

# The Synergy of Prout, Neohumanist Education, and the Spirit of Service

Compilation and Introduction by Kathleen Kesson

In this world/historical moment, two major challenges of global concern are the diverse and complex socio-political and economic inequalities that remain from the colonial era and the deep planetary ecological unsustainability wrought by the dominance of a corporate, global, extractive economy. Both challenges are generated and reproduced by the economic relations at the hub of capitalism's wheel, and the decolonization of society and education and the transformation of the global economic order are interrelated imperatives. A third challenge exists in the form of deeply autocratic empires committed to the preservation of patriarchal power and the suppression of individual and collective freedoms. We seem trapped in the crushing jaws of the 20th century, even as so many people awaken to the 21st century cries for justice, sustainability, peace, economic democracy, and the dismantling of destructive hierarchies.

P.R. Sarkar gave innumerable discourses on virtually every aspect of human life. We want to focus here on what we believe are three of his greatest proposals for human individual and social development/emancipation: Prout (the Progressive Utilization Theory), Neohumanism and Neohumanist Education, and AMURT/AMURTEL, the disaster relief organization that serves those in greatest need.

Prout philosophy is aimed at the transformation of societies to become more just, more ethical, more sustainable, and more supportive of human development and spirituality. Neohumanist Education is aimed at the cultivation of the character, knowledge and social commitment necessary to these transformations. To effect the necessary changes in societies, Prout and Neohumanist Education need to develop hand in hand. In this collaborative article, we look at six alignments between the theories of Prout and the theories of Neohumanist Education which offer an integrative approach to education and social change. We have invited scholars who have thought deeply about these ideas to offer brief commentaries elaborating on how they see these connections unfolding.

Following this, we feature a portrait of the potential synergies that emerge when Prout, Neohumanist Education, and AMURT/EL, with its integrated orientation toward education, community development, and service, align.



## I. The Purpose of Education By Marcus Bussey

*Excerpted from "Education for Liberation A Cornerstone of Prout" by, in Understanding Prout – Essays on Sustainability and Transformation, Volume 1. Proutist Universal, Australia, 2009. Version: 11th February 2010.*

Prout Perspective	Neohumanist Education Perspective
Economic and social institutions are designed to facilitate the attainment of the highest of human potentialities: self-realization, compassion, and love for all beings.	The nature of what it means to be human is reconceived as one of relationship and interconnection, not as an isolated individual. Non-dogmatic spiritual development is fostered in schools, as is the cultivation of empathy, emotional intelligence, and universal love. Cooperation with, rather than mastery over, all species is fostered.

Shrii Sarkar formally introduced Neohumanism in 1982 to focus attention on the philosophical essentials necessary to fulfil the Proutistic intention of shifting human attention from the narrow and limited geo- and socio-educations of both the capitalist and socialist nation state towards expansive yet deliberately enabling universalist education. For him this moved attention from human self-interest to a new sense of purpose for the human story. Such a move was flagged in his initial statements on Prout where he discussed the need for a "common philosophy of life" that fostered the physical, mental and spiritual development of individuals. In this way he foresaw the development of an integrated personality and a sense of not just belonging to one Cosmic family, but of being stewards by virtue of our position within the universal collective and thus responsible for the collective welfare of the universe.

This vision he clarified in a series of discourses called *Liberation of Intellect: Neohumanism*, in which he noted that Neohumanism will give new inspiration and provide a new interpretation for the very concept of human existence. It will help people understand that human beings, as the most thoughtful and intelligent beings in this created universe, will have to accept the great responsibility of taking care of the entire universe – will have to accept that the responsibility for the entire universe rests on them. Spirituality in essence focuses on the psycho-spiritual as the epistemological context for Prout. It builds on the re-imagining of humanity as part of a universal story. This is an epistemological task as it works on how we know and understand the world around us. It engages with worldview and paradigm as the contexts which shape human understanding of self, other and the world around us.



## II. Human Freedom By Kathleen Kesson, EdD

*Professor Emerita of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership (LIU-Brooklyn)*

Prout Perspective	Neohumanist Education Perspective
Prout supports the idea of individual freedom to acquire and express ideas, creative potential and inner aspirations in the belief that such intellectual and spiritual freedom will strengthen the collectivity.	Students are supported in their choices about what they wish to study and how they wish to learn. Creative thinking is taught and nurtured, as are the arts and aesthetic sensibilities. In the shift away from a standardized curriculum and rote learning, such freedom needs to be thoughtfully nourished in order to understand and maintain the welfare of all.

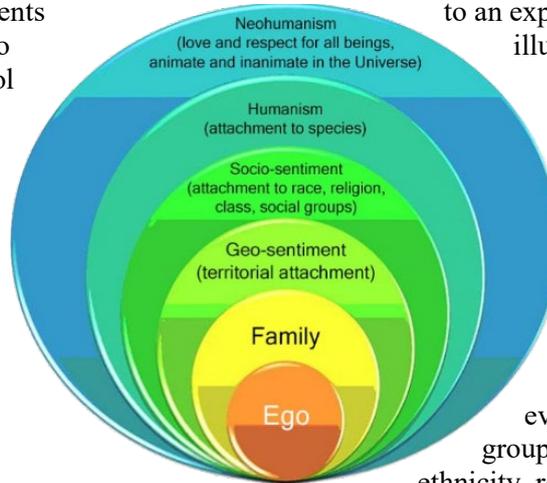
The notion of “educational freedom” means many different things to people. Western philosophers from Plato to Rousseau to Dewey have brought various conceptions to bear on the question of freedom in education. To some people educational freedom means that the child has the right to do whatever they might wish in school, obeying only an internal compass that leads them to what they need to know and be able to do. To others, the term implies that governments should provide funding to any parent who wishes to enroll their offspring in a school of their choice – private, public, or religious. Over the decades, experiments in educational freedom have come and gone, and these have been implemented with a variety of aims: to preserve an “essential child nature” despite the impositions of repressive culture, to cultivate critical consciousness and overcome oppression, to “deschool society” in the interest of defeating capitalism.

Educational freedom is at the core of Neohumanism and the pedagogical principles that follow from this philosophy. It is a freedom, however, that is tempered by the understanding that the individual exists only in relation to other beings (human and non-human). It rejects the old Humanist ideal of the individual “I” as a bounded entity, surrounded by stable substances and objects in space that constitute separate “others” to manipulate, utilize, and transact with. It recognizes that this sense of separation, mastery, and control in concert with an economic system predicated on resource extraction, endless growth, and needless consumption has led us to the ecological tipping point at which we find ourselves. It is therefore an ideal of freedom that is inseparable from a deep responsibility to respond to the needs of others, to ensure equality and social justice, to care for all life on earth, and to live lives of compassion and empathy.

Shrii Sarkar advocated unequivocally for freedom of thought, speech, and spiritual practice, but admonished that such freedom must not be allowed to surmount the common good. It is here, I believe, where Neohumanist Education intersects most importantly with Prout and AMURT/EL, in the commitment to both honor the

uniqueness of the person and their desire to express their “ideas, creative potential and inner aspirations” while at the same time cultivating the spirit of service in the interest of collective welfare. No society has yet achieved this harmonic potential.

How to facilitate the growth of young people in this “quest for liberation” from the limited sense of “I-ness” to an expanding circle of connection is illustrated in the graphic.



In the first phase of existence, there is the small self, the ego and its identification with the body and its needs and the growing awareness of the surrounding world. The individual’s sense of identity expands to their family, their sense of place (geo-sentiment) and ever outwards to include one’s social groups, clan, social class, race and ethnicity, religion, etc. (socio-sentiment) and ideally, to all of humanity. This is not a linear process and it is not a “stage theory” (an inevitable progression through identifiable stages of growth).

None of these phases of identity are problematic in themselves: one can hold a great love for the land on which they live, or one’s social identity can be a source of strength. Problems can arise when a person gets stuck on this identity “chain” – when they come to feel that their race is superior or that their religion is the only correct one. Their expansive flow is then blocked, or reversed. Neohumanism teaches that it is our destiny to remove all such limiting labels and continue to expand our consciousness into an identity of interconnectedness, of integral unity, rather than separation and superiority. When we remove all the labels we have affixed to ourselves, we find something that precedes all labels, and with that existential awareness lies the connection with the consciousness of everything, animate and inanimate, in the universe. Only by overcoming all limiting sentiments can human beings realize the “liberation of intellect” in all of its fullness, and foster the positive evolution of society to become more just, more peaceful, more balanced, and more free.



### III. Preservation of Local Language and Culture

By Matt Oppenheim, PhD

Fellow: Society for Applied Anthropology

Prout Perspective	Neohumanist Education Perspective
Prout encourages the protection and cultivation of local culture, language, history and tradition. For social justice and a healthy social order, individual and cultural diversity must be accepted and encouraged.	“Culturally relevant “and “place-based” education need to be at the foundation of the curriculum. Instruction takes place in both the local (indigenous) language and the “languages of power.” Multiple forms of knowing are supported (embodied knowing, ancestral knowing, intuitive and contemplative knowing, narrative knowing and intergenerational knowing) to balance the current emphasis on narrow versions of reason and technical knowing.

*I think of that mountain called ‘white rocks lie above in a compact cluster’ as if it were my maternal grandmother. I recall stories of how it once was at that mountain. The stories told to me were like arrows. Elsewhere, hearing that mountain’s name, I see it. Its name is like a picture. Stories go to work on you like arrows. Stories make you lie right. Stories make you replace yourself.*

Keith Basso,

*Western Apache Language and Culture*

Identifying place as self and as community and as language has been essential to our ancestors for thousands of years. Without that anchor, we are lost; aloof from our own stories and ancestors and understanding our futures. Upon knocking on the door of an indigenous Maori elder in Aoteroa (New Zealand), he was just about to slam the door in my face, when he simply asked “what is your mountain and what is your river? Upon my answer, he said “Yes, I know your people, they are good people.”

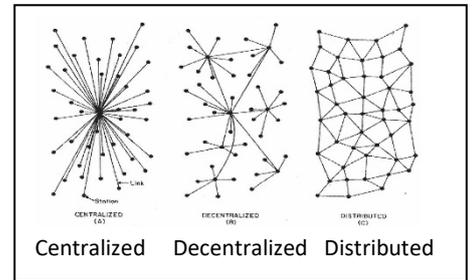
“Central Place” is a biological theory, essential to human evolution that is key to all life. To exist is to have a nucleus, where creatures of all sorts replenish, give birth and nurture, find safety, and store resources, and then go out into a widening radius to collect food, fight what endangers as well as what enriches . . . to explore what is possible and provide for existence and expansion. This Central Place is still essential to balance and resilience. Think about your own life and how this theory does or doesn’t apply and what the results are.

The painting depicts fossil evidence from a micro-watershed in Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania (famous for early evidence of hominid evolution by the Leaky Family). The artist depicts what was found from evidence buried under ancient volcanic ash. The forest at the right demonstrates the central place, where our ancestors sought shelter, prepared food, stored resources and raised



their young; the savanna ecology in the middle is where resources are obtained, and the water source to the left, shows nurturance and sustenance. The proto-humans and diverse animals demonstrate hunting and foraging.

As geographical areas expand beyond the initial central place, balanced society and ecologies are mutually supported and enhanced through



decentralized socio-economics. We can feel the strength of decentralization in the diagram above, with its opposite being centralized society, or distributed, as a model for multinationals such as Walmart and their production and supply chain. Archaeologist Vernon Scarborough uses his knowledge of water and resource management from civilizations all over the planet to advocate for a return to decentralization. As a modern approach, he advocates for the creation of dispersed decentralized technological hubs, which will then attract other resources and industries.

#### After Civilizational Collapse, Genuine Transformation is the Only Course for the Future

When empires and large civilizations begin to fall, massive refugee populations always flood the cities, making collapse inevitable. That is because rural regions have been depleted and often destroyed, as the growing urban populations consume rural resources, unable to

produce their own. With refugees and immigrants, the first generation that arrives in a large capital tries to sustain its language and at least part of its culture. But usually within the second generation, sense of place erodes, and megacities and capitalism take over the sense of self and community.

Having worked for decades as an anthropologist with indigenous place, and then in metropolitan centers for immigration and refugees, I believe that the only way to successfully

move ahead is through a transformational model of change, not just a service-based model. Research demonstrates that when people in local communities utilize their strengths, identity, and leadership, only then is sustained change possible. Otherwise, the system of service as well as colonization continues perpetual dependency.

**A Community Rises from Genocide to Resilience**

It is the worst of ironies that today, the traditionally resilient peoples are the brunt of genocide and destruction, while they also offer the only way forward. The Maya of Guatemala persisted in a resilient rainforest practice for ten thousand years yet faced genocide when 250,000 were slaughtered between the 1970s and 1990s. Today, thousands still risk their lives to wrest control over their ancestral lands from endless multinationals with the goal of destroying their self-reliance and cultural and linguistic sustainability.

The result of our collaborative indigenous project in the village of Panimatlam, Guatemala, as part of my PhD, developed an activist curriculum for high school students. Teachers created chapters that dealt with periods of both genocide and resilience, and then told the story of how villages freed themselves from virtual slave labor through integral development. Their story includes

the revival of culture, spirituality and language. Each chapter narrates the story of each generation and how they took charge of their futures. The book is based on Freirian pedagogy and challenges students to seek guidance from their ancestors, so that they can carry on their work into the future. Students graduate from this school and many attend an indigenous technology institute in the community. Many go on to college in the capital city and other communities. Because of this commitment to building the future, based on knowledge of the past, many become accountants, teachers, managers, or cooperative workers in the community. But ongoing violence, desecration of villages and loss of political power have made many take the life-challenging course of immigration and to seek refugee status in other countries.

I have come to realize that this community has developed the template for change which is the focus of this set of essays. Beginning with genocide, then moving into survival, then taking up the challenges of the ancestors to create a viable future, they and other communities like them, provide the activist project of transformative synthesis for our own project of AMURT/EL, Neohumanist Education/Proutist change.



**IV. Radical Democracy  
By Dada Maheshvarananda**

Prout Perspective	Neohumanist Education Perspective
Prout advocates economic and political democracy based on local and cooperative planning.	Learning is reconceived from an individual act to one of reciprocity, cooperation, and mutuality. Students work together to identify local problems and work on collaborative projects towards their solution. The study of history and economics is not doctrinaire, but looks objectively at systems and their impacts, as well as viable alternatives. School and community attain new levels of partnership and cooperation.

Despite our wondrous scientific and technological advances, humanity has still not learned how to live at peace with one another and to equitably share the planet’s resources. The first priority of every country’s economy must be to guarantee the minimum necessities of life to everyone: food, clothing, housing, education, and medical care. This birthright transcends citizenship—meaning that every human being, whether native or visitor, must be guaranteed these necessities. This guarantee is crucial to establishing real democracy, for as long as fear and insecurity about their survival plague people, they are easy targets of manipulation and disinformation.

Capitalism promotes the myth that anyone can become rich. It can be logically inferred from this myth that anyone who is not rich is so because of their fault. Though we sometimes hear amazing stories of a smart person who worked hard and became rich, for every happy example there are millions of other smart, hard-working people who never get that opportunity. Today’s

education trains students for this individualistic and competitive society, telling in effect, “First get an education; then get a job; make as much money as you can; and buy as much as you can.” Schools rarely convey a message of responsibility towards others in our human family. This selfish, materialistic attitude is expressed as, “I win, you lose,” or more correctly, “I win, and it doesn’t matter to me what happens to anyone else.” This individualistic outlook is destroying human relations, communities and the planet itself.

Democracy requires a continual process of political education in ethics, logic and civics to raise the consciousness of all voters. Ethics is needed to understand the moral implications of new developments. Logic is needed to understand confusing and sentimental arguments made by politicians. Civics is needed to understand the rights, duties and powers of citizens to choose and oversee their government. The media’s role will be to explain the campaign issues in a clear and

balanced way. In this way, voters will be better equipped to decide who are the most worthy candidates.

Economic democracy is where workers own and manage their own enterprises as cooperatives. This requires higher levels of resourcefulness, social skills, and discipline among everyone than in private enterprises. Learning for political and economic democracy needs to be reconceived from individual testing and achievement to collective cooperation. Students need to practice democracy as they study their community, identify needs, and collaborate with others in projects and service. Learning how to interview and listen to people of different cultures, ages, and generations, how to share

knowledge gained with others, and how to lend a hand and work together as partners are vital to co-creating our shared future.

Ongoing movements started by other young people, such as environmental causes and campaigns against bullying, racism, or violence are unforgettable demonstrations that we are all active participants in our world and need to join in and do our part. Ending the artificial separation between the classroom and the world will enable and empower students. History, society, and economics are not closed narratives but systems that impact people very differently. We need to see them from different perspectives and consider viable alternatives.



## V. Ethical Leadership by Didi Ananda Devapriya

*Excerpted from [Every Child Has an Inner Compass: Facilitating Children's Moral Development](#) (2010), Neohumanist Association.*

Prout Perspective	Neohumanist Education Perspective
Leadership in a Prout society is based on ethical principles, and expressed through collective leadership.	Students are taught to engage in ethical dialogue and decision-making, and democratic class meetings are an essential component of the curriculum. Social learning, communication skills, critical thinking, and the tools of negotiation and collaborative decision-making are fostered. Service learning is well developed and forms an essential component of the curriculum.

Relating the highest moral development to one that includes a deep ethical concern for other beings and resources of the planet requires not only a sense of justice, but more importantly a deeply felt sense of care, solidarity and connection. If we are to look at the effect that the current relationship of humanity to the rest of creation is having on the planet, it is clear that it is not a sustainable, thriving, regenerative relationship that can take us into the future. To motivate the massive shift of consciousness necessary to reorient that relationship away from an anthropocentric utilitarian one towards a consciousness of care, will require the mobilizing of powerful sentiments, not only dry rationality. Although the rational reasons for changing consumption patterns, emissions, etc. has been available for years already, we have not yet proven able to make the mass level changes needed.

On a planetary level, it seems that human consciousness as a whole has to evolve beyond anthropocentric standards of morality, if we are to survive and flourish. This next step in our evolution is what PR Sarkar termed “neohumanist consciousness.” In education, instilling good behavior through the clear and consistent use of fair rules, and the cultivation of virtues such as helpfulness, truthfulness, etc. are valuable in developing the child’s pre-conventional and conventional morality. However, in order to create the moral foundations that will allow a child to fully develop beyond those stages requires cultivating connection to the inner self.

On the practical level, this means that teachers need to create space for a child to practice listening inside.

Instead of telling children what is right and wrong, to invite them to reflect on fairness, to think through conflicts and practice perspective taking already when quite small. Open-ended discussions cultivate not only critical thinking, which is a cognitive skill needed for making rational, moral choices, but also can invite them to practice connecting to their sense of discrimination. Often, even with open-ended questions, children still are eager to give the responses that they “think are right,” having picked them up from their observations of the adult world, or that they think are what the adults want to hear. When an astute adult observes this, he or she can reflect this back to the child and invite them to think a little deeper. “Yes, that is what many people think, but what do you really think?”

While the seed of goodness is innate in all human children, its flourishing is the result of effortful processes. This happens within the child’s own self, through their natural striving to be good, to please and to help. The seed also receives water and sunlight through the nurturing care, validation, love, and guidance that caring, connected, sensitive adults are able to provide. When the factors that nourish this goodness are lacking, it is possible that this seed of goodness remains dormant or underdeveloped. A child who is living in adversity, such as neglect or abuse, will not have their sense of goodness affirmed, and instead can develop a distorted sense of self. Selfishness, fearfulness, meanness, or insensitivity in the emotional environment created by primary caregivers or other important adults can develop similar qualities in the child during this impressionable period of life that cloud her innate goodness.

The integration of ethical thinking into learning is a key principle in Neohumanist Education. Ethos, the Greek word at the root of ethics, means “character” or “conduct.” Neohumanist Education is a values-based approach to teaching and learning, and thus rightly concerned with the cultivation of an ethics in line with its philosophy. Issues of right and wrong, fair and unfair, harmless and harmful, surface in everyday life in the classroom as well as across the curriculum. The capacity for critical moral reflection is a developmental one and

involves a multitude of factors, including learning to listen to one’s peers, cultivating empathy, practicing mindful agreement and disagreement, observing effects and speculating about the future consequences of actions, and exploring the implications of individual and group decisions. In order to create the “good society,” leadership must be characterized by an “awakened conscience,” which Sarkar also called the “rationalistic mentality,” the human capacity for determining the best course of action for human welfare.



## VI. Awakened Rationality by Sohail Inayatullah

Excerpted from “Science, Civilization and Global Ethics: Can We Understand the Next 1000 Years?” (2000). Retrieved from <https://www.metafuture.org/science-civilization-and-global-ethics-can-we-understand-the-next-1000-years/>

Prout Perspective	Neohumanist Education Perspective
Reason, science, and technology form a solid basis for the development of society.	Science is taught in a way that nurtures a reverence for all life and an ecological orientation in which the inherent value of all living things is acknowledged. Ecological ethics are infused across the curriculum in multiple and diverse ways, and students are taught the arts of reflection, deliberation, and discerning judgement so that they might become good ecological citizens with the ability to assess the long term consequences of innovations in technology.

What will the world look like in one thousand years? What factors will create the long-term future? What are the trajectories? Will we survive as a species? Will science reduce human ignorance through its discoveries or will ignorance increase as science becomes the hegemonic discourse? Will that which is most important to us always remain a mystery, outside our knowing efforts? What should be the appropriate framework in which to think of the long-term? Will humanity successfully evolve creating brighter futures for all or will imperialism, racism, environmental problems and governance crises lead to full scale global catastrophe?

The future is quite likely to see quite dramatic shifts in the boundaries of what we consider the self. While history has been considered “given,” created by God or nature, the future is being increasingly made; we are directly intervening in evolution, creating new forms of life. Instead of a world populated only by humans and animals, the long-term future is likely to be far more diverse. There will be chimeras, cyborgs, robots and possibly even biologically created slaves. Our future generations may look back at us and find us distant relatives, and not particularly attractive ones.

What will intelligence look like in the future? Will it be human or artificial? What will be the boundaries? Advances in AI are so rapid that it is now defined as whatever machines can’t do today, since tomorrow they will be able to. How long will it be before judicial decision-making is done by AI know-bots, asks futurist James Dator? Will nano-technology make scarcity irrelevant creating a world of unending material bliss? Or will it be the development of our spiritual qualities that will be far more important?

Ethics must be explicit within science and not an afterthought. *What type of humans are we? What type of humans do we want to be? and What are our boundaries?* are not merely technological questions but political and moral issues. We have a responsibility to future generations to not create a dystopia – a Brave New World. Reason, science, and technology have a large role to play in the kind of future we create. On one hand, a new science is emerging that is value-laden, with reality as complex, chaotic and not divorced from cosmic consciousness. Indeed, at the very root of who we are, of what is real, is consciousness. As many have argued, there are no value-free positions, a value-free science is impossible. This however does not mean that rigour, systematic inquiry and empirical truths should be abandoned, rather that science must include issues of ethics, public knowledge, and alternative ways of knowing as part of its charge, and not as externalities. The meanings we give to the material world (and the epistememes and social structures that frame these meanings) are as important as the material world itself.

As we venture outward into space, as we create new life forms, expand our intelligence and reduce social and civilizational injustice, we should never forget the precarious nature of life. We may not even survive. Phillip Tobias, one of the world’s leading archeologists, tells us that 90% of the world’s species have become extinct. We may be next. However, even as he cautions, by tracing human evolution, he offers a story of hope for the future, of humans learning from mistakes, and proceeding slowly onwards.



## Feature

# Achieving Alignment: A Synthesis of AMURT/EL Neohumanist Education and Prout in Haiti

By Demeter Russafov, Executive Director – AMURT – Haiti

The women stand proudly in a circle clapping hands and singing in melodic voices a Creole song that exudes captivating dynamism, telling a story of collective female power and awakened social consciousness. The women will go back to their mud homes scattered in a grassy savanna in the isolated and impoverished Northwest of Haiti, confronting alone their day-to-day struggles with stoicism and devotion to their families and to God. In this small circle they find the support and inspiration that human connection and collaboration can bring, and a hope for a new beginning.

The women are members of a Self-Help Group (SHG) they have aptly called “Women Together For a Better Tomorrow”, part of a network of more than 5,000 mostly women members who meet every week in their villages to discuss commonly shared problems, and put together their contributions into a collective savings and micro-credit bank that supports their economic activities. The song weaves powerful themes that tell in a very direct and touching way the story of women standing strong as pillars of society and agents of change, in a language full of symbolism and charged with emotion that only people who have endured so much could express.

A tall woman with a shining face stands up and leads the women in series of stretches and breathing yogic exercises comfortably adapted to the limitations of the space. The trauma-informed mind-body skills they have learnt will help them come to terms with conflict and stress of all sorts, and the solidarity they have come to build amongst themselves will help carry them through the ups and downs of a turbulent existence in a nation which has been tossed in a whirlwind of political, environmental and socio-economic upheaval for decades on end.

The humanitarian and disaster response sector is constantly evolving in order to respond in an efficient and timely manner to an ever expanding and changing scope of environmental and human-caused crisis events. Whether related to climate change or socio-political instability, millions of people around the globe find their lives uprooted and their hopes for an equitable and bright future cut short. Humanitarian actors find themselves responsible for meeting gaps in needs such as basic hygiene, water, food, health, and education, helping communities recapitalize their resources and rebuild their society in a new way. It is exactly this possibility for a shift in perceptions and relationships that makes this sector a potential incubator of social change, and increasingly organizations around the globe are adapting their missions and methodologies in order to encourage innovation, collaboration, human rights and resilience amongst other factors. Linking a disaster response to long-term regenerative development has become an important goal and strategic milestone when responding

to humanitarian crises, and most humanitarian partnerships nowadays have to be accountable to both funders and communities and prove their coherence, relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, impact and durability.

AMURT/AMURTEL’s development model in Haiti has aimed to adapt the evolving humanitarian trends and themes as well as its own unique principles and methodologies to the complex local context of the rural communities it serves. The tantric yoga philosophy which has informed its approach and philosophy has given the organization a certain capacity for innovation and resilience which becomes particularly apparent in extremely hostile and difficult situations to which many other NGOs have a hard time to adapt. Its team in Haiti has intervened in every single disaster providing crucial services with a long-term vision orienting its intervention and guiding the evolution of the programs towards durable and transformative development processes. Rather than following the Call for Proposals which determines the parameter of projects according to outside funders, AMURT/EL has maintained a steady yet constantly evolving set of strategies which have sought to radically transform society through step-by-step bottom-up replicable systemic processes and programs that address the root causes of the challenges at hand.

The women’s Self-Help Group circles multiplying in numbers and growing in economic and leadership strength is one of the practical examples of block-level planning which traditionally has been the domain of Prout, the alternative economic theory which P.R. Sarkar proposed to restructure society using equitable and humanist principles. The rotational leadership of the structure, with every single group sending representatives to the Association and finally to the Federation level sets a vibrant grassroots model of a community transformed in a very real way by the Prout theory of change. And the hundreds of SHGs planting and transforming the highly nutritious leaves and seeds of newly-planted moringa trees, stabilizing watersheds and eroded ravines, or helping protect and regenerate endangered mangroves highlight the fine interconnections and inter-dependencies between service, block-level planning, Neohumanism, and environmental stewardship.

Yet another example of a systemic solution to the root cause of poverty and malnutrition is AMURT/EL’s approach to modernize the salt value chain in Haiti. Haiti is one of the last countries in the world to yet overcome Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD), which plagues more than 30% of Haitians and is linked to developmental health problems affecting wellbeing a

capacity to learn in children. Most institutional approaches had focused on resolving the problem from the top down, by supporting expensive and unsustainable ways to provide iodized salt at the end level of the value chain. Over the past 15 years AMURT/EL has utilized its Prout philosophy to gradually introduce innovative interventions from the bottom to the top of the value chain - from the organization of the salt harvesting communities in SHG structures, to transforming the modes of traditional salt harvesting into modernized salt production facilities of significantly higher efficiency and quality that invest all revenue in local initiatives, to building a maritime shipping and ports allowing the processed salt to supply the Haitian market and finally lead to reduction of IDD rates in the country.

AMURT/EL has sought to transcend the stereotype that it is solely a service-oriented organization not only by helping build economic democracy models using Prout

principles, but also by helping transform the traditional learning paradigms that have stifled the development of the education sector in Haiti. The Vibrant School approach which it first developed in the Child-Friendly Spaces of the post-earthquake response evolved to include child-rights distance learning and radio programming, teacher professional development, curriculum creation and professional development of hundreds of schools organized in model networks, and guiding government policies and curriculum towards a child-centered Neohumanist approach.

The experience of AMURT/EL in Haiti over the last 15 years has highlighted the importance of interconnecting the often-fragmented parts of the social puzzle, testing in very real scenarios sublime yet often theoretical and abstract principles and helping create agents of change using systemic and gradual transformation processes.