we also have to find out what can really create the happiness in humans. What we have to consider is how far and how much we can bring technology into our life? We have to use technology with great awareness and consciousness of the results of it before it is too late. This is the question about humans and technology, the technology that should provide good health and allow people to maintain peace from within. How should we go about it? We hope we can find the answer at the end.

***The Situation and Ethical Review of Organ
Transplantation in China***

- Yanguang Wang

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The shortfall organ for transplantation is severe in China. Some traditional theories have deterred organ donation. "Filial piety (*xiao*) is the beginning of *ren*" (Confucius) "skin and hair are endowed by parents and should not be

damaged.” (Book of filial piety); keeping body intact reluctant to donate dead bodies and organs to extend the life of ancestors. Confucian and Buddhist beliefs insist on the integrity of the corpse until the moment of cremation or burial; prevailing attitudes about the need for respect of elders also deters organ removal. As a result, autopsies and donations of cadavers for any purpose are short, including transplantation and use in medical schools.

There have been views objecting to the utilization of dead bodies of executed prisoners for transplants for a decade. The idea of taking organs from executed prisoners for transplants have been rejected on several ethical grounds: prisoners, who by definition have been denied their freedom, do not seem capable of freely consenting to such a procedure; doctors ought not to be allowed to participate in a process that involves killing.

There is also ethical dispute in legislating a criteria of brain death. Currently, both criteria of cardiac death and brain death are accepted by people according to their own wishes. The adoption of criteria of brain death may facilitate obtaining fresh organs for transplantation. Due to the tension between death of the donor, and a recipient’s life, a necessary separation of transplantation experts from diagnosing brain death is necessary. Practical problems include the lack of qualified doctors for diagnosing brain death, and instruments, and other services for removing and storing organs from the body of a brain dead person.

Prohibition of commercialize organ trade and compensation has been made on paper. From the perspective of “never treating human beings only as means but also as end-in- themselves” the sale of the body cannot be justified. It violates human dignity and would necessarily result in a society with greater social inequality. Most countries in the world object to sale of body.

However, we cannot rule out sale of organs for transplantation in practice. So a practical problem is how to prohibit such an immoral trade?

*Ethical Principles in Scientific Research: A
Quest for Harmony*

- **Sadek Beloucif**

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Scientific research is essential but modern science/technology and its application in medicine has raised moral concerns. The need for a regulation in science is linked to the fact that the potential consequences can be wide-ranging and global, having a long-term impact on future generations, and being potentially irreversible. In this context, we have to foresee the consequences on human actions. If “there is no forbidden area in science” or in the pursuit or knowledge, the practice of scientists needs to be proper. Considering that ethics might be changed following the step of scientific development, we need to rest on fundamental *principles and values*. This indeed is at the confluence of philosophy, law and ethics.

Philosophy and ethics could also be seen as a way to cope with risk management. Faced with the new advances of science, each citizen can think of ethical considerations as a kind of protective means. We have progressively evolved from a purely paternalist logic, to a contract-based logic, whereas we should in fact act as philosophers, or humanists, promoting a true therapeutic *alliance* between the scientific part and the public.

Beyond the precautionary principle, questions and concerns in the setting of scientific research are good inasmuch as they force us to enter a stage of prudential behavior, valuing openness and trust and condemning cheating and lies. In this question, seminal values, principles and utilitarian approaches tend to merge as both inductive and deductive modes of reasoning that demonstrate that fairness, dialogue and the struggle against dogmatism are the only ways to ensure proper therapy for all in these complex and multifaceted situations.

In the dialogue between scientific experts, decision-makers and the public, philosophical and ethical principles should thus be seen as an opportunity to share, in *harmony*, a common understanding of scientific progress.

***Towards a Philosophy and a “Meta-ethic” for
Building a post-European, post-Human Future***

Susantha Goonatilake

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15:30-17:00

Session 6:

Philosophy and Environmental Ethics

Genetic information, some machine-based information (as in neural networks and genetic algorithms and artificial life) as well as human cultural information constitute lineages that have evolutionary characteristics. Each of these lineages can be shown to have the characteristics of memory preservation, creation of novelty, speciation, self-construction, “subjectivity” to the external world and an evolutionary epistemology. The two non cultural information systems are now being acted upon through biotechnology, nanotechnology and information technology by the cultural. These processes are leading to a post human future, transforming both the human body and mind. The three lineages interact with each other merging directly or indirectly their information streams, merging the information content as well as their modes of interacting with their environments. This results in changes in all three streams, the genetic, the artefactual and the cultural. These processes profoundly change in describable ways, the long term evolutionary trajectories of all three lineages, raising fundamental issues in ethics and values.

Several earlier writers like Pierce, Hume, Mach, Huxley and Whitehead have been recently evoked in an attempt to describe evolution as a process partly from “within.” Yet all these writers have been compared with, or have been influenced by the Buddhist technical literature on processes and identity. Following Varela, this technical and observational literature of Buddhism, as it derives ethics from processes is explored, and found to be relevant and useful for discussing the new evolutionary processes redefining what it is to be a human. A consideration of processes associated with each lineage and their general properties lead one to the construction of a meta-ethic that covers the biological, cultural and artefactual worlds - a "universal" ethic. The Buddhist technical literature it is further noted, could allow for some deeper explorations of flow phenomena from within, leading to the enrichment of what has been termed an ‘endophysics’ of evolution.

Ethical Worldviews of Nature

- D. Nesy

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This paper will discuss a project document being developed inside the UNESCO Ethics of Energy Technologies in Asia and the Pacific (EETAP) Project. The Working Group (WG2) will review the worldviews inherent in philosophical and religious traditions of the Asia Pacific that shape ethical relationships with the natural world. How do our worldviews allocate value and meaning to people, plants, animals and the biosphere? What is the most appropriate timescale to consider problems of environmental ethics – years, decades, centuries, or generations? Is there a common vision of where we would like society to go beyond MDGs? How to balance economic growth, quality of life, and other future aspirations in a holistic vision? World views include: Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, Ecocentrism, Cosmocentrism and Theocentrism. What are the relationships between such worldviews and actual decisions made by policymakers or the daily lives of the people they represent? What changes would be expected in policy if different world views were taken.

Climate Change, Migration and Wars: Historic analysis

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This paper focuses on the historic relationship between climate change, migration and wars since the rise of pastoralism and agriculture thousands of years ago. Then it moves to discuss the effect of climate change shaping ancient civilizations, such as that of the

Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans (during the Roman Warming Period).

Migration and wars during those periods will be compared to recent published data on global warming derived from ocean sediment cores. A similar comparison will study the Arab – Islamic conquests, Viking ventures, the Crusades and Mongol expansion.

We will also discuss the impact of climate change during the latest little Ice Age during 14th – 19th centuries and its impact on the New World, and its role on the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century Europe.

Finally, the discussion will shift to discuss contemporary migrations and wars due to global warming and water shortages in Southern USA during the 1930`s drought, Africa and the Middle East, trying to build a perspective for further conflicts building up in our region and the world if the present trend of global warming and environmental ethics persist.

Buddhism and Ecological Crisis: Challenge and Promise in Global perspective

- Md. Sirajul Islam

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Global environmental and ecological problems have draw the attention of the scholars of all fields that mainly based upon the toxic contamination of the food chain, the worldwide consequences of nuclear proliferation, the impact of global warming, depletion of earth and water, irregular bio-diversity, engender species and so on, that are basically warning human beings to construct the major changes in national and international policy. It is now evident that all life-forms are interdependent, hence rampant utilization of pesticides and poisonous elements in the agricultural fields lost the balance in environmental as well as ecological levels. The “Religions of the World and Ecology” project brings the rich historical and contemporary resources of the world’s religions into critical dialogue with the global environmental crisis. In particular, it seeks to broaden and deepen the symbolic, conceptual, and practical dimensions of their distinctive holistic worldviews for an understanding of human flourishing, community, the natural environment, and their interactions.

We know, Asian religions have bearing very rich environmental and ecological tradition from the very beginning of the annals of mankind. This paper explores ways in which the Buddhist traditions might contribute to this discussion and to the practice of a more ecologically aware lifestyle.

Buddhism arose in north India in the fifth century BCE at a time when the region was undergoing a process of urbanization and political centralization accompanied by commercial development and the formation of artisan and merchant classes. The creation of towns and the expansion of an agrarian economy led to the clearing of forests and other tracts of uninhabited land. These changes influenced early Buddhism in several ways. Despite significant variations among the different Buddhist traditions it still becomes a very significant for world existence. Its non-violent appeal is highly significant today. Indeed, Buddha himself prefer to live in the forest and he assumes this is an appropriate place to strive for the ultimate realization of Nirvana. Buddhists see the world as conjoined on four levels: existentially, morally, cosmologically, and ontologically. Buddhist religious teachings are nature and environment based, holistic and pragmatic in approach. Its environmentalists extend loving-kindness and compassion beyond people and animals to include plants and the earth itself. Hence, in Buddhism, both animate and inanimate objects are similar important because, they are reciprocally interlinked and interdependent. Existentially, Buddhists affirm that all sentient beings share the fundamental conditions of birth, old age, suffering, and death. Buddha himself decides to share this existential insight into the cause and cessation of suffering which is regarded by the tradition as an act of universal compassion (*karuna*) and friendliness (*maitree*). Buddhist environmentalists assert that the mindful awareness of the universality of suffering produces compassionate empathy for all forms of life, particularly for all sentient species. They interpret the *Dhammapada*’s ethical injunction not to do evil but to do good as a moral principle advocating the nonviolent alleviation of suffering, an ideal embodied in the prayer of universal loving-kindness that concludes many Buddhist rituals: “May all beings be free from enmity; may all beings be

free from injury; may all beings be free from suffering; may all beings be happy.” Buddhist concepts of *karma* (action) and *samsara* (rebirth) integrate the existential sense of a shared common condition of all sentient life-forms with the moral dimension of the Buddhist cosmology. Not unlike the biological sciences, its rebirth concept links human and animal species and all are related to the cycle of birth (*bhava cakra*). Being connected with the process of taking birth, one is kin to all wild and domestic animals, birds, and beings born from the womb. (*Lankavatara Sutra*)

Nirvana, the Buddhist highest good, offers the promise of transforming karmic conditionings into an unconditioned state of spiritual liberation, a realization potentially available to all forms of sentient life on the karmic continuum. That plants and trees or the land itself have a similar potential for spiritual liberation became an explicit doctrine in Indian, Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. Within the Buddha’s enlightenment vision (*Nirvana*) all the major dimensions of the Buddhist worldview are found.

Buddhist environmentalists find in the causal principle (*pratityasamutpada dharma*) interdependence an ecological vision that integrates all aspects of the ecosphere—particular individuals and general species—in terms of the principle of mutual codependence. Within this cosmological model individual entities are by their very nature relational, thereby undermining the autonomous self over against the “other,” whether be it human, animal, or vegetable. Buddhist notion of *anatma* (non-self) and *sunyata* (emptiness) are the holistic vision of mutual interdependence. Buddhist environmentalists see their worldview as a rejection of hierarchical dominance of one human over another or humans over nature, and as the basis of an ethic of empathetic compassion that respects biodiversity. In the eyes of Buddhist the entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon, and the stars live together as a cooperative link.

The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and the earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise . . . then we can build a noble environment. It is the real time to apprehend their necessity for the existence of animate as well as inanimate objects of the world. If our

lives are not based on this truth, then we shall fall in severe destruction that never be compensate again. In environmentalist outlook, the Buddhist worldview or *dharma* not only refers to the teachings of the Buddha but also to all things in nature, rather it characterizes Buddhism as a “religious ecology.” Others argue that a mere cognitive recognition of interdependence is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for an ecological ethic. These critics emphasize the centrality of practice in Buddhism and the tradition’s insistence on training in virtue and the threefold path to moral and spiritual excellence (morality, mindful awareness, wisdom). In later schools of Buddhist thought the cosmological vision of interdependent causality evolved into a more substantive sense of ontological unity.

The Buddhist environmental movement suggests that Buddhism to be an effective force for maintaining environmental poise, the traditional Buddhist emphasis on individual moral and spiritual transformation must be adjusted to address more forcefully the structures of oppression, exploitation, and environmental degradation. It recognizes the values of all things/ objects, which seems a very vital and necessary component in recognition of ecological articulation for human development. Buddhist ecological outlook is not only a retreat from the world but as a place, where all forms of life—humans, animals, and plants—live in a cooperative microcosm of a larger ecosystem and as a community where humans can develop an ecological ethic. Such an ethic highlights the virtues of restraint, simplicity, loving-kindness, compassion, equanimity, patience, wisdom, nonviolence, and generosity. These virtues represent moral ideals for all members of Buddhism which are equally efficacious to all animate and inanimate species of the world.

Many other relevant points are in the paper that will be discussed in the full paper.

***Current ecological challenges and Buddhism:
A Case for Animal Kingdom***

- Neelima Dahiya

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The growing ecological imbalances and mounting social tensions and conflicts have put the inhabitants of planet earth in a perilous situation. We are sitting on a volcano where inner pressures have already assumed unbearable proportions. Global warming, increasing pollution, receding glaciers, deforestation, extinction of various species and threat of many more being on the threshold of extinction on the one hand and widening socio-economic divides, terrorism, communalism and, if we include, the current economic recession world-over on the other are some of the quagmires of present day civil society. These challenges need to be attended immediately to save the planet earth and its inhabitants from dire consequences. Unfortunately, such hazardous situation is our own creation. Since it is the product of irrational and screwed human conduct, onus lies on us alone to find the solution and make the planet earth safe and secure for human beings and for flora and fauna to flourish in congenial environment.

It the high time for all sensitive and knowledgeable individuals, governments and non government agencies, forgetting all narrow barriers, to go all out to sensitize people at large to appreciate the gravity of situation. It would help to induce them to participate in efforts to put an immediate check on further degeneration and to cooperate in all moves to begin the possible reversible processes to meet the challenges of modern world.

To launch a successful campaign against the challenges of modern world the people at the helm of affairs have to evolve an effective viable strategy. The positions of physical scientist, social scientist, philosophers, conventional wisdom and religious philosophies on the concerned issue could provide useful guidelines in framing the strategies.

Religion has been and it continues to be, one of the most potential and effective resource to have a moral authority on the people. The moral authority of a religion could be utilized, of course, in a secular setting, to invoke people's

conscience and to inspire them to meet the challenges of modern world squarely.

Buddhism is a religion which is widely respected for its compassion and humane values. Its principles and ethical system are capable of handling the dilemmas of modern civil society reasonably well. The indiscriminate and unplanned deforestation, over urbanisation and industrialisation and the callous behaviour of humans have posed a great threat to the very survival of wild life. Wild life is the great life support of the planet earth. The conservation of wildlife is the part of global need to preserve biosphere as a stable habitable system. Man is the part of biosphere and his existence depends on continued congeniality of biosphere. The present paper is an effort to apply Buddhist insights and ethics to appreciate the possible line of action to meet the current ecological challenges including conservation of animal kingdom. It is one of the most dynamic and creative response of Buddhism to current ecological challenges.

Saturday, 30th May

9:00-10:00

Session 7:

Future Themes Plenary Discussion

The proceedings on Saturday, 30th May will focus on dialogue on the themes of the working groups, and construction of frameworks of activity for the coming two years.

10:00-12:00

Session 8:

Parallel Working Group Sessions

13:00-16:00

Session 9: Discussion of follow-up

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***Asia-Arab Inter-regional Philosophical Dialogues:
Philosophy and the Crisis of Civilization***

Background on the Interregional Dialogues

Dialogue is essential for developing a better understanding of not only others, but also ourselves. In recent times the teaching of philosophy in almost all regions of the world has included core components with a predominance of Western philosophers. This relates to the predominance of published works in European languages, and to the higher output of postgraduate degrees in philosophy in North America and Europe, in the past two centuries.

In order to strengthen local, regional and global awareness of the rich philosophical traditions of many regions of the world, UNESCO Social and Human Science Sector's program in philosophy has launched programmes on inter-regional philosophical dialogues in 2004.

We hope to publish volumes of papers that will be useful resources for philosophy teaching, and to include papers from individual philosophers as well as papers the result of dialogue between members of the groups. These dialogues are expected to continue for some years in order to add the richness of traditions found in many civilizations to the mainstream of philosophical tradition.

While one model of dialogue is to have philosophers from different regions join together at conferences, presenting papers and then discussing the papers from different perspectives, it is hoped that papers will emerge as a construction between Arab and Asian philosophers as the dialogue itself is integral to the process. This will involve the establishment of small working groups on particular themes, under a chair, working together to produce a coauthored paper as a result of dialogue. During the process of dialogue using communication technology and face to face meetings the different working groups and other philosophers will come together to comment on the papers and develop dialogue across the themes of each group.

There is a yahoo listserve:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AsiaArabPhilosophicalDialogues>

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