

## **On Building Neohumanist Futures**

*Preamble to the Sixth International Neohumanist Educational Futures Conference 2008 by Dada Shambhushivananda, Kulapati (Chancellor), Ananda Marga Gurukula c/o CNS-Sweden, Ydrefors, 59081 Gullringen, Sweden.*

We are living at a very special time in history. On the one hand, we are faced with problems that could cause the death knell of the entire human species and on the other; we are equipped with the necessary stamina, intellect and awareness that could turn these problems into great opportunities for massive global transformation and usher a global golden age. The overarching theme of the conference this summer at International College of Neohumanist Studies in Ydrefors in Småland seems to be inviting us to explore positive visions and actions towards a bright future for all of humanity & other species and for all the coming generations.

Education can play a constructive role in responding to the challenges posed by the impending collapse of capitalism, apparent clash of cultures, changing planetary environment, unique opportunities created by cyber space & a growing recognition of global interdependence in a myriad areas. In particular, the Neohumanist Education Movement recognizes the importance of "shared visions" and the necessity of working 'cooperatively' towards a shared and cohesive transformation. As our consciousness expands to embrace physical, metaphysical and the transcendental, we are increasingly drawn together by cosmic-hood and by a moral imperative that calls for immediate actions for our collective survival in the midst of a sea of problems.

Here, we may chose to:

- a) Resolve the urgency of building sustainable communities in every nation of the world;
- b) Call for the redirecting of society's resources towards the building of such self-reliant communities;
- d) Explore the application of pedagogies of empowerment to raise levels of awareness for sustainable development; and,
- e) Utilize NHE or related pedagogies to build leadership that would make sane choices and foster evolution of sustainable futures.

Our neohumanist worldview is steeped in a 'pedagogy of love' where tenderness, trans-disciplinary and transcendental dimensions find their natural nest.

Tenderness - because only affection can overpower the widespread violence of today and transmute the hatred that divides one human heart from another.

Trans-disciplinary - because only the synthetic outlook can replace the outmoded systems based on analytical models that tends to divide the whole reality into separate parts and convert each living being into fractals, or a mere number or mechanical robots. Here, logic, emotion and intuition can come together in order to create methodologies and modalities that 'enliven' us rather than 'alienate or burden' us.

Transcendental- because cosmic sentiment alone can draw the power of the unbounded spirit and establish us in the pedagogy of genuine and lasting love.

I also propose that as we deliberate together, we may also want to lay the foundations for a cooperative venture to tap our hidden potentialities for building a sustainable world. One such initiative could be the "PL- Pattern Laboratory /Library" where we can compile all the functional and dysfunctional patterns that foster or inhibit the building of such sustainable futures. This work is akin to the deep work of Tantra - the sa'dhana of reconfiguring our sentiments embedded in patterns. CLA (Causal Layered Analysis) does this too by identifying the stories which generate/confirm/configure our patterns.

Opposing narratives of people sharing the same bio-sphere poses both a challenge and an opportunity. We may conveniently choose to avoid or ignore the underlying core issues; confront or challenge them; compromise grudgingly; surrender to the powerful or will of the majority; or choose an enlightened and rational selective combination of these options. Hopefully, we can draw on the wisdom part of our beings to see and foresee the bright side of both the seeming 'weak' and 'powerful' forces. Indeed, the acid test of success of neohumanism will be how we treat the weakest in the society. Our obstacles are: internal as well as external. Overcoming them will require an arduous effort to elevate our consciousness, on the one hand and nurture collective goodwill, on the other.

The curse of neglect is all pervasive: spanning neglect of the body (inner ecology); neglect of the 'others' especially foes and minorities; neglect of the environment (outer-ecology); neglect of the mind (value-based thinking) and neglect of the spirit (universal welfare). Some guiding principles that may enable us to approach the current situations positively may be: a) free the 'present' from old and current myths b) make social life a subset of universal spiritual life c) purify both means and the ends d) adopt 'genuine love' as the foundation principle and e) look for ways to adopt 'inclusive' as opposed to 'exclusive' approaches. Content, Process & Structure are all important.

Some of these and other solutions are a life-time endeavor and must therefore; begin with the young (and teachers) in our schools. A civic spiritual society must provide the room for fostering diversities while curbing the prevalent human

tendency to widen the disparities. Neohumanist Education is one response to the perceived need for evolving an educational system that would create wisdom-based leadership in society. Neohumanism steps out of the traditional paradigm for dealing with civic education - i.e. it is not simply a structural response that involves curriculum, technology and schools. It offers a new deep story and lays bare some of the dysfunctional myths of the present - e.g. God gave us dominion over others; some races or species are destined to suffer more and others will surely attain greatness by divine providence and favour etc.

Another pertinent question is: Do the ideas of civil society and citizenship relate to city or the nation state born out of geo-sentiment, socio-sentiment or pseudo-human sentiment; or universal citizenship begotten of neohumanism? History may then need to be constantly re-written in light of neohumanism.

Above all, the wisdom-based leadership of today must balance the centrifugal force clamouring for separateness and individualistic expression with the centripetal force that is passionately longing for greater unity amidst myriad diversities. As Daniel Barenboim said in his Reith lectures some time ago: We indeed need "sensitive talking and painful listening."