



ONE COUNTRY

"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens" – Bahá'u'lláh

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At a ground-breaking "Colloquium on Science, Religion and Development," specialists from all three fields gather to consider how better to integrate efforts to eliminate poverty and achieve social justice.

NEW DELHI, India — As the birthplace of Hinduism, one of the world's oldest religions, and home to significant communities of Muslims, Buddhists, Sikhs, Christians, Zoroastrians and Bahá'ís, India's spiritual heritage is deep and diverse.

And with some 85 percent of its population living on less than two US dollars a day, India is also a place where issues of poverty, social justice, and development are high on the national and international agendas.

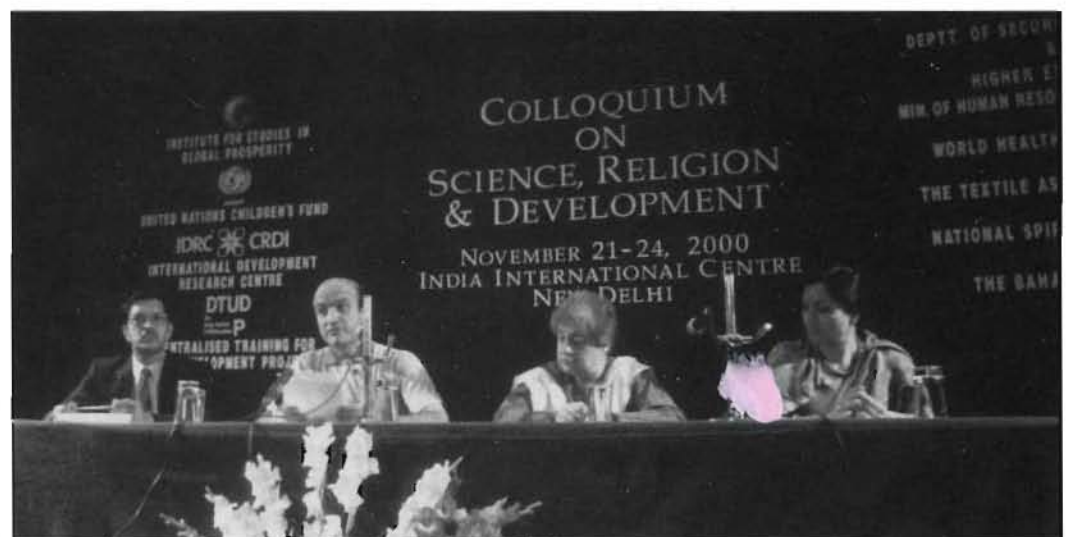
These two realities — which often seem at odds — made India an ideal venue to begin a new grassroots-level dialogue between development specialists, religious leaders, and scientists here from 21 to 24 November 2000.

Titled simply the "Colloquium on Science, Religion and Development," the event was in many ways modest in its approach. Limited to roughly 150 participants, its main result was largely a strong sense that the discussion and networking begun here should continue.

Participants and organizers clearly felt invigorated and encouraged by the dialogue, which broke new ground in seeking to create a bridge between the seemingly disparate worlds of "science, religion and development."

In particular, participants stated forcefully that the world needs a new model for international development that emphasizes spiritual and religious values as the missing ingredients in stimulating positive social change.

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On the final day of the Colloquium on Science, Religion and Development, rapporteurs from the various working groups reported their findings. Shown, left to right, are: Ali Merchant of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, Sohayle Mohajer of the Foundation for the Advancement of Science, Razia Sultan Ismail Abbasi of the Women's Coalition for Peace and Development with Dignity, and Bani Dugal Gujral of the Bahá'í International Community.

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Science, Religion and Development: Some Initial Considerations

[Editor's note: The following is based on a paper of the same title, prepared by Bahá'í International Community's newly created Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity and presented at the Science, Religion and Development Colloquium held 21-24 November 2000 in New Delhi. The entire paper can be read at www.onecountry.org/e123/SRDpaper.html]

Over the past several decades workers in the development field have gradually become aware of the many interrelated factors underlying social and economic advancement. Yet, despite this growing understanding, it is apparent that a complex but vital set of issues concerning human nature needs to be incorporated into development thinking.

The international development agenda has for the most part ignored the fact that the great majority of the world's peoples do not view themselves simply as material beings responding to material exigencies and circumstances, but rather as moral beings concerned with spiritual awareness and purpose. It has thus become evident that the mainly economic and material criteria now guiding development activity must be broadened to include those spiritual aspirations that animate human nature.

Civilization itself does not arise merely from material progress, but rather is defined by and founded upon the ideals and shared beliefs that weld society together. What uniquely defines the human experience is the transcendent component of life. It is this dimension of existence that enriches, ennobles and provides direction to human beings. It unlocks the creative capacities within human consciousness and safeguards human dignity.

While pragmatic approaches to problem solving must obviously play a central role in development initiatives, tapping the spiritual roots of human motivation provides the essential impulse that ensures genuine social advancement. When spiritual principles are fully integrated into community development activities, the ideas, insights, and practical measures that emerge are likely to

be those that promote self-reliance and preserve human honor, thereby avoiding habits of dependency and progressively eliminating conditions of gross economic disparity. An approach to development that incorporates moral and spiritual imperatives will more likely lead to enduring changes in both individual and collective behavior.

In essence, the development process is ultimately concerned with both the transformation of individuals and the social structures that the members of society create. The emergence of peaceful and progressive modes of living requires both an internal and external reordering, and such a reordering can only occur when the human heart is transformed. Hence, to be effective, development activity must directly address the inner life and character of human beings as well as the organization of society. Its purpose must be to promote a process of social change that engenders cooperation, compassion, rectitude of conduct and justice — a transformation that permeates every aspect of the relationships that govern human activity.

Recognition of the vital link between the practical and spiritual aspects of human life leads inevitably to a reframing of what constitutes well-being and of the possible mechanisms for attaining such well-being. This realization underlines the need for a systematic exploration of the roles that science and religion play in the development process.

A first step is to understand the essential functions of science and religion in human society. Throughout history, civilization has depended upon science and religion as the two principal systems of knowledge that have guided its development and channeled its intellectual and moral powers. The methods of science have allowed humanity to construct a coherent understanding of the laws and processes governing physical reality, and, to a certain degree, the workings of society itself. The insights of religion have provided understanding on the deepest questions of human purpose and initiative.

Science and religion have often been regarded as inherently conflictual, even mu-

tually exclusive spheres of human endeavor. That the vitalizing agency of religion has frequently succumbed to the forces of dogmatism, superstition, and theological factionalism is a conspicuous fact of history. The Enlightenment, in fact, marked a crucial turning point in releasing human consciousness from the shackles of religious orthodoxy and fanaticism. But in its rejection of religion, the Enlightenment also rejected the moral center that religion provided, creating a deep and still existing dichotomy between the rational and the sacred. The results of this artificial split between reason and faith can be seen in the skepticism, alienation and corrosive materialism that so pervades contemporary life.

For the vast majority of humankind, the proposition that human nature has a spiritual dimension is a self-evident truth that finds expression in all spheres of life. The spiritual impulses set in motion by the world's religious systems have been the chief influence in the civilizing of human character. Through the teachings of religion, great segments of humanity have learned to discipline their baser propensities and to develop qualities — such as compassion, trustworthiness, generosity, humility, courage and willingness to sacrifice for the common good — that conduce to social order and cultural advancement.

Reason and faith are complementary faculties of human nature that both engage in the process of discovering and understanding reality; they are both tools that enable society to apprehend truth. This perspective is reinforced by recent scientific developments that suggest strong epistemological convergence with various religious worldviews.

Taken together, science and religion provide the fundamental organizing principles by which individuals, communities and institutions function and evolve. Utilizing the methods of science allows people to become more objective and systematic in their approach to problem solving and in their understanding of social processes, while drawing on the spiritual inclinations of individuals provides the motivational impetus that begets and sustains positive action.

The enterprise of building human capacity, of fostering constructive personal, community and institutional change, is increasingly being recognized as the fundamental purpose of development. When viewed as capacity building, development is concerned principally with the generation, application,



The President of Iceland, Olafur Ragnar Grímsson, center, visited the Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi during an official state visit to India in November.

and diffusion of knowledge. If it is accepted that knowledge is both spiritual and material in nature, the methodologies of science and the insights of religion can, when working together in a synergistic manner, provide the essential tools for erecting harmonious and equitable patterns of living. Placing the generation and application of knowledge at the center of development planning and activity makes it possible to study the practical implications of religious values, particularly the role that such values have in generating a unified approach toward social change at the grassroots level.

It is generally accepted that the materially poor must participate directly in efforts to improve their own well-being. Participation must be substantive and creative; it must allow the people themselves access to knowledge and encourage them to apply it. Specifically, it is not sufficient for the world's inhabitants to be engaged in projects as mere beneficiaries of the products of knowledge, even if they have a voice in certain decisions. They must be engaged in applying knowledge to create well-being, thereby generating new knowledge and contributing in a substantial and meaningful way to human progress. If, in fact, a community controls the means of knowledge, and is guided by spiritual principles, it will be able to develop material resources and technologies that serve and match its real needs.

A discourse on the complementary roles of science and religion, we suggest, could start in some of the key issue areas that have

Perspective, continued on page 15

Reason and faith are complementary faculties of human nature that both engage in the process of discovering and understanding reality; they are both tools that enable society to apprehend truth.

In Tanzania, a school with a mission: to uplift girls and promote spiritual values

Two students, Queen Yaonga and Neema Gabriel, water the vegetables they are growing as part of "self-reliance" class at Ruaha Secondary School. The school's main buildings are in the background.



Operated by the Bahá'í Community of Tanzania, the Ruaha Secondary School takes a distinctive approach to education, one that strives to create a learning environment based on the application of spiritual and moral values to the challenges of daily life – and achieves high academic excellence.

IRINGA, Tanzania — Asked what makes their school different from others in this tropical East African nation, students at the Ruaha Secondary School are quick to point to a feature that usually "impacts" them quite directly: the total absence of "caning," as corporal punishment is known here.

"When the teacher walks in holding that stick you fear even answering a question because you may be beaten," said Clara Tomeka, a 16-year-old, third-year student at Ruaha, a private, non-profit school operated by the Bahá'í Community of Tanzania.

But when administrators, teachers, parents, and local officials are asked what sets Ruaha apart, they see the "no caning" policy as merely one sign of the distinctive approach to education, one that strives to create a learning environment based on the application of spiritual and moral values to the challenges of daily life.

In particular, those who know Ruaha talk about the school's emphasis on promoting qualities like patience, diligence, courtesy, trustworthiness, compassion and justice, while at the same time helping students developed the capacities, attitudes and skills

— such as knowledge of appropriate agricultural techniques, computer literacy and basic commerce — that are geared to help students survive in one of the poorest countries in the world.

On top of it all, they also speak of the school's strong sense of mission when it comes to educating girls and proudly note its record of academic excellence.

"It is a model school compared to others," said Merchant Mtandika, the national school inspector for mathematics for the Ministry of Education and Culture. "In environment and discipline, it is very good; the environment is very much conducive to academic excellence. It has a good administrative structure. And I am impressed by the cordiality of the staff and their team spirit."

Although located in this relatively small and remote capital of the Iringa Region, the school draws students from all over Tanzania. The roughly 400 currently enrolled, for example, come from 17 of Tanzania's 21 regions, as provinces are called here.

Founded in 1986, the school is owned and operated by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Tanzania, the freely

elected governing body of the Bahá'í community here. Overall, the school's primary mission is to serve the wider Tanzanian community by providing quality education at an affordable cost.

"We want to provide students with an education which is not only theoretical but also practical so they can be agents of change in their communities, so they can be examples of high moral rectitude, educational, academic and moral excellence, and so they can try to serve their communities and establish attitudes of service," said Becky Fairley, the principal at Ruaha.

"Our fees are moderate. We are not here only to serve the elite, though some elite choose Ruaha for their children. We are open to people of moderate means also. We attract students of different economic statuses," she said.

Focus on girls

More than two-thirds of those students are girls, a testimony to the school's success at achieving one of its major goals.

"We are really focusing on the education of girls, which is very important here, where traditionally only boys are educated, where traditionally boys are put first," said Ms. Fairley, noting that nationally, less than half of the students enrolled in secondary school are girls.

"We try to encourage girls, to improve their performance. We believe this contributes to raising up the status of women. It changes the way they raise children and this makes a tre-

mendous difference in the community."

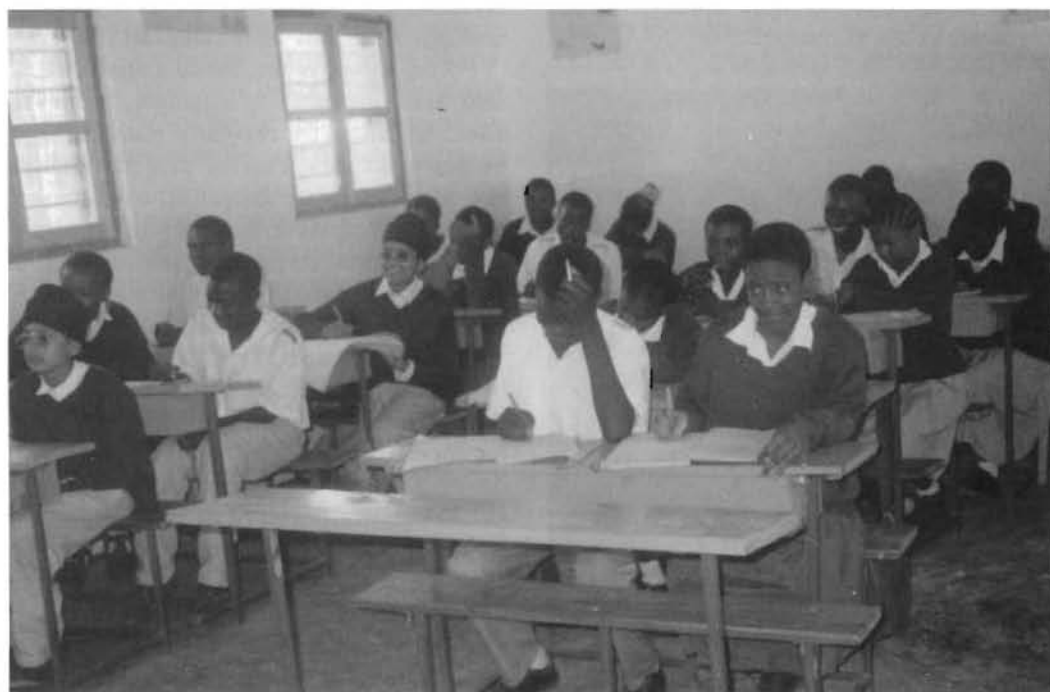
Ms. Fairley said the school requires an entrance examination, and girls are given preference in the scoring of that exam. She said the school also has special scholarship program for girls, and that it participates in the government-sponsored Girls Secondary Education Support Program, which is funded by the World Bank and gives educational opportunities to girls of low income.

Providing a good education is a difficult task in one of the world's poorest countries, where the majority of people are struggling to find enough food to eat. The average annual per capita income in Tanzania is about US\$450 a year. The average annual tuition at Ruaha is US\$175 a year, a fee which is higher than government schools but quite low compared to other private secondary schools of similar quality.

"It is difficult to help students see the importance of education," said Angresia Ginga, who teaches agriculture at Ruaha. "They see their university-educated relatives sitting at home jobless."

Ruaha strives to overcome these motivational barriers by focusing on subjects that will give students a better chance of finding a job. In addition to standard, nationally required subjects like English, Kiswahili, geography, history, mathematics, physics, biology and chemistry, Ruaha's curriculum also covers agriculture, commerce, computer literacy and "self-reliance."

One element of the self-reliance program focuses on practical experience in agricul-



A typical classroom at the Ruaha Secondary School.

"The self-reliance class helps because I can help my parents at home, to farm in the fields and to clean and do other small jobs. The computer classes help because now there is email, internet. If you go to other countries they use computers. I think it's better to learn now so I will be equipped later on."

– James Iddi, student

ture. Each student is assigned a plot and different crops are raised by each class. They also sell their produce to the catering program, so that students learn to see the "fruits" of their efforts.

"The self-reliance class helps because I can help my parents at home, to farm in the fields and to clean and do other small jobs," said James Iddi, a 17-year-old Form III day student. "The computer classes help because now there is email, internet. If you go to other countries they use computers. I think it's better to learn now so I will be equipped later on."

Spirit of Teamwork

Another problem faced by virtually every school in Tanzania is how to motivate teachers. In government schools, teachers are poorly paid and many skip class because they need to find alternate means to earn money.

Ruaha seeks to overcome this by promoting a spirit of teamwork among the teachers, a spirit that is enhanced by the school's policy of making salary payments on time.

"At Ruaha, the Principal consults with the students and teachers," said Boniface Mbungu, Coordinator of Student Affairs.

Likewise, said Mr. Mbungu and others, the administration consults extensively with the school's teachers, holding weekly staff meetings where teachers are encouraged to voice their concerns.

"Instead of fearing and hiding feelings, and doing things backhandedly, people feel free to express opinions," said Mr. Mbungu. "As a result, there is more unity — all are involved in the planning."

One result of the faculty's sense of teamwork has been solid academic performance, something especially noteworthy considering the school's high percentage of girl students, who often come under-prepared because of traditional neglect of girls in Tanzania.

Based on the 1998 National Form IV Examination results, Ruaha School ranked 3rd in the region, 5th in the zone and 35th out of 611 schools nationally.

Another measure of the school's success can be seen in the percentage of students who are selected by the government to go on from Form IV (11th grade equivalent) to Form V (12th grade equivalent). Nationally, the average acceptance rate is about 5 percent. In 1998, however, 26 out of 33 Form IV graduates at Ruaha were selected to go on, a rate of 78 percent.

Last year, Ruaha School won an award of \$5,000 from the Ministry of Education and Culture for the best "Academic Improvement Plan."

"The teachers work hard here to get high performance," said Mercy Mushi, a 16-year-old Form III boarding student. "They teach us in many ways. In other schools you might go a whole day and find that only one teacher has come to class."

Moral Education

Ruaha is also notable for its incorporation of moral education into the curriculum. Using an activities-based approach, the moral education program, for example, might employ a tree-planting session to teach the importance of environment and ecology, as well as team decision-making.

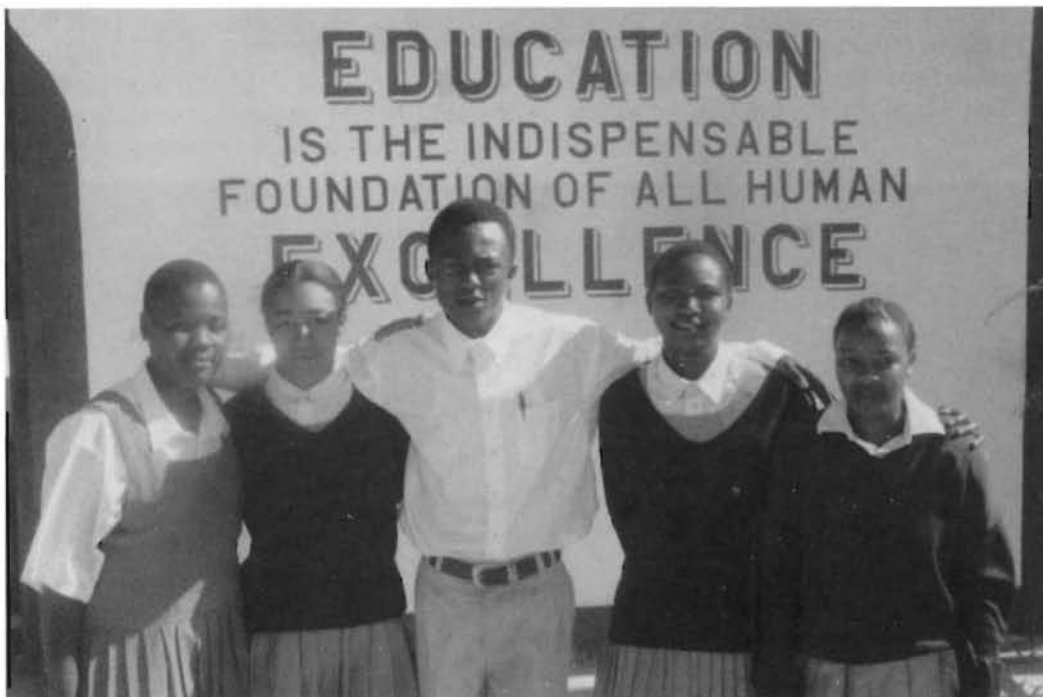
"The focus is on moral capabilities," said Ms. Fairley. "For example, perseverance. In any activity, many morals are to be learned." Ms. Fairley said the school seeks to integrate moral education into every subject. "We have a virtue of the week program, stressing qualities such as 'honesty,' for example, to bring to the students' attention one virtue each week."

Students learn to be service-oriented by taking turns cleaning the school compound, gardening and doing other maintenance work.

The moral education program also stresses the importance of religion, taking an interfaith approach and teaching about all of the world's major religions. In religious beliefs, the Tanzanian population is evenly split between Christian, Muslim and traditional religions, and the school's effort to



Ruaha School Principal Becky Fairley, left, and Vice Principal Micca Shilla.



Some of the students interviewed for this story gathered recently at the Ruaha Secondary School's front gate. Left to right are: Mercy Mushi, Ola Jahanpour, James Iddi, Clara Tomeka and Moza Said.

teach about all religions has helped to foster tolerance among students, who are likewise quite diverse in their religious and ethnic backgrounds.

"Ruaha School is different because it is a religious school," said Moza Said, a 17-year-old female student. "This religion unites people instead of differentiating between them. Our moral education class helps us learn to live with different people in society."

Parents and guardians like the emphasis on moral education. "There is a lot going on at the school beyond academics, which helps students become good citizens," said Cecilia Shirima, the Regional Administrative Secretary, who sends her niece to Ruaha. "Over the past two years, my niece has changed a lot for the better. She is more serious and responsible, so I do have cause to believe that Ruaha is developing in the right direction compared to other schools."

Ruaha itself also stresses service to the wider community by operating several ongoing social and economic development projects. A shop was built recently to serve both students and the surrounding community. It sells products at comparable rates to town and was built to provide students with the things they might need on a day-to-day basis. A dairy farm provides milk to the catering department and to the teachers and surrounding community.

Computer classes are available to the general public in the evenings for a small fee, which helps improve skills in the

wider community.

In interviews, students and parents acknowledged all of these distinctive points about Ruaha and more. But for many, the fact that Ruaha has banned corporal punishment still stands out.

Even though condemned by the Government, virtually every other school in Tanzania nevertheless relies on the cane to motivate students, a holdover from colonial days.

"Caning makes students become afraid and not feel free because they will be afraid they might be caned," said Ola Jahanpour, a 16-year-old boarding student, who took first place in the national Oral English Competition in 2000. "In primary school we were caned for not greeting the teacher properly, for making noise, for not plaiting our hair in the correct manner and for saying the wrong answer in class."

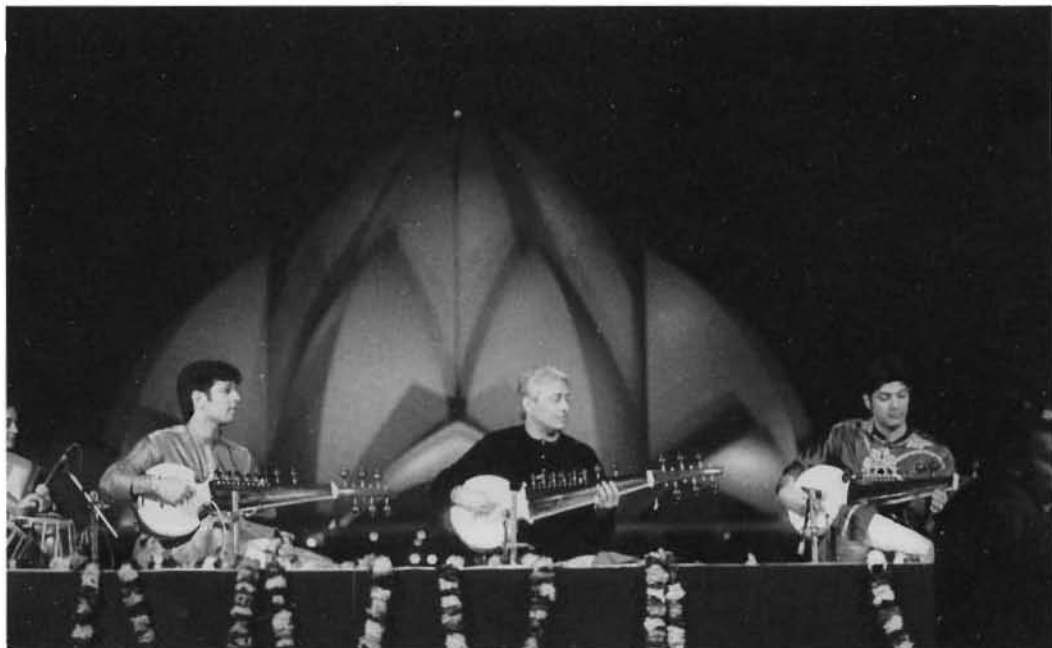
Claire Dawson, who taught English for six months at Ruaha in 1998, said caning is indeed the norm in schools throughout Tanzania, even though it is against Government regulations. "Even in secondary schools, where most students range in age from 15 to 23, caning is used at other schools," said Ms. Dawson.

"But from my point of view, if anything stands out at Ruaha, it is the overall sense of respect for students as human beings," Ms. Dawson added. "That is what is different. That they respect each person and try to empower them in a country where life is quite hard." ❀

"If anything stands out at Ruaha, it is the overall sense of respect for students as human beings. That is what is different. That they respect each person and try to empower them in a country where life is quite hard and there is no tradition of respect for children."

**– Claire Dawson,
former teacher**

As part of the cultural program for the Colloquium, the world renowned Amjad Ali Khan, center, and his two sons performed classical Indian music on the sarod in front of the Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi on 21 November 2000.



In New Delhi, a search for the missing ingredient in international development

Colloquium, continued from first page

"It is our belief that what is needed, then, is a new model of development that draws on both scientific methods and the universal values inherent in all religions."

**– Colloquium
Statement of
Findings**

"[T]he great majority of the world's peoples do not view themselves simply as material beings," said the Colloquium's "Preliminary Statement of Findings," issued and affirmed on the event's final day. "Rather, they understand themselves primarily as spiritual beings, and are as much concerned with social and moral well-being as with material progress."

"It is our belief that what is needed, then, is a new model of development that draws on both scientific methods and the universal values inherent in all religions," the Statement of Findings continued. "Such a model, we believe, will be better able to stimulate human transformation and build individual and community capacity than the mainly materialistic approach that has dominated the current development paradigm."

Diverse participation

Organized by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India and the newly formed Institute for Studies in Global Pros-

perity [see page 11], the event was co-sponsored by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Development Research Centre of Canada (IDRC), Decentralized Training for Urban Development Projects, the Department of Secondary Education and Higher Education of India's Ministry of Human Resource Development, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Textile Association (India).

Participants included representatives from a wide range of NGOs, academic institutions and religious groups involved in development work, mainly from India but also from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Colombia and Bolivia. The Colloquium also featured participation by representatives of the World Bank, UNICEF, WHO, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Participants came from virtually every religious background, including Buddhism,

Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and the Bahá'í Faith — as well as non-religious backgrounds.

In a written message, Indian President K.R. Narayanan welcomed the “galaxy of eminent people from different parts the world” to India and praised the Colloquium’s topic. “In order to provide the much needed sanity and strength to our crisis-ridden existence, there is an imperative need to weave the developmental path with the ideals of our heritage and civilization and blend them with science,” said President Narayanan.

In its program, the Colloquium featured a mix of plenary sessions and workshops, with much time set aside for open discussion and consultation. In the workshops, four thematic areas were identified as focal points: governance, education, technology and economic activity. For each of these thematic areas, participants were asked to discuss and identify how spiritual principles and perspectives might be incorporated to create new insights.

“Our goal was to bring together a diversity of organizations and practitioners in the field of development to explore how scientific methods and religious values can work together to bring about a new, integrated pattern of development,” said Matthew Weinberg, Director of the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity.

“In many ways, this event was an experiment and a learning endeavor, since an integrated discourse on these three topics has really only recently begun to take shape in the world at large,” said Mr. Weinberg. “The emphasis of this event was to involve national and grassroots level organizations in this dialogue. And we were pleased that a number of key points and possible lines of action were identified by the participants here for future consideration.”

Indeed, among the main results of the Colloquium was a sense that there is much more to be explored in this dialogue. And most participants said they wanted to see some sort of new network or ongoing follow-up project emerge.

Finding the “missing link”

“Development practitioners have for a long time been looking for a missing link, to explain the shortcomings of the current model,” said Dr. Behnam Ta’i, the Regional Representative for South Asia of the Netherlands-based Institute for Housing and Urban Studies, who participated in the Colloquium. “For a long

time, we thought environment was the link. Now there is a perception that spirituality is the link and the key idea for changing the attitudes for decision-making in the processes of development.”

“So the topic and content of the Colloquium was extremely relevant to today’s needs, as far as development is concerned,” Dr. Ta’i added.

The tone for the discussions was set principally by two keynote speakers in an opening session held outside on the grounds of the Bahá'í House of Worship in New Delhi, the famous “Lotus Temple” that is one of India’s most visited sites.

“Although there has been considerable evolution in development thinking over the past several decades, serious questions remain concerning the present approaches and assumptions of development practices and policies,” said Bani Dugal Gujral of the Bahá'í International Community’s United Nations Office in an opening address on 21 November.

“Social advancement, we know, does not arise solely from material progress but is based upon the values that weld society together,” Ms. Dugal Gujral continued. “True prosperity — a well-being founded on peace, cooperation, altruism, dignity, rectitude of conduct and justice — requires both the ‘light’ of spiritual virtues and the ‘lamp’ of material resources.”

In her opening address, also delivered outside the House of Worship, Katherine

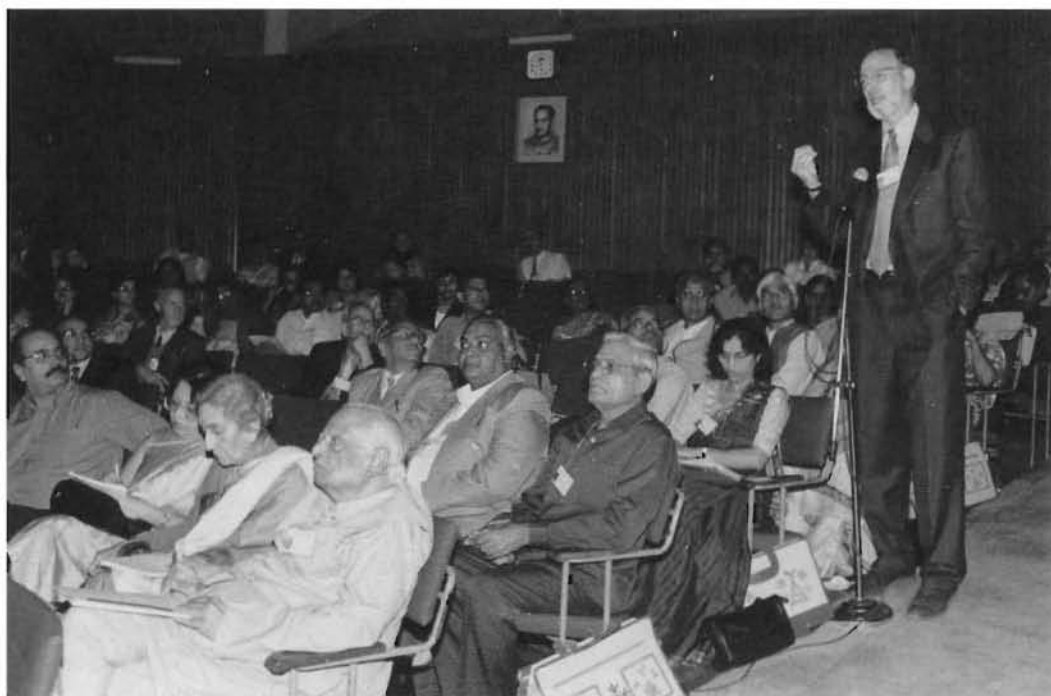
“Development practitioners have for a long time been looking for a missing link, to explain the shortcomings of the current model. For a long time, we thought environment was the link. Now there is a perception that spirituality is the link and the key idea for changing the attitudes for decision-making in the processes of development.”

– Behnam Ta’i



Katherine Marshall, who oversees the World Bank’s collaboration with religious organizations, known as the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), was a keynote speaker at the Colloquium.

There was much time for participation and interaction at the Colloquium. Here, Pierre Beemans, formerly of the International Development Research Centre, makes a comment from the audience. Another element of the Colloquium was the premiere of a video production, "Reflections at the Nexus: Science, Religion and Development," which featured advance interviews with many Colloquium participants. Commissioned by the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, the video was produced by Bisharat Media Development Associates.



"Faith does not belong exclusively to religion. Science, too, is built on elements of faith, particularly faith in the order of the world and the ability of the human mind to explain the workings of that order."

– Haleh Arbab Correa

Marshall of the World Bank said religious organizations have long played a "special role" in both understanding and helping the poor. "Yet their insights and their work are too little known in many development circles," she said.

Ms. Marshall, who oversees the Bank's collaboration with religious organizations, known as the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), urged a new partnership between religious groups and development specialists. "The idea should be to engage in a process that opens new windows of understanding, raises the bar of objectives, offers new insights and new visions, on all sides," Ms. Marshall said.

On 22 November, the Colloquium moved to the India International Centre, and there participants quickly began to engage in just such a process, looking at various aspects of what a new partnership between science, religion and development might mean.

"Truth" in science and religion

One frequently stressed theme was the essential harmony of science and religion, and the importance of drawing on the insights and resources of both fields in seeking to devise a new approach to social and economic development.

"The formidable power of science and technology can benefit humankind only if we know how to temper it with humanism and spirituality," said M.S. Swaminathan,

holder of the UNESCO Chair in Ecotechnology.

Likewise, Haleh Arbab Correa of the Colombia-based Foundation for the Application and Teaching of the Sciences (FUNDAEC), said development specialists must begin to see "science and religion as two complementary sources of knowledge."

"The two systems are not as dissimilar as they are presented to be," said Dr. Arbab Correa. "Objective observation, induction, the elaboration of hypotheses and the testing of predictions are important components of scientific methods. But they are also present in religious pursuits, albeit in different configurations and at different levels of rigor.

"Similarly, faith does not belong exclusively to religion," Dr. Arbab Correa continued. "Science, too, is built on elements of faith, particularly faith in the order of the world and the ability of the human mind to explain the workings of that order."

Recognition of this essential harmony and its application to development, said Dr. Arbab Correa, could "break the present pattern of the flow of knowledge in the world" in a manner that could "dissociate development from a cruel and destructive process of modernization."

The centrality of justice to the development enterprise was also examined. "Creating a culture of justice," said the Attorney General of India, Mr. Soli Sorabjee, "is intimately bound up with a process of moral

and spiritual development.”

At the various thematic workshop sessions, these and other themes were more broadly developed. Other points that emerged included the importance of increasing popular participation in development, the importance of bringing moral values into the educational process, and the need for new forms of economic activity based on cooperation and altruism rather than consumerism.

In remarks at an afternoon workshop on 23 November, Cherukuri Indira Dasgupta of the People's Institute for Development and Training in New Delhi suggested that the widespread rejection of religion in educational processes has led to a “vacuum” of values, which threatens to leave children to “float at the mercy of circumstance and situation” such that “their lives will never be their own.”

“Contemporary education is not without values,” said Ms. Dasgupta. “However, often these values are not made explicit. Usually, the teachers are not aware of the values that are being taught. There needs to be now a full and thorough theological understanding of concepts, attitudes and values that are being transmitted.”

Throughout the Colloquium, one of the

main points of discussion was over what exactly constitutes “spirituality,” “values,” “religion” and “faith” — and whether there is common ground on which religious groups can come together to create a unified vision of what development really means.

“Religion has somehow become a dirty word, because of the widespread religious conflicts in the world,” said S. K. Sharma of People First, a New Delhi-based NGO. “But religion is a science of ethics.”

Ms. Marshall of the World Bank suggested that the history of conflicts among religions and their continuing differences over theology will likely pose the biggest challenges in any continuing dialogue.

“At the Millennium World Peace Summit in New York, we saw both the power of the symbolism of the coming together of various faiths and some of their common themes, but we also saw the difficulties of communication and also some of the raw tensions between them,” said Ms. Marshall, referring to a major gathering of world religious leaders at the United Nations in August 2000.

“This is not a trivial issue,” said Ms. Marshall, addressing the Colloquium on the final day. “It is very significant, very com-

Colloquium, continued next page

“Religion has somehow become a dirty word, because of the widespread religious conflicts in the world. But religion is a science of ethics.”

– S. K. Sharma

Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity joins family of agencies at the Bahá'í International Community

NEW YORK — Simultaneous with its sponsorship of the “Colloquium on Science, Religion and Development” in New Delhi, the Bahá'í International Community formally launched its newest agency, the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity.

Based in New York, but drawing on the resources of the Bahá'í International Community in all its offices and affiliates around the world, the Institute is dedicated to researching both the spiritual and material underpinnings of human knowledge and the processes of social advancement.

“The agency's mission is to explore new concepts and models of social transformation,” said Matthew Weinberg, the Institute's Director. “The Institute aims to foster new thinking about current social questions by examining the connections between the moral, spiritual, and material dimensions of life.”

Mr. Weinberg said that the Institute plans not only to sponsor conferences and symposia on issues relevant to the processes that shape and sustain global peace and prosperity, like the “Colloquium on Science, Religion and Development,” but also to undertake various research efforts

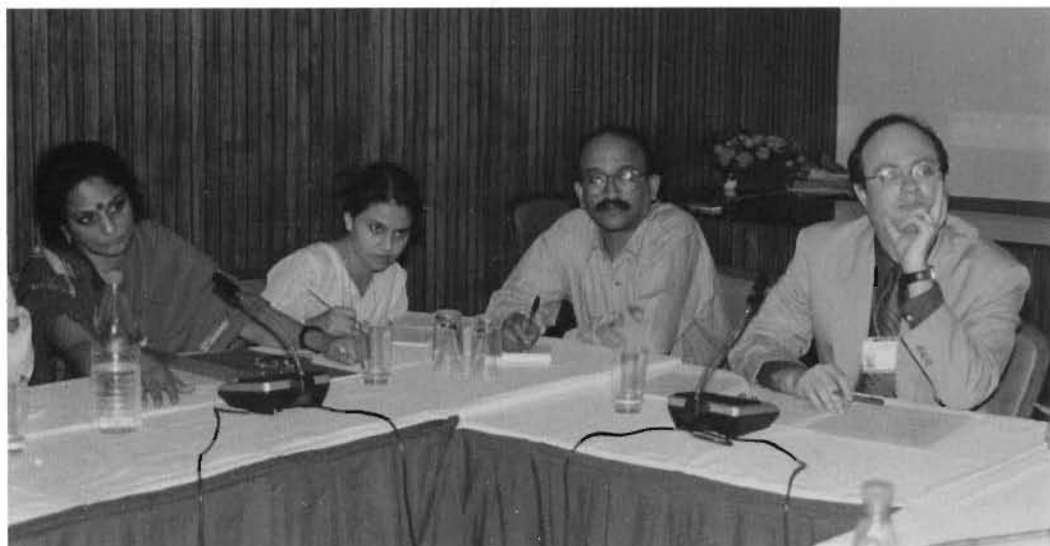
and to produce associated publications.

The Bahá'í International Community is a non-governmental organization that both encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith, which numbers more than 5 million people and is established in virtually every country and territory in the world.

The Institute joins a family of agencies of the Bahá'í International Community. These agencies include a United Nations Office, an Office of Public Information, an Office for the Environment, and an Office for the Advancement of Women. All are guided by the Faith's international governing body, the Universal House of Justice, and they draw on the resources of some 182 national-level affiliates, known as National Spiritual Assemblies, which are the freely elected governing bodies representing Bahá'í communities at the national level.

To contact the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, write to: Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, 866 United Nations Plaza, Suite 120, New York, NY 10017-1822, USA. Telephone: 1-212-803-2547; Fax: 1-212-803-2566; and email: isgp@bic.org. Website address: <http://www.isgp.bic.org> *

In afternoon sessions, the Colloquium sought to open a dialogue between participants on four themes: education, governance, technology, and economic activity. Shown here is one of those workshops. Left to right are Padma Vasudevan Sen of the Indian Institute of Technology, Deepali Jones of the Colloquium's secretariat, and, on the far right, Matthew Weinberg, director of the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity. The man third from the left could not be identified.



"The interchange among the Colloquium participants showed that there is much to be gained from giving serious attention to the role of spiritual values in building human capacity. The collective verdict of the participants was that social transformation cannot come from political prescriptions or technical recipes alone."

— Farida Vahedi

plex, and it requires a thoughtful approach."

In the end, Colloquium participants agreed on the importance of a number of principles and points, as affirmed in the Statement of Findings.

Among the main points of agreement were: the importance of building new partnerships between religious organizations, NGOs, aid agencies and government offices concerned with development; the necessity of introducing moral or "values-based" curricula in all educational endeavors; the significance of the principle of equality between women and men in all aspects of development; the imperative of creating institutional mechanisms, such as centers of technology training and research, to foster local learning; the value of linking the human rights and development agendas; and the need to promote principles of good governance.

As well, participants stressed the importance of the acceptance of religious diversity. Toward that end, many suggested that interfaith activities should be encouraged and increased as a means of promoting a wider understanding of the common basis of all religions.

Participants ended the event by calling for more research in a number of these areas, including ways to create a set of development indicators that might assess the impact of a values-based approach to development and on identifying "best practices" of religiously inspired development efforts.

Common values

"We see the need to undertake a careful program of research to determine the common values of all religions," said the Statement of Findings. "We also see the need to

explore the content and pedagogy of moral and values-based education."

As well, virtually all of the participants indicated a keen willingness to continue the dialogue across the three issue areas of science, religion and development.

"I really found the Colloquium stimulating, and it has given me a glimmer of hope for the future path of development," said Barry Underwood, Chief Executive Officer of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program, India.

Promilla Kapur, a Hindu sociologist who has studied these themes and is Director of Integrated Human Development Service Foundation, a New Delhi-based NGO, said the Colloquium left a "deep mark on the minds and hearts" of participants. "The Colloquium made people think about issues they were not thinking about, specifically the interface between science, religion and development," said Ms. Kapur. "And I think more and more people will start and have already started thinking in these terms."

Farida Vahedi, who coordinated the event on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of India, said a "solidarity of spirit" emerged among participants.

"Determining how religious insights and principles can be infused into our understanding, practice and assessment of development is no easy task," said Ms. Vahedi. "But the interchange among the Colloquium participants showed that there is much to be gained from giving serious attention to the role of spiritual values in building human capacity. The collective verdict of the participants was that social transformation cannot come from political prescriptions or technical recipes alone."*

Bahá'í International Community Launches News Service

HAIFA, Israel — The Bahá'í International Community launched an Internet-based news service on 4 December 2000.

The Bahá'í World News Service (BWNS) reports on the activities, projects and events of the worldwide Bahá'í community. Located at <http://www.bahaiworldnews.org>, the news service's Web site offers the latest headlines, searchable news and photo archives, and a subscription feature that allows viewers to receive articles by email.

"The main purpose of this new Service is to provide timely information about Bahá'í events and projects around the world to the world's secular news media," said Douglas Samimi-Moore, director the Community's Office of Public Information. "We also expect that the numerous Bahá'í-sponsored

magazines and newsletters around the world will draw on this Service.

"We also hope that the Service will come to be seen as a valuable resource for individuals who wish to learn what is happening in our worldwide community," said Mr. Samimi-Moore.

All stories and photographs produced by the Bahá'í World News Service may be freely reprinted, re-emailed, re-posted to the World Wide Web and otherwise reproduced by any individual or organization, as long as they are attributed to the Bahá'í World News Service. Although this blanket permission to reproduce BWNS stories is freely given and no special permission is required, the Bahá'í World News Service retains full copyright protection for its stories under all applicable international laws.*

"The main purpose of this new Service is to provide timely information about Bahá'í events and projects around the world to the world's news media."

– Douglas Samimi-Moore

UN General Assembly again expresses concern over treatment of Bahá'ís in Iran

UNITED NATIONS — For the 15th time in 16 years, the United Nations General Assembly has expressed "concern" over human rights violations in Iran, once again specifically mentioning the "unabated pattern of persecution" against the Bahá'í community of Iran, that country's largest religious minority, and calling for its complete emancipation.

In a resolution passed on 4 December 2000, the Assembly called on Iran to "eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religious grounds or against persons belonging to religious minorities" and decided to continue its examination of the human rights situation in Iran for another year.

Approved by a vote of 67 to 54, with 46 abstentions, the resolution followed the release of a UN report that stated that some 11 members of the Bahá'í community of Iran currently face death sentences because of their religious belief and that the community as a whole continues to experience discrimination in education, employment, travel, housing and the enjoyment of cultural activities.

That report, issued on 8 September 2000 by Maurice Copithorne, the Special Represen-

tative of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, said there have been recent reports of "situations of discrimination and persecution" against Bahá'ís, including "acts of intimidation carried out in order to prevent Bahá'ís from participating in religious gatherings or educational activities."

In its resolution, the Assembly expressed concern that Iran has failed "to comply fully with international standards in the administration of justice, the absence of guarantees of due process of law, and the absence of respect for internationally recognized legal safeguards...with respect to persons belonging to religious minorities."

"As we have stated numerous times, the Bahá'í community of Iran is entirely non-partisan in its nature and poses no threat to the Government," said Techeste Ahderom, the Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the UN. The Bahá'ís in Iran only wish to be allowed to practice their religion fully, in accordance with the numerous international human rights covenants to which Iran is a party.*

Review: *The Lab, Temple, and Market*

Review, continued from back page

ment. In the second essay, Gregory Baum, a Catholic mathematician, sociologist and theologian, notes that many seminal development thinkers were quite antireligious in their views.

"The early literature on development, starting with *The Stages of Economic Growth*, by W.W. Rostow (1960), regarded the religions of peoples in the South as an obstacle to economic development, because these religions often trusted the rhythm of nature, fostered social identification with family and community, and failed to promote a culture oriented toward personal achievement and social mobility," writes Dr. Baum in an essay entitled "Solidarity with the Poor."

Dr. Baum suggests it is time to call this viewpoint into question — a process which he acknowledges has already begun with efforts like the World Faiths Development Dialogue, initiated in 1998 by the World Bank. He also believes it is time for social scientists who direct much of the development work at the international level to question whether their own work is really is values-neutral.

"Most sociologists," Dr. Baum writes, "are convinced that in modern society, which is marked by industrialization, scientific rationality, and cultural pluralism, religion no longer fulfills any important social function."

Drawing on the writings of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II, as well as the work of Catholic bishops in Latin America, Dr. Baum suggests that truly integrated development cannot take place unless social scientists in the development field can fully overcome this prejudice and begin to work in a genuine partnership with the local communities that they seek to help. "A truly creative aspect of integral development is the summoning forth of meaning and wisdom derived from the cultural and religious tradition," he writes.

Azizan Baharuddin, an associate professor in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at the University of Malaysia, examines in the book's third essay what Islam has to say about "Rediscovering the Resources of Religion."

Dr. Baharuddin, like the other essayists, is critical of the prevailing secular develop-

ment paradigm, which, she believes, suffers in particular from being "highly compartmentalized."

Like Dr. Kapur, Dr. Baharuddin sees religion as potentially offering much in helping to bring a more holistic view to development. "In religion, doctrine-theory and practice-method are inseparable," she writes. "Doctrine concerns the mind, whereas practice concerns the will; religion must therefore engage both the mind and the will of believers. Thus, the mechanism for, and of, development can ideally be seen as manifestations of religious theories and methods."

Dr. Baharuddin goes on to identify several "main Islamic value perspectives that, if creatively and thoroughly applied, could change the direction, goals and processes of science and development." These perspectives include the idea that "all human activity is 'religious,' even and especially economics, development, and science, and therefore cannot be pursued in isolation from the goals and values inherent in the religious worldview, such as justice, unity, vicegerency, and recognition of God" and the ability to integrate "diverse modes of thought."

One important idea that gradually emerges is the importance of rethinking our understanding of human nature and its fundamental motivations if the world is to properly analyze and understand the failures of the current development paradigm and move beyond it.

This idea, among others, is most fully developed in the book's fourth main essay, "Promoting a Discourse on Science, Religion and Development," which was written by Farzam Arbab, a theoretical physicist who worked for many years in development in Colombia and who is currently a member of the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body of the Bahá'í Faith.

Dr. Arbab suggests that much of what is wrong in the modern world stems from a fundamental contradiction in the general view of human nature. "On the one hand, we dream of, and labor for, a world of peace and prosperity; on the other, what passes for scientific theory depicts us as slaves to self-interest, incapable of rising to the heights of nobility we must achieve to meet our challenges," writes Dr. Arbab. "We work, then, for objectives lying forever beyond our selfish means. It is such contra-

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— Farzam Arbab

dictions that have led to the paralysis of will that today pervades all strata of society.”

This contradiction can only be resolved, Dr. Arbab suggests, when the spiritual and religious dimensions of life are fully investigated and recognized as a source of knowledge on a par with science.

“The only explanation I have found for how a process of intellectual enhancement, so intimately associated in its origins with the free investigation of reality, has led us to our present predicament is persistent neglect of the spiritual dimension of human existence,” Dr. Arbab writes. “Modern scientific knowledge has shown its power to liberate us from the fetters of religion ruled by superstition and maintained by self-righteousness. But it has also demonstrated how it can lose its bearings when it falls victim to materialism. The knowledge system currently propelling the development of the world is fragmented. Its fragments by themselves cannot address the highly complex and interrelated problems of societies in dire need of profound transformation.”

Dr. Arbab writes that the real objective for development theorists and practitioners ought to be the building of a just and prosperous world civilization. Already, Dr. Arbab writes, the processes of globalization have set the world on a “new and irreversible course,” and a “global society is being born as barriers that have kept people apart crumble and are swept away.”

Only by drawing on the core values at the heart of all religions, but most particularly the global-minded values offered by the Bahá’í Faith, Dr. Arbab writes, can this new entity be given a vision capable of guiding it beyond the purely economic view that currently predominates.

“Belief in the unity of humankind, with its implications of equity and selfless love, is, after all, ultimately a religious conception of reality,” Dr. Arbab writes. “Viewed from the angle of oneness, development ceases to be something one does for others. A vision begins to emerge according to which the rich and the poor, the illiterate and the educated, are all to participate in building a new civilization, one that ensures the material and spiritual prosperity of the entire human race.”

This short review does not really begin to do justice to the views and ideas presented in *The Lab, the Temple and the Market*. Although the reflections offered in the four main essays make no pretense at offering a

comprehensive viewpoint on the topic of science, religion and development, the depth and breadth of thought in this collection is nevertheless profound.*

Perspective: Science, Religion and Development

Perspective, continued from page 3

already been identified as critical to promoting development, but in each case by taking a more holistic view.

Education for example, should strive to develop an integrated set of capabilities — technical, artistic, social, moral and spiritual — so that individuals can lead lives with meaning and become agents of positive social change. *Economic arrangements* should serve people’s needs; societies should not be expected to shape themselves to fit specific economic models — particularly those that embrace habits of unbridled acquisition and consumption. *Technological decision-making* should be directly guided by local value systems to ensure that superfluous uses of technology are avoided. Lastly, truly enlightened institutions of *governance* — institutions that are devoid of corruption and that engender public trust — will emerge only when processes of collective decision-making and collective action are guided by spiritual principles.

At this moment in history, development activity must be a global enterprise whose purpose is to bring both material and spiritual well-being to all the planet’s inhabitants. To acknowledge that humanity is a single people with a common destiny is to understand that development must cease to be something one does for others. The task of erecting a peaceful and just global society must involve all members of the human family.

If the capacities of the world’s peoples are to reach the levels needed to address the complex requirements of the present hour, the resources of both reason and faith will have to be tapped. While science can offer the methods and tools for promoting social and economic advancement, it alone cannot set direction; the goal of development cannot come from within the process itself. A vision is needed, and the proper vision will never take shape if the spiritual heritage of the human race continues to be regarded as tangential to development policy and programs.*

“Viewed from the angle of oneness, development ceases to be something one does for others. A vision begins to emerge according to which the rich and the poor, the illiterate and the educated, are all to participate in building a new civilization, one that ensures the material and spiritual prosperity of the entire human race.”

– Dr. Farzam Arbab

Toward a new development paradigm

The Lab, the Temple and the Market: Reflections at the Intersection of Science, Religion, and Development

Edited by Sharon Harper

**IDRC/CRDI
Kumarian Press**

**Ottawa and
Bloomfield, CT,
USA**

For years, many of the world's top "experts" on social and economic development discounted the role of religion in the fight against poverty and social injustice — or, worse, considered the religious beliefs of the people they intended to help as antithetical to progress.

But recently, individuals at many institutions large and small, ranging from the World Bank to grassroots-based NGOs, have begun to question this view, calling specifically for a new, values-based approach to development that not only examines the role of religion in development but embraces it.

For anyone following this trend, *The Lab, the Temple and the Market* is a must-read. Indeed, anyone who is deeply concerned about issues related to world poverty, sustainable development and globalization will find this book of interest.

As the subtitle indicates, the book's main topic is the "interface of science, religion and development." Essentially a compilation of four essays on this subject by four scientists who are also religious believers, in this case Hindu, Roman Catholic, Muslim and Bahá'í, the book in its introduction modestly indicates that it is an outgrowth of a research project at Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to "investigate what faith and science have to offer each other in the 50-year-old endeavor called development."

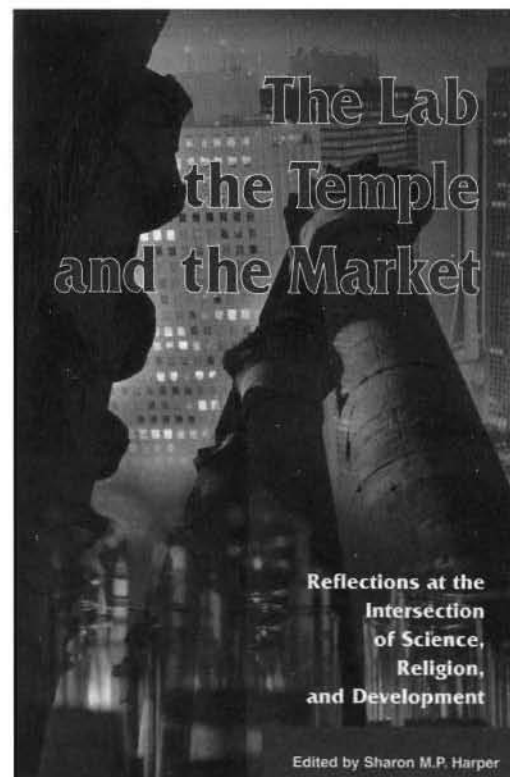
Yet in its 250 pages, something more emerges. The four authors view the topic through the lens of their own faith and personal experiences in development, without much apparent coordination among the essays. The end result is nevertheless both a meaty critique of the secular approach to development and its failures and a broad outline for a new development paradigm that more fully integrates religion, spirituality, and values.

The first essay, for example, entitled "The Principle of Fundamental Oneness," outlines a broad vision for how the essential teachings and principles of Hinduism, especially as interpreted by modern Hindu thinkers and teachers, offer a powerful re-

source for integrated development.

"Hinduism brings a holistic approach to development, because it does not concentrate simply on the question of economic well-being but also incorporates ideals of spiritual and sociopsychological satisfaction," writes Promilla Kapur, a Hindu sociologist and psychologist who currently directs a New Delhi-based NGO.

"Life for a Hindu is basically meant to be a spiritual journey. When development becomes merely a means to fight off hunger and disease, without encompassing the spiritual dimension, then to that extent it fails to provide the essential fuel of enthusiasm and hope," Dr. Kapur continues. "The con-



temporary discourse of development is geared toward the physical, without incorporating any idea of what lies beyond the attainment of plenty."

The idea of factoring a spiritual perspective into the development discourse, note Kapur and the others, runs at odds with traditional secular thinking about develop-

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