

Inside:



2

Perspective: The prospects for creating spiritually based development indicators.



8

At the UN, young girls explain their concerns to the Commission on the Status of Women.



10

In India's Dang District, an efflorescence of small-scale community development projects.



16

Review: *Mark Tobey: A Retrospective* — A show in Madrid highlights the painter's innovative style and spiritual vision.

An unusual meeting of bankers and believers

High-level representatives from nine major world religions meet with the president of the World Bank to discuss religion and development; a new factor in project assessment

LONDON — As the head of the world's largest economic development agency, James Wolfensohn is an extraordinarily busy man. Since becoming president of the World Bank some two and a half years ago, he has visited more than 60 countries, meeting with heads of state and government, top national banking officials and representatives from leading non-governmental organizations.

So it is in all respects exceptional that Mr. Wolfensohn spent nearly two days meeting with spiritual leaders from nine major world religions in February, exploring topics that are seemingly unrelated to international finance — such as how spiritual and material development are interrelated and how the Bank and the religions might forge a new relationship to help tackle the problems of global poverty.

"For a man like Wolfensohn, nothing is as important as his time," said Dr. Thomas Lachs, a former director of the Bank of Austria, who was at the meeting as a representative of the Reform Jewish community. "So I found it quite remarkable that he took two days for this conference, and consider it a sign of the importance he attaches to such things."

By all accounts, too, the meeting itself was quite extraordinary. Convened by Mr. Wolfensohn and the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, the event — known officially as the World Faiths and Development Dialogue — was held in London 18-19 February 1998 at the Archbishop's 800-year-old residence, Lambeth Palace. The gathering resulted in a series

(Continued on page 4)



The assembled participants of the World Faith and Development Dialogue.

ONE COUNTRY

is published quarterly by the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith.

For more information on the stories in this newsletter, or any aspect of the Bahá'í International Community and its work, please contact:

ONE COUNTRY
Bahá'í International
Community – Suite 120
866 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017
U.S.A.

E-mail: 1country@bic.org
<http://www.onecountry.org>

Executive Editor:
Ann Boyles

Editor:
Brad Pokorny


Associate Editors:
Nancy Ackerman (Moscow)
Christine Samandari-Hakim (Paris)
Kong Siew Huat (Macau)
Guilda Walker (London)

Editorial Assistant:
Veronica Shoffstall

Subscription inquiries should be directed to the above address. All material is copyrighted by the Bahá'í International Community and subject to all applicable international copyright laws. Stories from this newsletter may be republished by any organization provided that they are attributed as follows: "Reprinted from ONE COUNTRY, the newsletter of the Bahá'í International Community."

© 1998 by The Bahá'í
International Community

ISSN 1018-9300

Printed on recycled paper 

Spirituality in Development

[Editor's note: The following is adapted from a paper, entitled "Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development," presented by the Bahá'í Faith at the World Faiths and Development Dialogue on 18-19 February 1998 in London. (See page one.)]

Development, in the Bahá'í view, is an organic process in which "the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material." Meaningful development requires balancing the seemingly antithetical processes of individual progress and social advancement, of globalization and decentralization, and of promoting universal standards and fostering cultural diversity. In our increasingly interdependent world, development efforts must be animated by universal values and guided by a vision of world community.

Local and national communities that prosper in such a future will do so because they acknowledge the spiritual dimension of human nature and make the moral, emotional, physical and intellectual development of the individual a central priority. They will guarantee freedom of religion and encourage the establishment of places of worship. These communities will promote respect for both rights and responsibilities, will foster the equality and partnership of women and men, and will protect and nurture families. They will promote beauty, natural and man-made, and will incorporate into their design principles of environmental preservation and rehabilitation. Guided by the concept of unity in diversity, they will support widespread participation in the affairs of society and will increasingly turn to leaders who are motivated by the desire to serve.

Bahá'ís are optimistic that such a future is inevitable and, indeed, is already beginning to emerge. They are also realistic, understanding that progress toward such a future will require an enormous amount of perseverance, sacrifice and change. The speed and cost of this progress will be determined largely by governments,

multilateral organizations, the private sector, and organizations of civil society. All concerned must clearly understand what they are working for if they are to become constructive participants in the process.

To chart development progress, social and economic indicators are used by various actors, from United Nations agencies and governments to businesses and academicians. Indicators do not change reality, but they help shape the way we perceive, and serve to forge a common understanding of development.

Today, there are numerous efforts to make development indicators more reflective of what actually constitutes individual and community progress. Among the most notable of these is the Human Development Index, as calculated by the United Nations Development Programme in its annual Human Development Report.

The idea that spiritual values are critical to human advancement, long recognized by the great majority of humanity, is increasingly accepted by secular development specialists. The global action plans that came out of the major UN conferences of this decade have helped shift the dominant view of development from that of a top-down, technically and economically driven process to one in which people and communities increasingly define and take responsibility for their own advancement. And many of these plans explicitly take note of the importance of spiritual values. The idea of spiritually based indicators for development is accordingly timely.

Spiritually based indicators assess development progress as a function of the application of spiritual principles. At the heart of their conception is the understanding that human nature is fundamentally spiritual and that spiritual principles, which resonate with the human soul, provide an enormous motivational power for sacrifice and change. Therefore the people of the world will be much more inclined to support policies and programs that emerge from the development of indicators based on spiritual principles than they would programs based on a purely material conception of life. The use of these measures could help transform not only the vision but the actual practice of development, by

Perspective

helping to establish, clarify and prioritize goals, policies and programs.

The components of a spiritually based indicator would include a vision of a peaceful and united future; the selected principle(s) crucial to the realization of that future; the policy area addressed by the principle(s); and the goal toward which the indicator assesses progress. The indicator should be quantitatively or qualitatively measurable and verifiable, and adaptable within a wide diversity of contexts without violating the integrity of the principle(s) involved.

We suggest starting with five principles: 1) unity in diversity; 2) equity and justice; 3) equality of the sexes; 4) trustworthiness and moral leadership; and 5) independent investigation of truth. These five principles can then be applied to general policy areas to create spiritually based development indicators. For the purposes of discussion, we suggest beginning with five such policy areas: 1) economic development; 2) education; 3) environmental stewardship; 4) meeting basic needs in food, nutrition, health and shelter; and 5) governance and participation.

By juxtaposing these principles and policy areas, there are numerous ways in which spiritually based development indicators might be created. Take, for example, the application of the principle of unity in diversity to the policy area of education. In concrete terms, the principle can be expressed in many ways; one particularly relevant aspect is its connection to the concept of global consciousness.

Accordingly, one might measure the percentage of time — both in class and in after school programs — that is dedicated to subject matter or to other activities which foster global consciousness. Another approach might be a content analysis of textbooks to determine the percentage of space dedicated to this theme. Still another indicator might measure the prevalence of such subject matter in the curricula of teacher training institutes.

Another example that illustrates how such indicators can be created is found by applying the spiritual principles of equity and justice in the arena of economic policy. In this case, the goal would be to narrow the income gap between rich and poor nations. Already, of course, there are nu-



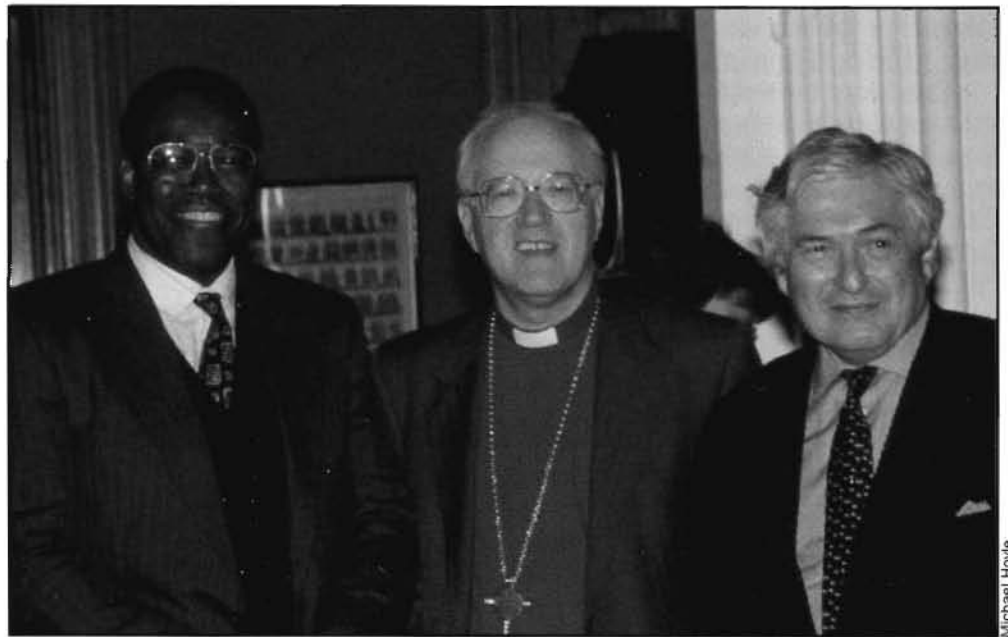
merous measurements of the income gap among individual countries. But these fall short of examining progress that is made in reducing the gap. A more spiritually based approach would be to plot income relationships over time, to determine if the gap between the most and the least economically prosperous nations is being reduced. Another approach might weigh the economic benefits that accrue from trading opportunities that favor economically poorer nations.

The actual identification of goals and the construction of specific spiritually based indicators for development could be undertaken as a collaborative process. We propose that representatives of the world's religions be brought together, perhaps under the aegis of the World Bank, or another international development agency, to begin consulting on spiritual principles and their bearing on individual and collective progress. The initial aim would be to reach understanding on a limited number of spiritual principles that are shared universally and a set of priority policy areas in which they would be applied.

The ultimate aim of this initiative would be to place spiritual principles at the heart of development. As is now increasingly recognized, sustainable development is impossible without the proper recognition of the role that such principles play in individual and collective advancement. Developing indicators to measure and chart this progress is therefore not only timely but essential. ☉

Non-governmental organizations sponsored a one-day conference on human rights at the United Nations on 21 January 1998. Entitled "Good Practices, Bad Practices," the conference explored in broad terms the human rights record since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 50 years ago. Shown left to right are: Afaf Mahfous, president of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN (CONGO), which sponsored the conference; Techeeste Ahderom, the main representative to the UN of the Bahá'í International Community and the chairman of the conference; and Ernst Sucharipa, Austria's Ambassador to the UN. Other speakers included Emilia Castro de Barish, Costa Rica's Ambassador to the UN; Kamallesh Sharma, India's Ambassador to the UN; Felice Gaer, Chair of the UDHR 50th anniversary committee; and Charlotte Bunch, director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership.

Shown left to right are Kiser Barnes, representative of the Bahá'í Faith, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, at Lambeth Palace during the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, held 18-19 February 1998. Mr. Barnes, whose background is in international law, currently serves at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa as an International Counsellor.



Michael Hoyle

World Faiths and Development Dialogue: an unusual meeting of bankers and believers

(Continued from page one)

of ground-breaking ideas and initiatives that could significantly reshape the field of international economic development, say those who were involved.

"For the first time in contemporary economics, the role of religion in development was not just publicly acknowledged or even acclaimed, but brought into a partnership with one of the largest and, some would argue, most vociferously secular organizations in the world," said Martin Palmer, director of the International Consultancy on Religion, Education and Culture (ICOREC), which played a key role in organizing the Dialogue. "The repercussions of this are that the economic world will have to take religion seriously — and vice versa." In particular, said participants, the meeting gave high-level endorsement to the idea that true development cannot take place without the proper consideration of spirituality in the lives of individuals and communities.

As Mr. Wolfensohn himself said in a closing statement: "What is clear is that what has come out of this meeting is that there is a unity between us. A unity of the concern for physical livelihood but also spiritual and cultural continuity and I

think it is that which certainly I have found remarkable at this meeting. There has been a total meeting of minds in terms of this linkage."

High-Level Representation

The representatives of the world's religions themselves came from perhaps the highest level yet for such an interfaith conference. Included were leaders from the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism, and Taoism. Among them, they represented the religious traditions followed by an estimated 3 billion people.

On the Bank's side, Mr. Wolfensohn himself was the main representative. A former investment banker, Mr. Wolfensohn has during his tenure sought to create new directions for the Bank, which has come under criticism in recent years for, among other things, its emphasis on funding large projects that some development specialists say are disconnected from the needs of local people.

The Bank is the world's largest development funding agency. For fiscal year 1997, it loaned out US\$19.1 billion to some 241 projects worldwide. An independent specialized agency of the United Nations, the Bank seeks to be the lender of last

"What is clear is that what has come out of this meeting is that there is a unity between us. A unity of the concern for physical livelihood but also spiritual and cultural continuity..."

— James Wolfensohn, President, World Bank

resort, providing capital to the poorest nations when no other sources exist.

Since taking office in June 1995, Mr. Wolfensohn has worked to widen the Bank's contacts with non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society. "This has involved the Bank reaching out to various groups and dialoguing with them," said John Mitchell, a Bank official who was involved in planning the Dialogue. "This event is in some ways an explicit recognition that Mr. Wolfensohn feels religions are a major part of civil society. While the Bank has dialogued with them in piecemeal fashion, this event is also trying to systematically push the dialogue to a higher level — and to validate it."

According to Mr. Palmer and others, the impetus for this meeting grew out of a previous interfaith gathering, held in April-May 1995 at Windsor Palace. Co-sponsored by the World Wide Fund for Nature, among others, that meeting was known as the Summit on Religions and Conservation, and it sought to strengthen the then burgeoning collaboration between religions and the environmental movement by creating a new entity: the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC).

A World Bank representative, Andrew Steer, participated in the Windsor meeting. As part of the follow-up process, Bank officials then began a dialogue with ARC

and its members. Elements of the Lambeth agenda were set at a meeting last May in Washington at the Bank's headquarters, when a smaller group of religious leaders gathered to discuss ways the Bank could be more sensitive to local communities and alternative values.

Themes at Lambeth

The Lambeth event opened on Tuesday, 17 March, with a reception at Buckingham Palace, hosted by HRH the Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who had also hosted the Windsor meeting.

The next morning at Lambeth, the official meeting, known as the World Faiths and Development Dialogue, began with a session entitled "understandings of 'development.'" During that session, the meaning of the terms "poverty," "prosperity," and "developed" were discussed, with an aim, according to the agenda, of understanding "how the gap between the present situation and the kind of societies to which we aspire" might be addressed.

The afternoon session focused on "criteria for development," in which themes relating to "participation," "sustainability," and "voice" were discussed, all in the context of how the faiths and development agencies like the Bank might cooperate to improve efforts in each area.

Among other things, it was generally agreed that development is a process that encompasses both the spiritual and the material aspects of life; that personal transformation goes hand in hand with social change and that both must be viewed as central to collective progress; and that development must be based on principles of sustainability, justice, consultation and participation.

Kiser Barnes, the lead Bahá'í representative, opened the session on "participation," offering some thoughts on the spiritual values that must undergird efforts to include the active participation of all in any development endeavor.

"Only development programs that are perceived as just and equitable can hope to engage the commitment of the people upon whom successful implementation ultimately depends," said Mr. Barnes, who holds the position of International Counsellor. "When people trust that all are protected by standards and assured of benefits, such virtues as honesty, the willingness to work and sacrifice, moderation,

Participants of the World Faiths and Development Dialogue February 18-19, 1998

Co-Chairs:

- Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, head of the Anglican Church
- James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank Group

Bahá'ís:

- Kiser Barnes, International Counsellor, Bahá'í World Centre
- Lawrence Arturo, Director of the Bahá'í International Community, Office of the Environment

Buddhists:

- Nambaryn Enkhbayar, Leader of the Minority in the Parliament of Mongolia
- Sulak Sivaraksa, social activist and founder of small economy model developments in Thailand

Christians:

- Metropolitan John of Pergamon (Orthodox tradition), representing the Ecumenical Patriarchate
- Archimandrite Feofan (Orthodox tradition), Deputy Chairman of the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate
- Wendy Tyndale (Protestant tradition), development specialist, Christian Aid
- The Right Rev. Thomas Olmorijoi Laiser (Protestant tradition), Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, the Arusha Diocese.
- His Eminence Cardinal Roger Etchegaray (Catholic tradition), President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the Vatican
- Monsignor Diarmuid Martin (Catholic tradition), Secretary for the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace



Lambeth Palace, the 800-year-old residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the 70 million member Anglican community.

- Father Sergio Bernal (Catholic tradition), S.J., Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at the Gregorian University, Rome

Hindus:

- Swami Vibudhesha Teertha, Head of the Sri Admar Mutt, Udipi, Karnataka, South India
- Acharya Srivatsa Goswami, Head of the Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana, in Vrindavan, India

Jains:

- His Excellency Dr. L. M. Singhvi, Patron of the Institute of Jainology and a leading scholar of Jainism and of Vedic and Indic religions, and a prominent jurist, philosopher and parliamentarian
- Professor Padmanabh S. Jaini, trustee of the Institute of Jainology and Professor of Buddhist Studies at the University of California at Berkeley

Jews:

- Professor Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg (Conservative tradition), Vice President Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress
- Professor Rabbi René Sirat (Orthodox tradition), Former Grand Rabbi of France, current Grand Rabbi of the Consistoire Central
- Dr. Thomas Lachs (Reform tradition), former Board Member of the Bank of Austria, Chair of the Board of the Jewish Museum of Vienna

Muslims:

- HRH Crown Prince El-Hassan Bin Talal of Jordan
- His Highness, the Aga Khan, spiritual leader or Imam of the Nizaris, the larger of the two main branches of the Ismaili Shia community

and a spirit of cooperation can flourish and combine to make possible the attainment of demanding collective goals.”

On Thursday, 19 February, the meeting ended following a morning-long session during which the final details of an 11-point, 700-word statement on the outcome of the Dialogue were agreed upon. That statement, which was presented by the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Wolfensohn, made a number of significant and concrete proposals.

Most importantly perhaps, the Bank

Tyndale, a development specialist with the UK-based Christian Aid, who served as an advisor to Archbishop Carey in the planning of the Dialogue. “The criteria that the Faiths are suggesting focus more on the overall well-being of communities and people, of which a very important aspect is both spirituality and cultural identity. This came out of the meeting very strongly.”

Representatives of each faith presented a paper giving their suggestions on the new criteria for development. These papers will later be published in a book. [See

Much of the Dialogue was devoted to an exchange of ideas. Among those points which received wide agreement were:

- **Development is a process that encompasses both the spiritual and the material aspects of life.**
- **Personal change goes hand in hand with social change, and both must be viewed as central to collective progress.**
- **Development must be guided by spiritual principles and values, and seek to promote quality of life and human dignity.**
- **Successful development will promote family and community cohesion.**
- **New measures of development, based on common criteria and shared principles, will be needed.**
- **Corruption is a cancer that destroys trust and destabilizes the very foundations of society.**

and the faiths agreed to continue to dialogue by setting up joint working groups to explore further themes of concern. Among the themes that will be considered by working groups are: community building; hunger and food security; environmental sustainability; preservation of cultural heritage (including sacred sites); violence and post-conflict reconstruction; education and social service delivery.

The final statement promised that the religious communities will be invited to “influence the thinking of the World Bank by participating in the studies and discussions embodied in the Bank’s annual World Development Reports.” A special effort will be made to get this input for the year 2000 report, which will focus on “understanding poverty.”

“Until now, the main criterion in judging the success of development work has been economic growth,” said Wendy

Perspective, page 2/ Participants also committed themselves to “explore further opportunities for partnership” at the country level. Pilot projects are to be established between the Bank and the faiths, for example. Religious representatives are to be invited to speak at special staff training sessions to help Bank personnel learn more about religious beliefs and cultures.

A Comparison to Ecology

Beyond the specifics, many participants said the most significant aspect of the event was the fact of the meeting itself and its overarching idea that religion and spirituality must now be factored into even the most straightforward programs of economic development. This idea, they said, is likely to affect not just the World Bank, but also the entire international development agenda.

Dr. Lachs said he thought that the processes unleashed by the meeting could

lead international development agencies like the World Bank to view the cultural and spiritual impact of development projects in much the same way that environmental considerations have come to be a factor in projects today.

"Thirty years ago, in development, nobody cared about ecology," said Dr. Lachs. "Today, the environmental impact of a project is a major issue. If we can do the same thing in the spiritual-cultural-values field, the impact on the non-economic lives of people will be tremendously important."

Wangari Mathaai of Kenya, founder of the Green Belt Movement, who was also at the Lambeth meeting, said she agrees that the meeting could signal the beginning of a major shift in the way development agencies regard religion and culture.

"In my region, the culture has been completely destroyed and is considered retrogressive and not helpful to development," said Ms. Mathaai. "It is possible to disempower people when you destroy their culture, and to make it very difficult for them to participate in development. So I am very happy to see development agencies recognize that a people without a culture is a people without direction and that the culture of a people and the things they value do matter very much."

Another emergent idea was that

greater involvement of religious groups in official development efforts might become an antidote to the corruption that all too often accompanies the processes of development funding. "The moral authority of religious leaders is key in the campaign to promote good governance and transparency — which Wolfensohn passionately champions in view of the high price that corruption and waste exact on poor countries," said World Bank News, a Bank publication aimed at journalists.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, Vice President Emeritus of the World Jewish Congress, who was present at both the Lambeth and Windsor meetings, said the interfaith nature of the meeting was especially important. And he suggested that, wherever possible, joint projects with the Bank should also be undertaken as interfaith ventures. "Projects should be managed not by one religious group but by a consortium of Faiths," said Rabbi Hertzberg.

Swami Vibudhesha Teertha, one of the principal Hindu representatives, said: "The significance of the meeting is not to be underestimated. This dialogue redefined poverty, prosperity and progress. A new atmosphere was created for new development activities which take into account the social, the environmental, and the spiritual." ☸

Sikhs:

- Sri Singh Sahib Manjit Singh, Jathedar of Anandpur, Punjab, India, and President of the Sikh World Council
- Dr. Rajwant Singh, founding member of the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, a leading Sikh organization in the USA

Taoists:

- Zhang Ji Yu, Vice President, Vice Secretary General of the China Taoist Association at Bai Yun Guan, Beijing
- Zhang Xun Mu, academic researcher on Taoism at the Religious Research Center, an institute under the Religious Affairs Bureau of China
- Tjalling Halbertsma, Dutch national who has been working with Taoist groups in China to preserve seven major Taoist sacred mountains

Other invitees:

- Dr. Wangari Maathai, well-known environmentalist and women's rights activist and founder of Kenya's Green Belt Movement
- Dr. Vandana Shiva, Hindu activist, development specialist, and Director of the Institute of Science, Technology and Ecology in Delhi
- Andrew Purkis, Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for Public Affairs
- Ismail Serageldin, Vice President for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development, the World Bank Group
- Andrew Rogerson, World Bank's representative for the United Kingdom and Ireland

More biographical information about Dialogue participants can be found at

<<http://www.onecountry.org>>



Believers and a banker: left to right are Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, Sri Singh Sahib Manjit Singh, Dr. George Carey, World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn, and Dr. Rajwant Singh.

Posing behind the chairman's podium in United Nations Conference Room Three, where they addressed the 42nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, are 15 young girls from around the world, whose presence was sponsored by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on issues related to the girl child. The girls came from eight countries — Armenia, Brazil, Chile, the Gambia, Nepal, Singapore, the UK, and the USA — and ranged in age from 13 to 18. Their testimony about the problems and challenges facing young women was often poignant.



At the UN, young girls voice concerns about grown-up issues

Brought from around the world by NGOs, 15 young girls told their stories to this year's UN Commission on the Status of Women. Their stories illustrated the human side of the reports and statistics presented this year to the Commission.

UNITED NATIONS — Speaking bravely through her tears, 17-year-old Kemmeh Damba-Danjo from the Gambia told a room full of government delegates and non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives a story as sad as it is common — the tale of her 14-year-old cousin's death from birth complications. Her cousin had become pregnant by a boy who had broken his promise to marry her. She died, as so many teenage mothers do, within weeks of giving birth, from complications in delivery. Her infant died shortly thereafter.

If the baby had lived, said Ms. Damba-Danjo, who is both working and going to school, she would have taken the child as her own. She is already raising the child of her sister, who also died following pregnancy due to problems arising from her female genital cutting, a controversial tradition referred to by the United Nations as female genital mutilation (FGM), which is practiced in some parts of Africa.

"For how long should girls continue to die from pregnancy?" asked Ms. Damba-Danjo said at a 4 March 1998 roundtable discussion called "Listen to Girls." "I am appealing to all girls to prevent themselves from this problem."

Ms. Damba-Danjo was one of 15 young women who came from all over the world

for the 42nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The girls were sponsored by the NGO Committee on UNICEF's Working Group on Girls (NGO-WGGs) and their stories illustrated the human side of the reports and statistics which abounded at the meetings and workshops held here 2-13 March 1998.

Following the schedule determined by the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Commission met this year to assess progress in addressing four interrelated themes: human rights of women, women and armed conflict, violence against women, and the girl child.

Many agreed that these areas overlap considerably, and some said that the issues of the girl child are simply an earlier stage in a cycle of issues that affect women.

"The rights and needs of girls are central to the achievement of the human rights of women, the elimination of violence against women and protection of women in armed conflict," said Sree Gururaja, senior adviser on Gender and Development for UNICEF. "The themes should be considered in an interrelated manner."

In "Clearing a Path for Girls," a report published by the NGO Working Groups on Girls in New York and Geneva (WGGs),

248 NGO respondents from 87 countries identified areas of most and least progress regarding the situation of girls in their countries. Problems frequently mentioned were health and nutrition; economic exploitation; negative cultural attitudes and practices including FGM, early marriage, and adolescent pregnancy; and the "entrenched and widespread discrimination against women" which "constituted the single most persistent and deeply-rooted cause of all problems facing girls."

The most notable improvement for girls worldwide, according to the report, is in primary education, where enrollments for girls have increased substantially since 1990. At the secondary level, however, the dropout rate for girls remains high because of early marriage, pregnancy, work, or the irrelevance of curricula. The most distressing trend identified by the report was the lack of progress in protecting girls from violence, which is sometimes culturally accepted and not considered a crime.

Sexual abuse also continues due to taboos which keep it from being reported. The Commission's NGO expert panelist on the Girl Child, Teresita Silva of Childhope, a Philippines-based NGO, said the problem is pervasive in her native land and victims are reluctant to come forward. "Sexual exploitation occurs in families by fathers, stepfathers, older brothers," said Ms. Silva. "Even police, teachers and pastors are involved."

To combat the problems facing girls — and subsequently women — NGOs involved with these issues said empowerment and education are the keys to building the self-esteem necessary for girls to understand and assert their rights and to act on behalf of their own advancement.

"So important is the education of girls," said a statement to the Commission by the Bahá'í International Community, "that if a lack of resources forces a choice, parents are advised to consider giving first priority to the education of their daughters."

The visiting girls, who represented eight different countries (Armenia, Brazil, Chile, the Gambia, Nepal, Singapore, the UK, and the USA) and ranged in age from 13 to 18, echoed these concerns at the roundtable discussion on 4 March. Speaking mainly about the related problems of low self-esteem and teenage pregnancy,

these young women were themselves manifestations of the empowerment and education they were advocating.

"All girls need to go to school," said Milena Dalmaschio Silva, 18, of Brazil, whose participation was sponsored by the Bahá'í International Community, a member of the NGO-WGGs. "They are potential educators of the whole family."

"Education for a girl is education for her children in the future," said Adeline Koay, a 14-year-old from Singapore, also sponsored by the Bahá'í Community. She said some families don't send their girls to school for fear they will be sexually abused or harassed. Limitations in educational opportunity have an impact on a girl's self-esteem, Ms. Koay said. Thirteen-year-old Sonia Ong, also of Singapore, added: "Education and training are the key to widening women's role and improving their status in society."

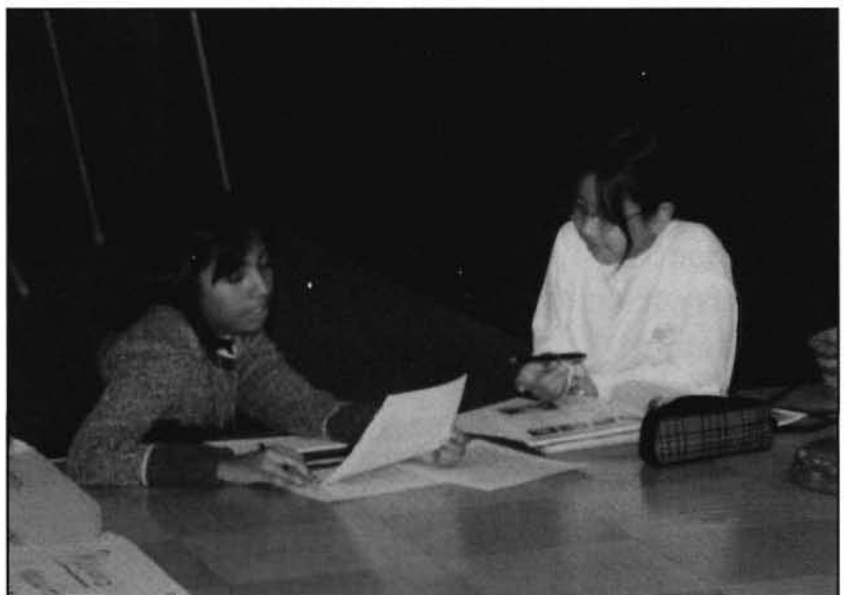
On the whole, reports to the Commission on women's progress since the 1995 Beijing Conference were encouraging. According to "Mapping Progress," a report by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), 70 percent of 187 governments have created national plans to address the needs of women in their countries. NGOs have contributed greatly to this success. Women's NGOs have had noticeable influence on legislation in the areas of domestic violence, trafficking in women and children, reproductive health, political participation and property rights, the report said. ☉

— By Veronica Shoffstall

"All girls need to go to school. They are potential educators of the whole family."

— Milena Dalmaschio Silva, 18, of Brazil

Sonia Ong and Adeline Koay from Singapore prepare to speak at the "Listen to Girls" Roundtable Discussion, held 4 March 1998 at the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women meeting. Both young women are Bahá'ís.



At the Dang Bahá'í Institute, located in Ahwa, the District Center, students from around the District gather for periodic training courses in community development and moral education. Shown here is a recent group of students. The courses are locally administered but they receive technical assistance from the New Era Development Institute.



In India's Dang District, new ideas bring an efflorescence of small-scale community development projects

In recent years, local Bahá'í communities in India's remote Dang District have undertaken a wide range of small-scale development projects almost entirely by themselves. These efforts include a three-month carpentry training workshop, a village grain bank scheme, and a hostel for young school children.

BHISYA, Gujarat, India — Even though he regularly visits this small village in Gujarat State's Dang District several times a year in an effort to promote small-scale, grassroots development, Manohar Patil was nevertheless caught by surprise when he learned that the local Bahá'í community here had, entirely on its own, launched an English class for children and youth.

Mr. Patil is the extension coordinator for the New Era Development Institute (NEDI), a Bahá'í-run development and training center based some 300 kilometers away in Panchgani, Maharashtra State. NEDI has established a collaborative relationship with the Dang Training Institute, a regional agency established by the state Bahá'í community.

The collaboration is designed to strengthen the capacity of local communities in the District, which is among the poorest in Gujarat State. This is accomplished through various training programs, through the co-sponsorship of selected projects, and the general process of development outreach. So it was pleasant news for Mr. Patil to learn about such a spontaneous undertaking.

"I was not even aware of the English

classes until we visited," said Mr. Patil. "But this is definitely the type of community development service we are looking for, are hoping for."

Indeed, throughout the Dang District, which is populated largely by the Dangi people, an indigenous grouping that is classified as a "tribe" by the government, there has been an efflorescence of just this type of locally initiated and locally operated social and economic development project.

Over the last year, for example, local Bahá'í communities in the District — which are composed almost wholly of Dangi Bahá'ís — have undertaken or sponsored the following efforts with little outside help: a three-month carpentry training workshop; a village grain bank scheme; a hostel for young school children; and the English classes in Bhisya. There are also regular and ongoing morals classes for children, women's group meetings and numerous individual income-generating enterprises in many of the communities in the District.

The flowering of such activities can be traced in part to the recent collaboration with NEDI, which since 1990 has been a gradually increasing presence in the District. Credit must also be given to

some 30 years of Bahá'í-sponsored humanitarian activities among the Dang people, a process that has led to the widespread acceptance of the Bahá'í Faith. Of the population of some 144,000 in the District, of which 95 percent are Dang, there are about 20,000 Bahá'ís.

Taken all together, it is a story of how the arrival of a new religious movement, especially one that promotes a new vision of individual capacity and empowerment, a strong sense of community responsibility, and spiritually grounded progressive social principles, can aid in the general process of social and economic advancement.

An Isolated Enclave

Even though it lies about 200 kilometers north of metropolitan Mumbai (Bombay), the Dang District remains quite isolated and materially underdeveloped. Encompassing 1,764 square kilometers in a rugged valley noted for its still largely pristine teak forests, the District has an overall literacy rate of 38 percent, the second lowest among 19 districts in Gujarat.

Approximately 90 percent of the population reside in the countryside, sustaining themselves at or just above the subsistence level by growing local varieties of millet and other seed crops and, in the off season, by working outside the District as migrant laborers. According to the District Health Office, some 70 percent of the population are considered to suffer from malnutrition.

Other health problems include extensive skin diseases such as scabies and water ringworm. "The level of hygiene is very poor," said Mahendra Chavan of the Health Office. There is only one hospital and some 57 health centers to serve the District's 311 villages.

Most of the population are nominally Hindu, although District officials say that the prevailing religion is really animist. "Basically, the people worship tigers and the forest and snakes and the sun and the moon," said M.N. Patel, the District Development Officer.

Yet the District is far from a disaster area. The houses are quite sturdy and clean, made from bamboo matting plastered over with a mixture of mud and cow dung that dries to a concrete-like hardness. And residents have access to acres of valuable teak wood (its export, though, is carefully regulated by the Government). As well, village

life remains relatively untouched by urban problems — although abuse of a native alcoholic drink made from wild jungle fruits is fairly common.

The Bahá'í community of India began its humanitarian efforts in Dang about 30 years ago when Bahá'í doctors from Bombay began coming up once or twice a month to hold weekend medical camps. "The doctors worked for free, bringing free medicine obtained from pharmaceutical companies," said Motilal Sevaram Sarolia, a Bahá'í from Indore who came to the District at that time, married a Dang woman and stayed on.

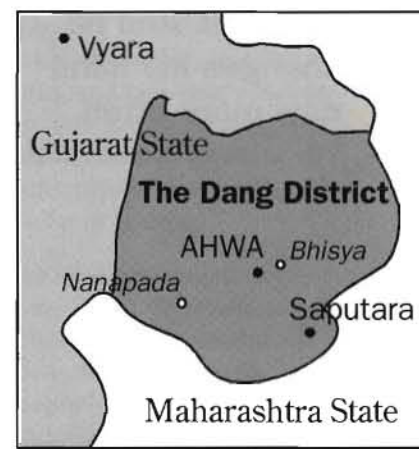
The establishment of the Faith brought with it a regularized process of community building. In any village or town where nine or more adult Bahá'ís reside, the group forms a local Spiritual Assembly, a freely elected decision-making council that forms the administrative center of Bahá'í community life. There are currently some 70 such local Spiritual Assemblies in the District.

Gradually, the Spiritual Assemblies in the District established morals classes for children, meeting groups for women and other community activities, in addition to regular worship meetings.

The New Era Development Institute began its outreach work here in the 1990s. The initial work was largely a follow-up service for its vocational training graduates. A number of young Bahá'ís from Dang had come to NEDI for vocational training



The Dang District



Members of the local Spiritual Assembly of Nanapada pose with grain stored as part of a community grain bank scheme.

"I'm hotheaded and my husband is hotheaded. And then we read in the Bahá'í writings about the equality of men and women and we decided that we would discuss things more often together. And he changes his mind now more often."

— Kamala Gain

and had returned to set up businesses. "We started coming to help our students set up service centers, and also to recruit new students," said Manohar Patil.

Currently, there are more than 50 NEDI graduates in Dang, and, in accordance with the general philosophy of providing both vocational training and an education in community development, many of them have indeed proved to be the key motivators in creating local projects.

The English classes in Bhisya, for example, are conducted on a volunteer basis by several NEDI graduates who returned to the village after a year or two of study in Panchgani. The classes were initiated at the request of the Bhisya local Spiritual Assembly, which, in turn, had received requests from the community at large for such courses. The ability to speak English is seen here as a mark of education and a prerequisite for advancement.

"People in the village approached us and said, 'You send your children to Panchgani to learn English, so why don't you teach our children English?'," explained Dilip Gaikwad, 23, who is chairman of the Bhisya Spiritual Assembly. He said in November 1997 that the classes were held from 5 to 6:30 p.m. each day in the Bhisya Bahá'í Center, were offered free to anyone in the village, and that the enrollment totaled some 84 students.

Bhisya is also the location of the Bahá'í hostel, which is operated by the Dang Re-

gional Bahá'í Committee, which represents the entire Bahá'í population of the District. The hostel provides free room and board — as well as daily moral education classes — to some 28 students, who range in ages from 10 to 15. It fills a critical function in that it allows the students to stay in the region for their schooling while their parents work outside the District.

"The biggest problem in education is the high rate of seasonal migration," said Balubhai Patel, the District primary education officer. "Because there is not enough food and not enough jobs, many families have to go to factories or farms in neighboring states each year and the children have to leave school."

The Government runs some 14 hostels for school children, said Mr. Patel. But they are not enough to house the estimated 3,500 school-age children that miss school because of seasonal migration.

The Bahá'í hostel was established in June 1996 with the help of an initial grant of some 20,000 Rupees (about US\$600) from a Bahá'í in Bombay. That money bought beds, cooking utensils and other equipment. Located in a rented house in Bhisya, its monthly operating costs come to about 7000 Rupees (about US\$200) and the majority of that money comes from Dang. Bahá'ís in the District, said Manohar Birari, 25, the director of the hostel.

"Some people give rice or another grain to support the hostel," said Mr. Sarolia.

The women of Nanapada meet regularly to discuss their concerns. Shown at right are some of the young Bahá'í women who are among the most active participants in the meetings. From left to right are Anju Birari, Sunderbai Birari, Kamala Gain, Sita Birari, Sunderbai Gobir, Bahgwati P. Birari, and Hema S. Patel.





Shusila and Manahar Birari operate the Bahá'í Hostel in Bhisya as volunteers.

"The fact that it receives so much local support like this is remarkable."

Mr. Birari, who is a NEDI graduate, contributes his time, as well. He and his wife, Shusila, are essentially full-time volunteers at the hostel, getting only room and board and a small stipend. In this regard, Mr. Birari represents the new breed of young Dangi Bahá'ís. Born into a Bahá'í family in Nanapada, he graduated from NEDI with a pre-primary teaching certificate in 1995. His goal since then has been to assist in the community development work.

Indeed, very few outside funds are used for any of the locally run Bahá'í projects in the District. The carpentry workshop, for example, was taught by experienced Bahá'í carpenters in the village, who volunteered their time. Sponsored by the local Spiritual Assembly of Nanapada, the workshop ran for three and a half months during February, March and April 1997. In addition to basic training in carpentry, the workshop covered topics in moral education, community development, and small business development skills. Thirteen young men completed the course and most have since found jobs.

The Nanapada Spiritual Assembly has also started up a local grain bank project, which is notable for its non-profit approach. The project aims to tide over poor families during the crucial planting season. Too

often, said Mohan Birari, who is chairman of the Nanapada Assembly, poor families are forced to eat their seed grain during the winter season. Then, come planting time, they must leave the District to earn the hard cash they need to buy seed.

"There is no money involved in this," said Mohan Birari, who is the uncle of Manahar Birari. "This is not a money-making scheme. The Bahá'ís contribute grain, but it is open to all. The amount of grain loaned out depends on the size of family."

Nanapada has a population of about 500 people, of which nearly half are Bahá'ís. And acceptance of the Faith by so many in the village has had an undeniable impact on the community, say residents. In addition to such projects as the carpentry workshop and grain bank, they say, small social changes — for the good — have gradually been accepted by everyone.

The women of the village, for example, have learned to be more assertive and active. The Bahá'í women hold a weekly meeting to which all village women are invited. They sing together, say prayers and discuss their concerns.

At a recent meeting, about a dozen women of Nanapada talked about the changes they see in their lives. Kamala Gain, 25, whose story was typical, said that she and her husband became a Bahá'ís in 1993, about two years into their marriage. Before, she said, there was much quarreling in their relationship. "I'm hotheaded and my husband is hotheaded," she said. "And then we read in the Bahá'í writings about the equality of men and women and we decided that we would discuss things more often together. And he changes his mind now more often."

Ms. Gain then gave another example of how things had changed, describing how she had recently traveled to a District-wide women's conference in Ahwa, the District center. Her husband agreed to let her travel without him while he stayed home and looked after their son — something that most men would traditionally not agree to do.

"It is because of our Faith that my husband says he has enough trust in me, to let me stay out in another village on my own," said Ms. Gain. "I cannot imagine this would happen in the old days, that my father would let my mother do such a thing." ☺

The New Era Development Institute

Founded in 1987 and sponsored by the Bahá'í Community of India, the New Era Development Institute (NEDI) seeks to provide students with both the skills to earn a living and the ability to comprehend and, in turn, impart a new vision of community service.

Located in Panchgani, Maharashtra State, the Institute functions primarily as a vocational training center, offering one- and two-year courses in nine areas, ranging from diesel mechanics to agriculture to pre-primary teacher training.

All courses include an innovative curriculum in community development designed to produce capable and energized individuals who can return to their villages and, while supporting themselves, undertake and encourage local and sustainable development efforts.

Results from this new approach are just now emerging in places like the Dang District. Drawing on and working closely with the grassroots network provided by the two-million-member Bahá'í community of India, NEDI has established outreach projects not only in Dang in the state of Gujarat, but also in the states of Manipur, Sikkim and Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

Review: *Mark Tobey*

(Continued from back page)

spiritual reality. On the surface, this aspect of Tobey's intention can be understood simply from the titles of many of his paintings: *Saints and Serpents* (1953); *Meditative Series I* (1954); *Fragments in Time and Space* (1956); *Prophetic Night* (1956); *Mysterious Light* (1958); and *Prophetic Light Dawn* (1958).

But even where the titles do not indicate a specifically spiritual theme, the luminosity, complexity and, indeed, ethereal nature of the paintings often combine to transport the viewer to a wholly different place.

Take, for example, *New Crescent* (1953). At first glance, this tempera painting done predominantly in yellow-greens and white over a dark field appears to be a rather flat and monotonous abstraction in the all-over style. Yet careful study shows the work to be multi-layered, and with many regions of lambent radiance and lustrous depth. It might be best described as shimmering with the colors of moonlight. After a time, viewers can easily find themselves being pulled into another dimension.

Beyond such traditional or mystical elements of spirituality, there is also a way in which the titles and the paintings themselves work in concert to express new spiritual ideas for this age.

Take *Red Man, White Man, Black Man* (1945) which, given Tobey's religious beliefs, must surely be understood in part as an expression of the oneness of humanity. Almost entirely abstract, with the calligraphic features of white writing, it also appears to create an interconnected web or network uniting the barely perceptible human figures that populate some regions of the canvas.

Or consider the four paintings presented in the exhibition from the *Above the Earth* series, created between 1953 and 1956, which each depict a portion of a circle in space (presumably the Earth). They seem prophetic of the famous photographs that would be taken, a decade and a half later, by astronauts and which show the Earth in all its oneness.

Such themes are Bahá'í and Tobey was, as is well known, an active Bahá'í from his acceptance of the Faith in 1918 until his death. Art critics and historians of various

backgrounds have agreed that Tobey was enormously influenced by his religious beliefs and that he sought to express elements of them in his paintings.

"Bahá'í provided Tobey with aesthetic as well as social and religious principles," wrote William C. Seitz, curator of Painting and Sculpture Exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, at the time of the Museum's 1962-63 exhibition of Tobey's work. "He has often stated that there can be no break between nature, art, science, religion, and personal life... Few religions... have given the concept of oneness such pointed emphasis, and few modern artists have dealt with it as explicitly as has Tobey."

The significance of his Faith in relation to his art is something that Tobey himself acknowledged on many occasions. "The root of all religions, from the Bahá'í point of view, is based on the theory that man will gradually come to understand the unity of the world and the oneness of mankind," Tobey wrote in 1934. "It teaches that all the prophets are one — that science and religion are the two great powers which must be balanced if man is to become mature. I feel my work has been influenced by these beliefs. I've tried to decentralize and interpenetrate so that all parts of a painting are of related value... Mine are the Orient, the Occident, science, religion, cities, space, and writing a picture."

In his life, as well, Tobey lived as a world citizen, eschewing any notion that he was an "American" painter. He spent his early years in the American Midwest, and then began working intermittently in New York in 1913. He first moved to Seattle, in the American Northwest, in 1923. He also made several trips to Europe and the Middle East in the 1920s and he lived for a time in England. In 1934, he went to China and Japan, where he stayed for a number of months in a Zen monastery near Kyoto. After World War II, he continued to live and work in Seattle, but in 1960 he moved to Basel, Switzerland.

Kosme de Barañano, one of the curators of the exhibition, characterizes him this way: "Migrating from continent to continent like a restless bird in search of propitious seasons, casting his glance across all cultures, Mark Tobey was one of the few 20th century artists who was truly cosmopolitan and in fact trans-avant-garde. Be-

"Migrating from continent to continent like a restless bird in search of propitious seasons, casting his glance across all cultures, Mark Tobey was one of the few 20th century artists who was truly cosmopolitan and in fact trans-avant-garde."

— Kosme de Barañano, co-curator, Tobey retrospective

sides being a pioneer of American abstraction, he was a scholar of oriental calligraphy and Renaissance tempera."

Ferran Roca Bon, a contemporary painter in Barcelona who is also a Bahá'í, spoke about Tobey in a recent interview. "He was a very sensitive person, self-educated, cosmopolitan, spiritual," said Mr. Roca Bon. "He opened himself to spirituality and discovered the sensibility and refinement of the Orient, and thanks to the Bahá'í Faith, he discovered the 'magic' of calligraphy.

Mr. Roca Bon said he believes that, in fact, Tobey's white writing was inspired by the style of Arabic calligraphy which is manifest in original letters and tablets from Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, whose fast-flowing revelation was often transcribed quite rapidly by special secretaries, creating something like an all-over composition in its initial form.

"Many artists have used such 'pictography' to express themselves, such as Miró, Klee or others," said Mr. Bon. "But Tobey had that unique advantage of knowing the mystical value of the calligraphy. Mark Tobey was conscious that he was creating mystical art."

Tobey won international acclaim for

his work towards the end of his life. He became the first American since James Abbot Whistler (1834-1903) to win the Painting Prize at the Venice Biennale, an award he won in 1959. In 1961, he had a retrospective showing at the Louvre in Paris, an extraordinary tribute to the work of a living artist. These landmark achievements were followed by a major exhibition at the New York Museum of Modern Art in 1962 and, in 1974, another major show at the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution.

Art critics and historians in the United States have long been uncertain exactly how to categorize Tobey. Many gave Pollock most of the credit for creating the all-over style. Others have suggested that Tobey's internationalism and even his religion have so far kept him from being accepted in mainstream art circles.

The Madrid exhibition and its outstanding catalogue, one can hope, will set this sense of underappreciation aright. For certainly it revealed that Tobey, while defying categorization, must be counted as one of the 20th Century's most innovative and, ultimately, influential artists. ☉

"Many artists have used such 'pictography' to express themselves, such as Miró, Klee or others. But Tobey had that unique advantage of knowing the mystical value of the calligraphy. Mark Tobey was conscious that he was creating mystical art."

— Ferran Roca Bon, contemporary Spanish Bahá'í painter



In Malaysia, the local Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Gombak launched a tree planting campaign on 11 October 1997. More than 120 guests witnessed the opening ceremony and received T-shirts which read: "Want freshness? Do your share. Plant a tree."

“Mine are
the Orient,
the Occident,
science,
religion,
cities, space,
and writing a
picture.”

Mark Tobey

A retrospective
exhibition

Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte
Reina Sofía

11 November 1997 to
12 January 1998

Madrid

Except perhaps for the Founders of the world's great religions, no one on this earthly plane can be said to fully understand the nature and composition of the spiritual world. But that has certainly not stopped people from trying to communicate their visions of it.

Such attempts can be found in the stained glass windows of Europe's great cathedrals, in the complex filigree of Persian prayer rugs, or in the meditative tones of Buddhist chants — to mention just a few such humble expressions of spiritual reality made throughout history.

But what is the modern equivalent? Where might we turn to find a new vision of spiritual expression — one capable of inspiring deep feelings — in our modern, technological and secular age? And are there any who have also captured the contemporary climate of cross-culturalism, interdependence and oneness that surely characterizes the highest expression of spiritual values today?

There are certainly many artists, musicians and architects who are seeking to realize such a vision. One individual whose work would certainly be a starting point in such a survey is the American painter Mark Tobey.

Tobey, who was born in Wisconsin, USA, in 1890 and died in 1976 in Switzerland, has gained increasing recognition in recent years — an appreciation that has perhaps reached its highest point yet in a superlative retrospective exhibition at Spain's prestigious Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, held from 11 November 1997 to 12 January 1998.

The exhibition brought together about 130 works from some 56 different collections, covering the years from 1924 to 1975 — virtually the entire creative period of Tobey's long and productive life. The exhibition included works in oil, watercolor, charcoal and tempera, and it sought, in the words of the catalogue, to “explore Mark Tobey's complex pictorial world, emphasizing its most transcendent aspects.”

The curators succeeded in their goal. The exhibition not only showcased the great range and diversity of Tobey's work

but also captured and conveyed the deeply emotional — and, we must add, “spiritual” — content of his vision.

Tobey is of course most famous for his creation of so-called “white writing” — an overlay of white or light-colored calligraphic symbols on an abstract field which is often itself composed of thousands of small and interwoven brush strokes. And this method, in turn, gave rise to the type of “all-over” painting style made most famous by Jackson Pollock, another American painter to whom Tobey is often compared. (A new essay by Judith S. Kays, published in the exhibition's catalogue, establishes to a high degree of certainty that Pollock was familiar with Tobey, and quite likely influenced by him, before Pollock himself began working in the all-over style — something that art historians had previously overlooked.)

The exhibition in Madrid provided many fine examples of both the white-writing and all-over styles, from *Broadway Norm* (1935) to later works such as *White*

Review



White Writing (1951)

Writing (1951), *Shadow Spirits of the Forest* (1961), and *River Fog* (1970).

A careful examination of the works gathered in Madrid also tell much about Tobey's attempt to express his vision of
(Continued on page 14)