

# New Horizons of Human Development: Art, Spirituality and Social Transformations

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## INTRODUCTION AND INVITATION

The discourse and practice of human development has been at a cross-road for a long time. For quite some time, critics and reflective practitioners in the field of development have raised ethical and moral issues in the vision and practice of development such as poverty, hunger,

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This builds on a report of a two day workshop held at Madras Institute of Development Studies (MIDS), Chennai, March 28–29, 2008 which I had nurtured. This workshop at MIDS was followed by workshops in Bangalore (Indian Business Academy, Bangalore, July 5, 2008), and at Indian Business Academy, Greater Noida (September 14–15, 2008) which brought scholars such as Des Gasper to this dialogue, and at University of Western Ontario, London, Canada in October 2008. Professor John Clammer, our co-editor of this volume, had taken part and presented papers in our MIDS and IBA Greater Noida dialogues. The present text also builds on my collaborative work with Philip Quarles van Ufford on development ethics (cf. Quarles van Ufford and Giri [2003](#); Giri and Quarles van Ufford [2015](#)).

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displacement and production of underdevelopment by the very interventionist process and logic of development. This has led to the rise of a vibrant critical field of development ethics in which scholars and activists such as Denis Goulet, Amartya Sen, Ashish Nandy, Des Gasper, Claude Alvares, Vandana Shiva, Arturo Escobar and Martha Nussbaum, among others, have taken part. This has led to a critical and creative broadening of the vision and practice of development from mere economic and infrastructural development to broad visions and practices of human development. Amartya Sen (1999) spearheaded such a shift as part of a broad reconstitution of development as freedom at the core of which lies issues such as capability and freedom. But in this rarely issues of art, spirituality, human development and social transformations are addressed together though in this discursive field, Martha Nussbaum's work is an exception who draws our attention to the way art can help to transcend existing boundaries through the work of what she calls "artistic transcendence" (Nussbaum 1990).<sup>1</sup> Nussbaum also draws our attention to the significance of art in education, where 'the artist's fine-tuned attention and responsiveness to human life is paradigmatic of a kind of precision of feeling and thought that a human being can cultivate' (Nussbaum 1990: 379). Reflections like Nussbaum's urge us to understand the integral significance of art in life and society as a locus of a different way of seeing, envisioning and relationship. Art here constitutes a source of utopian imagination and possibility in self, culture and society—a dimension which has been cultivated by movements such as the cultural and artistic movements of *avant-garde* in modernity (Strydom 1984, 1994).

#### ART, SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: WIDENING AND DEEPENING THE UNIVERSE OF DISCOURSE AND PRACTICE

At present, the existing meaning, understanding and realization of human development, art, spirituality and society are getting broadened. Human development means not only to have the capability to function; it also, at the same time, involves the art and practice of imagination. Imagination is simultaneously individual and social, material and spiritual and art plays an important role in fostering and growth of our imagination, especially collaborative imagination as it weaves selves and movements across fixed positions and boundaries (cf. Giri 2017a, b).<sup>2</sup> Human development means not only economic, political and ethical

development; it also means artistic and spiritual development. All these dimensions of development are interlinked but in our conventional and dominant discourses of development, we have not paid sufficient attention to artistic and spiritual dimensions of development. To develop, both individually as well as collectively, is to also to develop one's artistic and spiritual potential. But to develop ourselves artistically is not just to look beautiful as it is perceived externally; art is linked to living life as a work and meditation of art in one's inner life as well. As Michel Foucault challenges us: "What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art is now linked to objects, rather than to individuals or life itself [...] But couldn't we ourselves, each one of us, make of our lives a work of art? Why should a lamp or a house become the object of art—and not our own lives?"

Foucault links the process of self-making as a work of art to an ethical project as he urges us to realize that "the search for an ethics of existence" must involve an "elaboration of one's own life as a personal work of art" (Foucault 1988: 49). Thus ethics here becomes linked to aesthetics generating the border-crossing movement of aesthetic ethics which is helpful for understanding integral links between aesthetics, ethics and human development. Foucault's agenda of an aesthetic ethics is developed in the context of his discussion of ethical life and ethical ideals in Antiquity. But this is not meant only to be an archaeology of the past but suggest a possible mode and ideal of ethical engagement for the present and the future. For Foucault, in Antiquity, "the search for an ethics of existence" was "an attempt to affirm one's liberty and to give to one's life a certain form in which one could recognize oneself, be recognized by others, and which even the posterity might take as an example" (ibid). For Foucault, life as a work of art involves care of the self, a conversion to self, an intense relation with oneself. While ethics is usually conceived as care for the other, for Foucault, ethics at the same time, must help one to "take oneself as an object of knowledge and a field of action, so as to transform, correct, and purify oneself, and find salvation" (1988: 42). Furthermore, aesthetic ethics as care of the self involves cultivation of appropriate values in the conduct of life. The most important task here is not to be obsessed with exercising power over others and to be concerned with discovering and realizing "what one is in relation to oneself" (ibid: 85).<sup>3</sup> This can give rise to a new hermeneutics of self and society where the model of self and social formation is not just predicated upon socially produced *apriori* models of self, state and society.<sup>4</sup> Art plays a

role in giving birth to a new imagination and hermeneutics of self and society and a new relational aesthetics which urges us to cross different borders.<sup>5</sup> As argued later, this hermeneutics is related to our walking and meditating across multiple landscapes, pathways and imaginations of self and social realizations—a *multi-topia* hermeneutics—rather than just be trapped within fixed positions and models of self and society.<sup>6</sup>

Such paths of aesthetic ethics and hermeneutics of self calls for a new art of relationship between self and power where one embodies a different way of being with power, for example, as suggested by Hannah Arendt (1958), working and meditating in concert,<sup>7</sup> to give birth to a desirable new path of being and relationship rather than exercise one's domination over others (see Giri 2009). It also calls for realizing the limits of power and realizing that power is not the only foundation of life. Life has other integrally linked foundations such as love and respect what is called *sraddha* in Indic traditions (see Giri 2012). *Sraddha* calls for what Foucault himself calls self-restraint vis-a-vis ones' work of power including in acts of resistance to power such as in *Satyagraha*. This is particularly salutary in the field of development where agents of development have sought to impose their own will and models on the targets of development interventions. Through development of self-control the actors of development can resist the temptation to unnecessarily meddle in the lives of those with whom they are in interaction and thus facilitate their self-unfolding and self-flourishing. For Robert Chambers, "it implies that uppers have to give up something and make themselves vulnerable" (Chambers 1997: 234). An engagement in self-control also enables actors of development to be aware of the hegemonic implications of a project of ethics which is primarily prescriptive. It enables them to continuously seek to transcend the world of separation between the creators of development and the beneficiaries of such a creation. In this context, Majid Rahenema who has applied Foucault's insights in going beyond the impasse of contemporary development interventions calls for a "bottom up aesthetic order" in development at the heart of which lies a desire on the part of the actors to be true to themselves and develop their "inner world" and challenge the distinction between the makers of the worlds of beauty, truth and goodness and those who enjoy their benefits. In such a bottom-up aesthetic reconstruction of development, "Right action involving others starts always as a personal work on oneself. It is the fruit of an almost divine kind of exercise, which

usually takes place in the solitude of thought and creation” (Rahenema 1997: 401).

Aesthetic ethics as a path of realization of links between art and human development can also draw inspiration from philosopher and historian Frank Ankersmit’s cultivation of pathways of what he calls aesthetic politics (Ankersmit 1996). For Ankersmit, while “ethics makes sense on the assumption of a (Stoic) continuity between our intentions, our actions and their results in the socio-political world,” aesthetics draws our attention to the gaps and discontinuities among them (1996: 44). Ankersmit makes a distinction between mimetic representation which denies this gap between representation and represented and aesthetic representation which acknowledges this gap and builds on it. For Ankersmit, mimetic representation is against representation itself as “representation always happens, so to, speak, between the represented and its representation; it always needs the presence of their distance and the ensuring interaction [...]” (Ankersmit 1996: 44). The problem with modernist politics for Ankersmit has been that it has been a hostage to the politically correct ideology of mimetic representation where political representatives are required to mirror the expectations of their constituency. This creates a compulsion for politically correct mimetic representation rather than a representation which is based on one’s autonomous self-identity and negotiation between this identity and the aspirations of the represented. For Ankersmit, acknowledgment of this gap becomes an aesthetic work par excellence where actors learn to develop an appropriate political style (and I would add spiritual style) in the midst of fragmentation rather than with a valorized united whole. Aesthetic political representation urges us to realize that “the representative has autonomy with regard to the people represented” but autonomy then is not an excuse to abandon one’s responsibility. Aesthetic autonomy requires cultivation of “disinterestedness” on the part of actors which is not indifference. To have disinterestedness i.e., to have “comportment towards the beautiful that is devoid of all ulterior references to use—requires a kind of *ascetic* commitment; it is the ‘liberation of ourselves for the release of what has proper worth only in itself’” (Osborne 1997: 135).<sup>8</sup>

In aesthetic politics, the development of appropriate styles of conduct on the part of the representatives is facilitated by the choice and play of appropriate metaphors. For Ankersmit, in the development of an appropriate style of conduct for a representative the metaphor of a “maintenance man” or woman is more facilitating for self-growth than

an architect. While the architect thinks that she is designing a building of which she is the creator, a maintenance person has a much more modest understanding of one's role and does not look at his effort as creating a building out of nothing, rather continuing a work to which many others have contributed. Such a metaphor of "maintenance man" can provide new self-understanding to actors both in the field of politics and development where we do not have any dearth of actors, institutions and worldviews who attribute to them the role of the original creator, the architect, the god. But such a self-understanding of ourselves as architects often leads to arrogance and dominance. In this context, there is a modesty in the metaphor of the "maintenance person" which is further facilitated by the choice of the metaphor of the captain of a ship. It is not enough for a captain to have only an *apriori* plan; she must know how to negotiate between *apriori* plans and the contingent situations on the ground. Such a capacity for negotiation which is facilitated by one's choice of an appropriate metaphor such as captain and "maintenance person" is crucial for development of appropriate styles of conduct on the part of the actors in the field of politics and development. In developing his outline of aesthetic politics, an outline which has enormous significance for reconstituting the field of development as a field of artistic rather than mimetic representation which, in turn, calls for the cultivation of an appropriate style of life on the part of the actors of development, Ankersmit writes: "[...] when asking himself or herself how best to represent the represented, the representative should ask what political style would best suit the electorate. And this question requires an essentially creative answer on the part of the representative, in the sense that there exists no style in the electorate that is quietly waiting to be copied" (ibid: 54). For Ankersmit, "aesthetics will provide us with a most fruitful point of departure if we desire to improve our political self-knowledge" and in this self-knowledge autonomy of actors, units and institutions has a crucial significance. In fact, nurturing the autonomous spaces of self, institutions and society itself as spaces of creative self-fashioning and development of creative styles of action becomes an aesthetic activity par excellence. Of course, autonomy here has not to be meant in a defensive sense of preserving the established structures rather than transforming it in accordance with the transformative imagination of actors and a democratic public discursive formation of will.

Aesthetic politics in Ankersmit is not geared to a will to power but inspired by a will to political self-knowledge and the will to develop

oneself as a “maintenance man,” which can be linked to developing oneself as a servant of people, divine and society as part of a new ethics, aesthetics and spirituality of servanthood (cf. Giri 2002). As against the tyranny of unity in certain strands of German aesthetics such as Schiller’s, Ankersmit’s aesthetics celebrates and works “within an irrevocably broken world” (Ankersmit 1996: 53) but the brokenness of the world is not an excuse to abandon one’s responsibility. This is facilitated by further creative elaborations of an aesthetic mode of engagement by Charles Taylor (1991) and Seyla Benhabib (1996) where aesthetics is characterized by both quest of authenticity as well as striving for establishing non-domineering relationships with others (also see Scarry 1999; Welsch 1997). In the words of Benhabib: “The overcoming of the compulsive logic of modernism can only be a matter of giving back to the non-identical, the suppressed, and the dominated their right to be. We can invoke the other but we can not name it. Like the God of the Jewish tradition who must not be named but evoked, the utopian transcendence of the compulsive logic of Enlightenment and modernism cannot be named but awakened in memory. The evocation of this memory, the ‘rethinking of nature in the subject’ is the achievement of the aesthetic” (Benhabib 1996: 333).

Our engagement with various new ways of understanding the work of aesthetics has important lessons for us in thinking about and relating to the field of development. First, aesthetics as critical and creative memory work helps us to transform development as a multi-dimensional memory work in our lives which also involves working and meditating with both our roots and routes as well as their complex arts of cross-fertilization (cf. Giri 2016c).<sup>9</sup> Second, aesthetics as sensitivity to configurations of togetherness without reducing it to an *apriori* plan or teleology of order can help us to look at the field of development as a field of togetherness—a movement for generation of commons in our world of individualism and fragmentation (cf. Reid and Taylor 2010). But this togetherness is not a product of an ordered plan nor is it teleologically geared to production of order. A preoccupation with order has led to dangerous consequences in the field of development where leaders have deliberately tried to put conflict, ambiguity and contradictions under carpet. It has also led to a denial of the work of contingencies in developmental dynamics. Aesthetics as openness to the contingent also helps us overcome the creed of certainty and better prepare ourselves for appreciating the work of uncertainty in the developmental world

and fashion an appropriate mode of action and management which reflects such a concern. For instance, Lyla Mehta, Melissa Leach and her colleagues at Institute of Development Studies, Sussex urge us to explore new directions in natural resource management which takes uncertainty of people's lives—ecological uncertainty, livelihood uncertainty, and knowledge uncertainties—seriously and in this engagement an aesthetic awareness compared with a positivist preoccupation with regulation can help us too (Mehta et al. 1999). Finally aesthetics as artistic representation rather than mimetic representation can enable us first to understand the mimetic nature of most of development interventions and then encourage us to cultivate various alternative ways of coming out of this closed mimetic world in which creative and critical memory work can help us. One aspect of the mimetic character of the contemporary world of development interventions is that the representatives of development are self-confident that they can represent the interest of the donor agencies on the one hand and beneficiaries on the other in a transparent and unproblematic manner. But such assumption condemns them to a world of self-created continuity while the field of development is characterized by lack of fit between intentions and outcome. And with aesthetic sensibility once the representatives realize the practical and moral untenability of such a mimetic world they can engage themselves with various modes of aesthetic ethics and politics which enables them to articulate the interests of donors and beneficiaries in a more responsible manner.

But as these are some of the potential for renewing development practice with an engagement with aesthetics, unfortunately there are some fundamental limits to it too. One of these relates to a narrow valorization of care of the self in an aesthetic engagement, a valorization which does not take seriously and is even blissfully oblivious of its responsibility to others. In fact, this problem lies at the core of the Foucauldian ethics as care of the self. As Gardiner helps us realize: "In Foucault's ontology of the subjects, there are only scattered and essentially gratuitous references to our relations with others, little real acknowledgment of the centrality of non-repressive solidarity and dialogue for human existence. One must not have the care for others precede the care of the self, he [Foucault] bluntly declares at one point" (Gardiner 1996: 38). Critical reflections on Foucault's own scripting of life also points to a preoccupation with sado-masochism in his life which points to the limits of his aesthetic ethics (Miller 1993: 327). In this context, aesthetic ethics in itself cannot help us



come out of the impasse in which we are in the field of development and we need to engage ourselves with development as embodiment of responsibility. Development as responsibility involves both ethics and aesthetics in a transformational way. Development as responsibility includes strivings for beauty, dignity and dialogues across borders in which art plays an important role (see Giri and Quarles van Ufford 2015).

### BROADENING AND DEEPENING THE VISION AND PRACTICE OF ART, AESTHETICS AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Aesthetic ethics in Foucault and aesthetic politics in Ankersmit urge us to realize the broader and deeper vision of art and aesthetics. Art is not only what we draw on a piece of paper but the quality of life we live and create in our lives and society. It is the poetry that we write in our bodies, social as well as self. As Chitta Ranjan Das (2008) argues, there are two streams of aesthetic consciousness: *Anna* and *Ananda*—food and bliss. For Das, human development lies in establishing bridges between the two. This brings us to dialogue between Gandhi and Tagore vis-à-vis these two wings of aesthetic consciousness. To the comment of Tagore that Gandhi does not see the beauty of birds flying early in the morning, Gandhi commented that he sees the beauty but he also understands the pain of those birds who are not able to flap their wings because they did not have anything to eat the night before.<sup>10</sup> Aesthetic development thus is a bridge between these two wings of human consciousness—food and freedom—and facilitates border-crossing movements across many domains which are considered isolated from and opposed to each other such as economic and artistic, material and spiritual.

We can here walk and mediate with several experiments with broadening of the vision and practice of aesthetic development from societies and histories. In the famous Bauhaus movement in Weimar Republic in pre-Nazi Germany artists and architects were inspired by a vision of social beauty for many and not only for the elites. They built aesthetically rich houses for the working class. There is also an emerging new aesthetics of experimentation and participation in Europe, India and many parts of the world. The small country of Lichenstein has a laboratory for artists called BKK Labor where around twenty artists work together. According to an artist who works in such a shared space whom I had met during a visit in 2008: “As an artist I am used to working alone but in this place

I work in a space shared by other artists. They come and comment on my work which also softens the edges of my own ego.” Artistic development in such places not only means movement from gross to subtle but a transformation of one’s ego through the social practice of working, sharing and experimenting together. In the same gallery I met a woman photographer who collaborated with two middle aged men in taking photographs of their nude bodies to reflect upon the fragility of body through the flow of time and its attendant anxiety. Barbara Muller, this creative artist, who through art work overcomes the marked bodies of gender told me about a fellow artist in Malta named Pierre Portelli. I visited Portelli in Malta in 2008 and during our conversation, he told me how in his artistic production he seeks to narrow the gap between the viewers and the artists inviting the artists to take part in the process of creation of art. Portelli deliberately keeps his art work incomplete so that the viewers may take part in it and join the ongoing process of completion. Portelli also makes production of contemporary art in which objects of art such as bread through time gathers fungus showing the transitory nature of life. Art thus contributes to realization of transitory nature of all things which can have a deep spiritual touch.

Art is thus related to transcendence and critique of self, culture and society. The *avant-garde* artistic and cultural movements in modernity also presented such a move of deepening and broadening of art and its relationship to self, culture, society and the world. Art here was not only tied to logic of reproduction of status quo but also its transcendence and transformation (see Strydom 1984, 1994). Piet Strydom who has reflected upon *the avant-garde* movements also urges us to realize the wider and deeper significance of the aesthetic in human development which resonate with similar emphases by John Clammer (2016). As Clammer tells us in his insightful essay, “Art and Social Transformation: Challenges to the Discourse and Practice of Human Development:”

The sterile question of ‘what is art’ [...] is better replaced by the question of what art *does*. Apart from its role as a natural expression of human creativity (children almost always spontaneously produce art), it clearly has four major functions. The first of these is to create new imaginative spaces [...] The second is to reflect, record or symbolize, often in indirect but nevertheless unmistakable forms, the fundamental existential issues built into being human – suffering, mortality, death, belief, embodiment, sexuality,

strangeness, curiosity, fear, our relationship to nature and our desire to represent in some physical form our current and cultural perceptions of the world around us and its varied inhabitants, and our ideas of divinity. [...]

The third is the real but again indirect relationship between ethics and aesthetics, between truth and beauty. In contemporary analytical social science, the two are of course unrelated. So called “development” for example is “successful” if it brings about economic and material growth, even at the expense of immense ugliness, destruction of natural beauty and devastated landscapes and cityscapes, all issues thought to be peripheral to real “progress”. Even as the emerging field of eco-psychology has clearly showed that prolonged lack of exposure to nature is a source of stress, neurosis and violence, so too lack of exposure to beauty is exhausting and causes similar mental and behavioral problems and the extent to which art therapy is now prescribed as a remedy for such ills points clearly to the role of art as an essential part of human psychic make-up, which in turn has ethical implications: to impose ugliness and lack of form on any natural environment or humanscape is to do violence, not only symbolic violence, but also to create the conditions for many forms of behavioral disorder, crime and alienation.

All these transformational discourses also point to the transformation in the discourse and practice of art now which links it to establishing relationships of beauty, dignity and dialogue in society in a world marked by monologue, ugliness and violence of many kinds. They also bring us in many different related ways to seekers and practitioners such as Tagore, Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. Tagore urges us to realize the crucial significance of art and aesthetics to the gift and functioning of life and the way art helps us give a new imagination and generate creative webs of relationships. In Tagore, art and spirituality are also linked as both help us cultivate our inner life in creative relational ways—neither solipsistic nor collectivist.<sup>11</sup> In Gandhi, our way of life which is based upon a mode of renunciation, and not just endless gratification of desire, becomes an art which is crucial for development—self as well as social.<sup>12</sup> Sri Aurobindo (1962) challenges us to realize the limits of the ethical which can degenerate into a regime of control which resonates with the Foucauldian critique of ethics. Aesthetics needs to transform this rigidity into flows of ease, spontaneity, joy and beauty. But Sri Aurobindo here also challenges limited understanding of aesthetics when it is bound to senses only. In modernity, there is a predominance of the senses as we are within a predominantly sensate civilization, as Pitirim Sorokin, the great cultural

critic and sociologist had told us a long time ago. Sri Aurobindo thus makes a distinction between aesthetics and *aestheses*. For Sri Aurobindo, aesthetics is limited to senses and sensuality while *aestheses* realizes the limits of it and explores different modes of transcendence of senses, self and society. In *aestheses*, there is a profound connection between art and spiritual quest (see Bidwaiker 2012).<sup>13</sup>

## ART, EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Sri Aurobindo, Tagore, Gandhi and many seekers and thinkers challenge us to realize the link between art, education and human development. Art plays an important role in educational initiatives started by these pioneers in their own ways. Art is dancingly significant in the vision and practice of integral education which draws inspiration from Sri Aurobindo and his spiritual companion Mira Richards who is also known as The Mother.<sup>14</sup> Integral education seeks to go beyond the one-sided mechanical and mentalist emphasis in modern education and integrate all the dimensions of our self and society such as physical, vital, mental, psychic and spiritual (cf. Giri 2008). Art plays an important role in such a journey of education and human development (Boughton and Mason 1999; Vatsayan 2011). Art also plays an important role in the educational pathways of Tagore. In a different way, art and music play an important role in the educational pathways of Gandhi which is known as basic education. Art also plays an important role in educational initiatives such as the Steiner Waldorf schools which draws inspiration from Rudolf Steiner. In Steiner Waldorf schools there is a connection between arts and craft as well as dances like eurhythmy which creates movements for artistic self-creation and co-creation of learners.

In all these, art, education and human development blossom and dance together which has a wider significance. In creative experimental schools such as Bifrost in Denmark which means rainbow art plays an important role. Art also has been an important part of many initiatives in education in the modern world and now there is a need for a broader base for social foundation for arts education and to bring to the both curriculum as our inter-linked wider practices and thoughts.<sup>15</sup> John Dewey who is an inspiration behind many strands of progressive education in the modern world also challenged us to understand the link between art, education and human development. Dewey talked about developing an aesthetic ecology of public intelligence (cf. Reid and Taylor 2006). In this the aesthetic, ecological and our work of intelligence come together as a

creative process of human development. It contributes to the creation of an integral being and not only mentalist or intellectualist, a folded ontology of many layered self and society and not only the flat ontology of modernity (cf. Taylor 2016). Aesthetics helps us in generation of such configurations of folding and unfolding beings and society.

All these point to profound challenges to the existing models and practices of both education and development. Here there is a need to transform both education and development as multi-dimensional visions and experiments with learning—co-learning and collaborative learning. Building upon the seminal work of Piet Strydom, we can realize both education and development as manifold initiatives and movements in collective learning and triple contingency learning (cf. Strydom 2009). Triple contingency learning goes beyond the double contingency of just the self and the other and embraces the third as an inauguration of working, meditating and dancing with the multiple contingencies of self, other, culture, society and the world. Triple contingency learning in education and development has both an artistic and spiritual dimension as it is facilitated by the aesthetic sensibility to embrace many and the spiritual works of going beyond the logic of closure of self and the other. Triple contingency learning is thus linked to both multi-valued logic and also to a *multi-topia* hermeneutics (cf. Giri 2016b). *Multi-topia* hermeneutics, as discussed briefly earlier in an endnote in this essay, involves walking and meditating across different cultural, social and spiritual terrains which is also an artistic and spiritual process. It involves foot work or what Henry David Thoreau (1947) calls walking like a camel where we ruminate while walking. In such meditative co-walking, we open the very themes of life and discourse such as art, spirituality and human development to cross-cultural dialogues and personal and transpersonal realizations in which our co-walking becomes a passage and hermeneutics of a new revelation and gathering of meaning.<sup>16</sup> Multi-valued logic and *multi-topia* hermeneutics creates dance of transpositivity as it frees us from prisons of fixed positions and standpoints (see Giri 2016a, b, c). Such movements are crucial for human development which helps go beyond prisons and prisms of dominant and established models and practices of human development. Art and spirituality play important roles in triple contingency learning, multi-valued logic, *multi-topia* hermeneutics and the accompanying movements of a new imagination and practice which is crucial for thinking and practicing development in a different way as they help us realize that another development is possible.

## THE BROADENING AND DEEPENING OF VISION AND PRACTICE OF SPIRITUALITY: THE DANCE OF PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The broadening and deepening of vision and practice of art resonates with broadening and deepening of both spirituality and society. If in the discourse of development there is now a move to include visions and movements like self-development, ethical development and aesthetic development, in the discourse of spirituality there is now a move to make spirituality relational and practical moving beyond the frames of individual excellence, salvation and isolated meditation—a multi-dimensional initiative in self and social transformation. There is a practical and social turn in spirituality where many movements of spirituality wish to address concrete problems in society such as poverty, shelter and suffering—physical as well as spiritual. This gives birth to the reality and movement of practical spirituality (Giri 2013). Practical spirituality emphasizes upon continued practice, not only on euphoric movement of realization, enthusiasm and miraculous experience. As Robert Wuthnow tells us drawing on his work with the spiritual quest of the artists: “Many artists speak of their work as a form of meditation. For some the sheer rhythm of the daily routine brings them closer to the essence of their being. Writing all morning or practicing for the next musical performance requires mental and emotional toughness [...] For spiritual dabblers the insight that these artists provide is that persistence and hard work may still be the best way to attain spiritual growth” (Wuthnow 2001: 10). Like art, practical spirituality accepts the brokenness of the world and does not want to assert any totalizing unity or totalitarian absorption (cf. Bellah 1970). At the same time, practical spirituality is a striving for wholeness in the midst of our inescapable brokenness and fragmentation of this world. This wholeness is emergent as it is manifested in the work of the artists. Artists strive to paint landscapes of emergent wholeness in the midst of fragmentation and brokenness. Artists incorporate “[their] experimental approach into one’s spiritual quest” (Wuthnow 2001: 276).

An artist is a *bricoleur*, creating beauty and images of emergent wholeness out of many fragments. There is artistic dimension to our striving to establish connections and communications across fragments. Practical spirituality follows a new logic—a multi-valued logic of autonomy and interpenetration. This is different from the dualistic logic of either or and it seeks to find out and weave threads of connections among different

fragments and disjunctions. This involves both ontology and epistemology in which art plays an important role. This art of establishing connections across isolated fields and domains creates a new *yoga* of human development as *yoga* also means the ethics, aesthetics and spirituality of establishing connections in the midst of disjunctions, disruptions and violence of many kinds.<sup>17</sup> It is also part of a warmth of being connected in the midst of the cold logic of isolation and alienation which gives rise to a new *tantra* of human development in which the fire of mutual creative warmth becomes a vehicle of self and social transformation. Art and spirituality play an important role in the vision and experiments with human development as *yoga* and *tantra* of development. The yoga of human and social development involves creating fields of mutual learning and connectedness. The *tantra* of development involves creating vibrant spaces of conviviality where all concerned would enjoy being together and grow in each other's warmth of relationship. The broadening of art and spirituality also is accompanied by deepening of the discourse and realization of the social where social no longer means only structures but also spaces of self and mutual realization.

## ART, SPIRITUALITY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: AN INVITATION FOR NEW PATHS OF THINKING AND PRACTICAL REALIZATIONS

Development has both an artistic dimension as well spiritual dimension. Conventional visions and practices of human development have not paid enough attention to these as well. This essay as well as our book is an invitation for us to realize these links and manifold processes of self, cultural, social and world transformations.

## NOTES

1. Artistic transcendence in Nussbaum refers to these processes as she writes: 'there is a great deal of room for transcendence of our ordinary humanity... transcendence, we might say, of an *internal* and human sort ... There is so much to do in this area of human transcending (which I also imagine as a transcending by *descent*, delving more deeply into oneself and one's humanity, and becoming deeper and more spacious as a result) that if one really pursued that aim well and fully I suspect that there would be little time left to look about for any other sort' (Nussbaum 1990: 379).

2. Imagination is an indispensable foundation and ever-present companion of life and it is linked to aspiration and dynamics of creativity in self, culture and society. But our dominant models and methods of research in modernity, as the linked larger field of modernity itself, has lacked cultivation of imagination and creativity. In many ways the predominance of mechanical models in science, scholarship, society and state has killed our wings of imagination and creativity. Imagination works at the interstices of body, mind, spirit, society, nature and divine. Imagination is not confined to individual in a narrow sense; it can begin with the vibration of silence and solitude of soul but it also arises in our practices of co-beings, collaborations and points and pathways of contestations and confrontations. Creative imagination, as the linked pathway of moral and social imagination, has an indispensable collaborative dimension in which as we walk, work, dream, sing, argue and fight together, our wings and roots of imagination get sharpened and deeper.
3. Here the following reflections of S.N. Eisenstadt also deserve our careful consideration:

While the term “parrhesia” as used by Foucault goes beyond the simple emphasis on resistance as due mainly to the inconvenience of being confined within the coercive frameworks of an order and denotes the courageous act of disrupting dominant discourses, thereby opening a new space for another truth to emerge—not a discursive truth but rather a “truth of the self,” an authentication of the courageous speaker in this “eruptive truth-speaking”—it does not systematically analyze the nature of the agency through which such other truth may emerge, or how the emergence of such “truth of the self” may become interwoven with process of social change and transformation. (Eisenstadt 2002: 38)

4. As Foucault writes, “The political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our day is not try to liberate the individual from the state and its institutions but to liberate us both from the state and the type of individuality linked to state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity [...]” (Foucault 2005: 526).
5. As Alka Wali writes about her work with artists in New York city and Chicago: “We discovered that the desire to practice art led people to cross deep social boundaries of gender, class, and even, at times race. We discovered that the serious dedication to the crafts led people to overcome their fear of each other, to develop trust and engagement in many ways that were not possible in their work place or home place” (Wali 2015: 183). To make sense of this work of art, Wali presents us the



perspective of relational aesthetics cultivated by Bourriaud, an art critic. Here what Wali writes deserves our careful consideration:

Bourriaud, an art critic and curator, attempts to characterize trends in conceptual arts that emerged in the 1990s, suggesting that certain artists are positioning art as a form of social activism in ways that emphasize social interaction and its context. Relational aesthetics is defined by art that is more participatory, collaborative and activist. Following Foucault and Guattari, Bourriaud posits that this type of art works at the “micro-political” level, focusing on individual or localized transformation rather than striving for grander-scale social movements. (Wali 2015: 185)

6. The vision and pathways of *multi-topia* hermeneutics builds upon the idea of *diatopical* hermeneutics proposed by Raimundo Panikkar. Building upon the seminal work of Raimundo Panikkar, Boaventura de Sousa Santos elaborates *diatopical* hermeneutics thus:

The aim of *diatopical* hermeneutics is to maximize the awareness of the reciprocal incompleteness of cultures by engaging in a dialogue, as it were, with one foot in one culture and the other in another—hence its *diatopical* character. *Diatopical* hermeneutics is an exercise in reciprocity among cultures that consists in transforming the premises of argumentation in a given culture into intelligible and credible arguments in another. (2014: 92)

Santos here talks about putting one’s feet in cultures which resonates with my idea of foot work, foot work in landscapes of self, culture and society as part of creative research (cf. Giri 2012). Hermeneutics does not mean only reading of texts and cultures as texts but also foot-walking with texts and cultures as foot walks and foot works resonating with Heidegger calls a hermeneutics of *facticity* (cf. Mehta 2004). Santos talks about *diatopical* hermeneutics but this need not be confined to our feet only in two cultures; it needs to move beyond two cultures and embrace many cultures. Spiritual traditions also can help us realize that though we have physically two feet, we can realize that we have many feet. In the Vedas it is considered that Divine has million feet and similarly we can realize that humans also have million feet and with our million feet we can engage ourselves with not only creative foot work but also heart work (*herzwerk* as it is called in German) in our acts of gathering of knowledge, self and the world. Supplementing Santos’s *diatopical* hermeneutics, we can cultivate *multi-topia* hermeneutics which is accompanied

by a multi-valued logic of autonomy and interpenetration going beyond either-or logic. Art and aesthetics play an important role in both *multi-topia* hermeneutics and multi-valued logic as they help us to take gentle and careful artistic steps in difficult journeys across terrains and domains and making connections across fields usually constructed isolated and separate (see Giri 2016b).

7. As different from Max Weber, for Hannah Arendt, power is the ability to work in concert rather than exercise one's will over others.
8. We can also here consider the following paragraph of thought from Giorgio Agamben who also offers similar thoughts:

How can art, the innocent of occupations, pit man against Terror? [...] The dream of the Terror is to create works that are in the world in the same way as the block of stone; it is the dream of a *product* that exists according to the statute of the *thing* [...]

[...] art becomes an increasingly uncanny experience, with respect to which speaking of interest is at the very least a euphemism, because of what it at stake seems to be not in any way the production of a beautiful work but instead the life and death of the author, or at least his or her spiritual health. (Agamben 1999: 9, 5)

9. Memory work involves both work and meditation with memory as well as our roots and routes of life. The following poem by the author explores these entangled pathways of critique, creativity and transformations:

Roots and Routes: Memory Works and Meditations

Roots and Routes

Routes within Roots

Roots with Routes

Multiple Roots and Multiple Routes

Crisscrossing With Love

Care, *Chung* and *Karuna*

Crisscrossing and Cross-firing

Root work and Route Work

Footwork and Memory Work

Weaving threads

Amidst threats

Dancing in front of terror  
 Dancing with terrorists  
 Meditating with threat  
 Meditating with threads  
 Meditating with Roots and Routes  
 Root Meditation  
 Route Meditation  
 Memory Work as Meditating with Earth  
 Dancing with Soul, Cultures and Cosmos

[UNPAR Guest House, Bandung Feb. 13 2015 9 AM; Chung in the above passage refers to equilibrium and centrality of mind which is the foundation for ho, harmony. I am grateful to my friend Julie M. Geredien for her insight as I build on her work on transformative harmony here]

10. In his dialogue with Tagore, Gandhi writes in his article, "The Great Sentinel," published in *Young India* of 13 October 1921:

True to his poetical instint the Poet lives for the morrow and would have us do likewise. He presents to our admiring gaze the beautiful picture of the birds early in the morning singing hymns of praise as they soar into the sky. These birds had their days food and soared with rested wings in whose veins new blood have flown during the previous rights. But I have had the pain of watching birds who for want of strength could not be coaxed even into a flutter of their wings. The human bird under Indian sky gets up weaker than when he pretended to retire". (in Bhattacharya 1997: 91)

As the above presents a glimpse of Gandhi's mind, there are many aspects of Gandhi's approach to beauty which can inspire us to think, meditate and walk further with him and the calling of beauty in life. The following glimpse from Gandhi's visit to Paris exhibition of 1890 can be instructive. Gandhi visited Paris exhibition of 1890. As Hassan (1980: 52) writes:

He appreciated the wonderful construction of Notre Dame and the elaborate decoration of interior with its beautiful sculptures. There was much fashion and frivolity about the streets but inside churches, he found a different atmosphere as he saw people

kneeling and praying before the image of the Virgin [...] On the other hand, he found no beauty in the Eiffel Tower and like Tolstoy before him disparaged it: “It was the toy of the exhibition. So long as we are children we are attracted by toys.”

11. Here what Margaret Chatterjee writes deserves our careful consideration:

When Rabindranath Tagore writes of the spiritual, especially in his Herbert Lectures [...] he expressed his dissatisfaction with “the solitary enjoyment of the infinite in meditation.” He quoted approvingly Kabir’s opinion that to say the Supreme Reality dwells in the inner realm of the Spirit “shames out the outer world of matter.” But how can the two pilgrimages be combined, the within and without? Tagore’s answer is clear—through artistic activity. The harmony of relationship created by the poet and musician can be mirrored in the nature of each individual, for each man is endowed with a perpetual surplus of powers which transcends the desultory facts about him. (Chatterjee 2009: 107; also see Miri 2015)

12. Renunciation in Gandhi can bring us to Foucault’s path of self-restraint in life as a work of art though in his own life Foucault may not have followed this closely as he enjoyed bodily pleasure without limits as evident from his visit to many bath houses in San Francisco when he was teaching at Berkeley.
13. For Sri Aurobindo, aestheses can awaken us, even the soul in us to something yet deeper and more fundamental than mere pleasure and enjoyment, to some form of the spirit’s delight of existence, Ananda (Sri Aurobindo 1973: 40). According to Sri Aurobindo (1973: 44), “There is not only physical beauty in the world – there is moral, intellectual and spiritual beauty too. There are not only aesthetic values but life values, mind values and soul values that enter into art. Beyond the ideals and idea forces even there are other presences more inner and inmost realities, a soul behind things and beings, the spirit and its powers, which could be subject matter of an art still more rich and deep and abundant in its interest than any of these [...]” Walking and meditating with Sri Aurobindo and some of his co-walkers, the following poem of the author explores different possibilities of art, collaboration and transcendence.

### HalfBirth Day

This is my halfbirth day

This is my friend’s birthday

We are friends

of soul, art and the world  
 We create art in the beach  
 A public art of aesthetics and *aestheses*  
 Aesthetics touching the visible  
*Aestheses* embracing the deeper  
 We create murals in the streets  
 Not only in our drawing rooms  
 We create fusion of flags and music  
 A new art of border-crossing  
 Art becomes a call for transformation  
 Calling friends to break out of  
 Routines of repetition and reproduction  
 To discover the spring within and around  
 To sing again  
 We call people to their streets and souls  
 We become clean  
 We become green  
 We create beauty in our lips and cosmos  
 We have faith in each other  
 Faith in Nature, Human and Divine  
 When we sing  
 The donkey and divine  
 Come to listen  
 This is our joint birth day  
 Of co-birthing and co-breathing  
 Surrender and co-creation

[For and with Kirti and Lelya, Tasmai Art Gallery,  
 July 17, 2014: 610 PM].

Sri Aurobindo's pointer to aestheses as movement of beauty with and beyond sensuality is also reflected in the following passage on art and beauty by Andrew Harvey, a deep seeker of both art and spirituality:

Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote in the *Brothers Karamazov*: "The world will be saved by beauty." What Dostoevsky meant by beauty was not mere aesthetic beauty but an illumined and initiatory radiance of a vision of holiness. This radiance is art's highest and noblest function to represent, and when through art's holy magic, the heart is awakened to a vision of the sacrality of all creation, beauty can become the fuel for a passion to transform the world. (Harvey 2011: 60)

14. The Mother herself was a creative artist and she was part of circle of creative artists and circles in Paris around the turn of the last century. She knew such famous artists and sculptors as Andre Rodin.
15. Here what Mason writes deserves our careful consideration: "[There is need for a] broader base for social foundations of art education and art teacher-training and their translation into curriculum practice, together with planned program of applied research. At local levels, research is needed to obtain precise information about the artistic histories and characteristics of small-scale communities for use in art teacher education, and at national and regional levels to ascertain ways in which global culture is engaging with these local practices and forms" (Mason 1999: 16). But this, as Mason suggests, challenges us to go beyond available models of art, education and development, for example if arts education for human development needs to be done through sole focus on "literacy" understood in a narrow way. As Kapila Vatsayan (2011) challenges us here:

[...] the question to be asked in the context of our debates about education and arts is whether the need for arts can be addressed in the context of a focus on 'literacy.' It can, if one considers that there are several kinds of literacy: oral, kinetic as well as visual.

India, and indeed, Asia, is known for its handicrafts. Who makes these handicrafts—embroidery, shawls and textiles—in Asia? Many Indian women's Indian identity is shown through their saris, jewelry, etc. These products, often made by so-called illiterates in the 'underdeveloped' world are creative expressions which manifest a 'literacy' of another order, and through mean other than writing. Information, knowledge and wisdom can and has been transmitted though oral and kinetic means.

Such reflections will perhaps convince us that there are alternative perspectives in regard to the measuring of development and creativity.

16. The following extract from a poem by the author explores this:

Walking with words like a camel  
 Bringing words to the woods  
 Walking and dancing together with words  
 Our co-walking becomes a passage of a new revelation  
 A new realization of co-creation.

17. This is explored in the following poem by the author

***Yoga, Jamming and Tantra***

Is Yoga India's gift to the world  
 or India Yoga's gift to humanity?  
 Yoga  
 Samkhya Yoga  
 What about Tantra?  
 Samkhya-Yoga-Tantra  
 Jamming with Jamming  
 The Journey of the Sufis  
 Creating a warm space of embrace  
*Annayoga* and *Sabdayoga*  
 Yoga of foods and Yoga with words  
 Life worlds and Living words  
*Chittabudhi Niroadha*  
*Chittabudhi Sanjoga*  
 Control of mind, connection of mind  
 A million embrace  
 Kissing clasp of heaven and earth

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