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A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

RECONCILIATION



Pax Lumina

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

**We must work to resolve
conflicts in a spirit of reconciliation and always
keep in mind the interests of others.**

Dalai Lama



Pax Lumina

A Quest for Peace and Reconciliation

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The Nodal Platform for Peace and
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Contents

Vol. 04 | No. 03 | May 2023



08



12



18



22



25



28



33



36



39



FEATURE



43



47



56



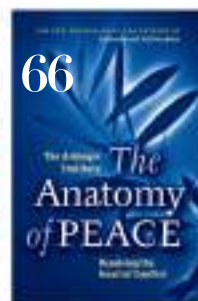
51



59



66



62



69





The Long and Difficult Path to RECONCILIATION

*P*ax Lumina tries to chronicle the efforts of our friends all over the planet to bring peace to areas and communities which writhe under the curse of violence. It should be admitted that though everyone knows that violence of any sort is a negation of human dignity of both the self and the other, in the interest of expediency and result-orientedness, often violence is resorted to, condoned, and even commended. Aggression and wars thus take place. Actually, peace does not occupy headline space, violence does. In this context, for a magazine like Pax Lumina, to pursue peace and reconciliation doggedly needs a lot of determination and patience.

Our contributors have just shown that. They have witnessed and reported that reconciliation, seemingly impossible, can still be hoped for. We find that reconciliation is badly needed almost everywhere; between nations, between cultures, within societies, families, groups, and even individuals. Therefore, the need for reconciliation is, indeed, diverse and wide.

There are both external and internal hurdles to reconciliation in any conflict. The external ones include historical, social, economic and other structural ones. Addressing them non-violently requires commitment and patience. The internal ones are mainly psychological and they too require a long time to be addressed.

In any case, without empathy and compassion, no progress in this regard is possible. And probably this is an area where the technological progress we hear about all the time, and at times scared of, cannot be of much help.

Will any AI innovation bring reconciliation amongst two or more factions anywhere on this planet? What we probably need may not be faster or stronger or more artificial intelligence but wisdom, pure simple, and human. This, we think, is what our friends and collaborators tell us, and this is what gives us hope.

Jacob Thomas

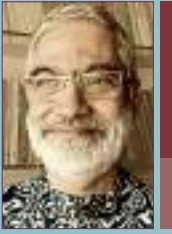


**The weak can never forgive.
Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong.**

- Mahatma Gandhi



RECONCILIATION



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STRIVING TOWARDS **PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE**



The veil/hijab and dietary habits – vegetarianism/ non-vegetarianism – are some of the issues that have resulted from cultural communication styles. **Addressing conflicts then must increase the conflicting parties’ knowledge of each other’s culture, weaken negative stereotypes they have of each other, and enhance effective intercultural communication.**



Relations between Hindu and Muslim communities, on the one hand, and Hindu and Christian communities, on the other hand, have deteriorated sharply in the recent past in India. The conflict between these communities has resulted in frequent violence, mostly leading to attacks on members of both these minority communities. As a result, there is growing religious polarisation leading to a deepening of communal identities.

Various theories seek to explain conflicts between social groups. According to the community relations theory, a conflict is caused by ongoing polarisation, mistrust and hostility between different groups within a community.

For historical reasons, these include conflicts between the Hindu and Muslim communities over power-sharing during British rule. This led to the partition of the country and became the ground for hostility and mistrust between a section of these communities.

Mahatma Gandhi exerted himself to improve relations between the communities and to promote understanding and tolerance. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, propounded the doctrine of unity in diversity, to make diversity acceptable.

The identity theory states that feelings of threatened identity, often rooted in unresolved past losses and suffering, can give rise to conflict. A section of Hindus feels that their existence is threatened due to the higher growth rate of the Muslim population and religious conversion missions undertaken by Christians.

The resolution of conflict, according to this theory, must facilitate parties to identify threats and fears they each feel and to build empathy and reconciliation among themselves. All parties must jointly agree to mutually recognise their core identity needs.

According to the intercultural miscommunication theory, a conflict results from the incompatibility of different cultural communication styles. For example, the congregational style of prayers in Islam and Christianity, while in Hinduism worship of God is an individual act.



Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer Memorial Lecture delivered by Prof. Tanika Sarkar

The veil/hijab and dietary habits – vegetarianism/ non-vegetarianism – are some of the issues that have resulted from cultural communication styles. Addressing conflicts then must increase the conflicting parties’ knowledge of each other’s culture, weaken negative stereotypes they have of each other, and enhance effective intercultural communication.

Conflict transformation theory suggests that a conflict is caused by real problems of inequality and injustice expressed by competing social, cultural and economic frameworks. There is a growing socio-economic and educational backwardness of Muslims and Dalits resulting from their discrimination in employment in public and private sectors, and exclusion from educational and other institutions.

Competing interests between the Muslim saree weavers and Hindu traders who buy the sarees from them in Varanasi, or between Muslim brassware workers and Hindu traders in Moradabad, often manifest as communal conflicts. The Sachar Committee Report in 2006 pointed out structural causes behind the growing inequality and backwardness of Muslims.

Measures should be undertaken to change structures and frameworks that cause inequality

and injustice, including economic redistribution, to improve long-term relationships and attitudes, to develop processes and systems that promote empowerment, justice, peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and recognition. We have not been able to recall other theories that explain conflicts due to limited space.

The Role of the ‘Centre for Study of Society and Secularism’ in Resolving Communal Conflicts

The CSSS was formed in 1993 by a peace activist and Islamic scholar, Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer, in the wake of communal riots in Mumbai. It works to improve relations among religious communities, particularly between Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities.

The primary task that the CSSS addresses is to counter the misinformed notions about other communities. Over time, negative notions about other communities create prejudicial attitudes about them.

Prejudicial attitudes are generally prevalent against marginalised communities, including religious minorities, as they are economically and politically weak to counter them. Stereotypical negative attitudes are popularised to ensure that the targeted marginalised communities are excluded economically, socially, educationally and politically, and the dominant powerful community can maintain their social hegemony.

On account of these prejudicial perceptions, perpetuated through school and higher education curriculum, media, social media and hate speeches, minorities are often subjected to discrimination in matters of access to educational institutions, public and private sector employment, livelihoods, government



We have been organising workshops on ‘Peace and Conflict Resolution’ wherein the participants are equipped with tools to map types, stages and root causes of conflicts, and peace-building methods. **Using these tools, participants learn to analyse conflicts and become peace-builders.**



Dr. Asghar Ali Engineer

We feel that we are far away from building democratic conscience among the common citizens. **That would be achieved by transforming the culture of social hierarchies into cultures of solidarity and equality where all human beings are accepted as equals with empathy.**



welfare schemes, civic infrastructure, and in numerous other fields.

They are further subject to calls for social and economic boycotts, and even subjected to communal violence. While invoking institutions of the State, including the criminal justice system and human rights commissions, to deter dissemination of prejudicial and incorrect information, which promotes ill-will, animosity or hatred towards any community, it is an arduous and long process that may yield very little result. It is more necessary to change attitudes and make people introspect their long-held perceptions.

The CSSS organises many programmes to make the participants realise that no community is a cultural monolith. The other community is as diverse as one's own. The educational courses designed by CSSS unpack communal identities and help the participants realise that every individual in the community has multiple identities – religious, linguistic, caste, ethnic, national, gender, class, professional/occupational and acquired identities like a sportsperson or art critic.

Different identities assert themselves at different points in time depending on the context and situation. No individual is exclusively determined by any single identity. We share something or

the other about our culture and values with members of the community we are supposed to be in conflict with. All this is achieved through the 'Exploring Diversity in Mumbai' course which is conducted for students in collaboration with various colleges. This course has been going on since 2014 and every year 50 participants have benefitted.

The 'Freedom of Religion or Beliefs' – a nine-session course helps the participants appreciate why an individual must have the right to believe or not to believe in any religion of his/her choice. We also have been organising workshops on 'Peace and Conflict Resolution' wherein the participants are equipped with tools to map types, stages and root causes of conflicts, and peace-building methods. Using these tools, participants learn to analyse conflicts and become peace-builders.

Besides these courses, the CSSS has peace fellows in six cities in India organising various programmes to bring members belonging to various communities together on festive occasions, including religious festivals, national festivals and for observance of internationally mandated days.

The peace fellows running peace centres enable regular dialogue between communities to promote better understanding between members. Cultural performances and events help us reach people with the message of peace, human rights and democratic values.

The CSSS monitors communal violence in India to understand the causes behind the conflict and publishes its research and documentation of violence. We organise lectures, interfaith dialogues, and seminars to build a body of knowledge about peaceful co-existence.

Yet we feel that we are far away from building democratic conscience among the common citizens. That would be achieved by transforming the culture of social hierarchies into cultures of solidarity and equality where all human beings are accepted as equals with empathy.

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EXPERIENCES OF RECONCILIATION IN THE

COLOMBIAN PACIFIC REGION



Through the communal reading of three biblical narratives related to reconciliation, from their traumatic experiences, **the members of the communities involved in the project contributed to establishing what are the real possibilities of reconciliation in cases as complex as those of massacres and forced displacements.**



Diverse Notions of Reconciliation
Reconciliation is a process of transformation that can be conceived in several ways. One way is the restoration of a previous relationship between individuals or groups affected by the inadequate handling of conflict that led them to a rupture.

Another way of looking at reconciliation is the re-encounter of two agents between whom there was no previous interaction, but who, at one time, were involved in a confrontation over their competing interests.

An additional way of understanding reconciliation is the encounter between those who, from a previous relationship or without it ever having existed, caused pain to the other party by becoming perpetrators of some harm and making the other party an individual or a collective victim.

Likewise, reconciliation can lead to different scenarios depending on whether it allows to reestablish or initiate cooperative relations between the parties that were in confrontation, limits itself to guaranteeing their coexistence without causing harm to each other again, or allows the reach of communion between both parties. In any of these three cases, the reconciliation process generates a transformation of both parties and their relationships.

Two Different Experiences of Reconciliation

The research project, 'Believing in Reconciliation', was carried out through cooperation between different Christian churches in Colombia and the Netherlands between 2012 and 2015. It aimed to articulate the academic reflection on reconciliation and the experiential reflection of grassroots communities whose fundamental rights had been violated by armed actors.

Between 1989 and 1994 around 400 people, accused of collaborating with the guerrilla group, disappeared, or were tortured, or murdered in this village, near the Pacific Coast.

The relatives of the victims organised themselves as an association in 1995 and presented their case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.



Through the communal reading of three biblical narratives related to reconciliation, from their traumatic experiences, the members of the communities involved in the project contributed to establishing what are the real possibilities of reconciliation in cases as complex as those of massacres and forced displacements.

The three biblical narratives chosen to carry out this experience were the narrative of Isaac's sons Jacob and Esau (Gn 32:4-32; 33:1-4), the story of the encounter between Saul and Ananias (Act 9:1-19), and the history of the merciful father and his two sons (Lk 15:11-32).

One of the participating communities was made up of members of the Association of Relatives of the Victims of the Trujillo Massacre (AFAVIT). It brought together the relatives of the victims of a massacre perpetrated in the village of Trujillo by drug traffickers, the Colombian police and army to isolate the ELN (National Liberation Army) guerrillas from the civilian population.

Between 1989 and 1994 around 400 people, accused of collaborating with this guerrilla group, disappeared, or were tortured, or murdered in this village, near the Pacific Coast. The



Without giving up their struggle for justice, memory, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition of the violent events, most of the members of AFAVIT have been able to forgive those who caused them deep pain.



relatives of the victims organised themselves as an association in 1995 and presented their case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

Another participating community lives in the jungle region of Medio Baudó, in the upper part of the Pepé River. In August 2010, after the disappearance of three inhabitants, about 300 people were displaced from the village of Union Berrecui by the violent action of paramilitary groups.

Ten kilometres away, these people were welcomed by the inhabitants of Pie de Pepé village. The presence of armed groups in the area prevented their return and forced their coexistence with their hosts, so the share living between these two groups of people became more difficult as time went by.

In the first case, the project was aimed at reconciliation between the victims' families and the perpetrators of the massacre. It was established that forgiveness was a prior phase and a condition for reconciliation to take place, but this implied that the perpetrators accept their responsibility for causing the damage and ask to be forgiven. However, this only happened in very few cases and it seems that their statements were just a strategy to diminish their prison sentences.



In the second case, the project sought reconciliation between the original inhabitants of Pie de Pepé and the people who fled from Union Berrecui. Before the displacement, there were good relations between the two groups, but because the area is very isolated, with limited services and precarious infrastructure, tensions arose that damaged the social fabric and ended up generating political polarisation among the inhabitants.

The Result of the Two Processes

The narratives created by the Trujillo participants in the light of the biblical narratives made it clear that forgiveness is a difficult process, but it is not impossible. The time that has passed since the violent acts were committed has helped them to forgive, but the time forthcoming is also very important because it is still possible to build a new life.

Without giving up their struggle for justice, memory, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition of the violent events, most of the members of AFAVIT have been able to forgive those who caused them deep pain. They are ready for reconciliation because they have been able to rebuild their own lives through a change of perspective that allows them to see their pain differently without forgetting it.

Behind this change of perspective, there is a process of self-transformation facilitated not only by processes of professional accompaniment and listening by outsiders but also by the experience of union and solidarity among the members of the same association.

The restorative character of reconciliation was evident to the Pie de Pepé participants, who paid particular attention to the fraternal relationships broken by the actions of the characters in the narratives, as in their own lives by those who caused their forced displacement.



In the case of the community of Pie de Pepé, their narratives mirror the biblical stories and helped to overcome the division, because the difficult conditions in which people must survive generate tensions associated with the exercise of subsistence economic activities, such as mining, or related to the support of political leaders who make promises at the time of elections.

When the two groups that now make up the community lived separately they had good relations with each other and now, when they occupy the same space, they should also live together as the sisters and brothers that they are.

As in the case of Trujillo, fear and uncertainty were shared feelings that allowed the participants of Pie de Pepé to identify with Ananias, whom Saul pursued; and also with Jacob, who expected the imminent revenge of his brother Esau. The overcoming of this fear was associated by the participants with a transformation of one's person; in this case, produced by faith and also brought about by a transformation of those who exercised violence, like Saul, or those who lived by deceit, like Jacob.

The restorative character of reconciliation was evident to the Pie de Pepé participants, who paid



particular attention to the fraternal relationships broken by the actions of the characters in the narratives, as in their own lives by those who caused their forced displacement. Meanwhile, AFAVIT members associated the restoration of the social fabric with their work for memory, justice, reparation, and non-repetition of violent events.

The story of the father who loves his two sons equally despite having ruined his own life, as the younger son did, or for believing himself just and not wanting forgiveness for his brother, like the elder son, was a motivation to open up the possibility of a better future through reconciliation.

The Current Worth of the Two Experiences

As a result of the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian Government and the former FARC-EP (Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces-Popular Army) guerrilla group in 2017, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence, and Non-Repetition (CEVCNR) was created.

The three main objects of this Commission were (1) to investigate and explain the armed conflict, promoting its deep understanding; (2) to encourage the recognition of individual and collective victims, as well as the voluntary acknowledgement of responsibility in support of non-repetition; and (3) to reinforce tolerant, respectful, and democratic coexistence across the country's territories based on the dignity and the rights of the victims.

After three-and-a-half years of work, in June 2022, its final report, 'There is a Future if There is Truth', presented the results of more than 30,000 interviews in eleven volumes.

Among the recommendations of the Commission to overcome the armed conflict in Colombia we find the following:

- To build peace in the territories with the communities through dialogue as the main tool for dealing with differences and transforming conflicts.

- To prioritise the definitive solution to the armed confrontations – through dialogue for the negotiation or submission to the justice of the illegal armed groups – to relieve the communities affected by the armed conflict.

- To advance in a critical examination of the past to build a future in peace through a policy of memory and truth looking for the non-repetition of violent acts.

- To establish a new vision of security for peacebuilding, as a public good centred on the people, that allows overcoming the logic of the armed conflict.

- To rebuild trust through dialogue between citizens and institutions, particularly the public force, as a fundamental element for territorial peace, facing human rights violations and breaches of International Humanitarian Law guaranteeing the non-repetition of these events.

- To guarantee conditions of well-being and dignified life for the communities in the territories. Land redistribution, prevention, and reversal of dispossession with open access to public goods and services, including security and justice, as well as productive opportunities for rural inhabitants to reach food security and sovereignty, besides the care of ecosystems, water, and land.

- To transform the educational system so that students can learn the lessons of the past as part of collective memory, as well as promote respect for life and diversity in the territories involving the media, churches, and religious communities to transform narratives of hatred, discrimination, and stigmatisation.

The two presented experiences developed in the framework of the project 'Believing in reconciliation' serve as examples that these recommendations are not only necessary to establish lasting peace but are also plausible to get a better future through reconciliation.

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CAN KENYA'S TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION PROMOTE **NATIONAL RECONCILIATION?**



A range of combinations can be used in the reconciliation processes at the national level, some of which include truth commissions, trials, reparations and rehabilitation. **All these measures are applicable relying upon the nature and degree of social divisions being experienced in the particular country.**



We cannot contemplate reconciliation before we accept the fact that conflict is inevitable in human relationships. Conflict is born from the human struggle for individuation and identity.

Reconciliation can be sought for different kinds of conflicts including interpersonal conflicts, intrapersonal conflicts, intragroup as well as intergroup conflicts. National conflicts are commonplace and even these seek to use reconciliation to promote the national healing processes.

A range of combinations can be used in the reconciliation processes at the national level, some of which include truth commissions, trials, reparations and rehabilitation. All these measures are applicable relying upon the nature and degree of social divisions being experienced in the particular country.

Truth commissions are seen as a vehicle for transitional justice. They offer countries ways of responding to years of barbarism and disturbing human rights violations that took place for either political, ethnic, religious, tribal, economic, ideological reasons, gender, power show, or monopolising control of economic resources.

Truth commissions may be an alternative to other national responses to these abuses, examples being extremes like criminal prosecutions or granting of blanket amnesty to the perpetrators. Truth commissions are important because they open up a dialogue. This is key in the reconciliation process.

In Africa, there have been truth commissions in Uganda, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Kenya, to mention a few. Beyond Africa, truth commissions have also been held in El Salvador, Chile, Argentina and Peru among others.



One recommendation in all the issues raised was that the state should 'acknowledge and apologise', especially by the office of the president, police and chief of the defence forces.

This is critical because it opens up a door for healing and reconciliation. It is an important starting point for any kind of reconciliation even in personal relationships.

Truth commissions are established for gross human rights violations that normal courts cannot, are unwilling, or are unable to address.

In South Africa, for example, it was increasingly used in 1995 to deal with human rights violations committed between 1960-1994 during the apartheid era. Amnesty was offered to those who were willing to come forward. This played an important role in national reconciliation and accountability.

Each country must decide the kind of truth commission it needs depending on the unique experiences it has. Truth commissions are created principally at the time of a State's transition towards a more democratic and participatory government. It, thus, seeks to uphold democracy and the rule of law, and most importantly, promote justice and reconciliation.

In Kenya, the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) was established through the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation (TJR) Act of 2008. Its main aim was to promote peace, justice, national unity, healing and reconciliation among the people.

This objective was to be achieved through investigating and establishing a record of the human rights violations by the State for 45 years (1963 to 2008) since Kenya's independence. Consequently, it sought to explain the causes of the violations, and also recommended the prosecution of the perpetrators and reparation of the victims.



The commission collected 42,465 statements and 1828 memoranda from Kenyans in different parts of the country. The victims, witnesses and alleged perpetrators gave their stories to TJRC. The findings were published in the final report released in May 2013 following four years of investigation.

The commission faced many challenges including but not limited to the controversy surrounding the credibility and sustainability of the chairperson, financial and resource constraints, legal challenges where some people protested the establishment of the commission, lack of State support and a lack of political will for the achievement of its goals.

The credibility of its findings was also questioned because of some alterations that were made to



the document, especially in the last chapter. The commission also held back the release of the final report before the 2013 elections. This heightened the doubts about its credibility and truth-seeking endeavour.

Changing the content of the findings also meant a breach of the Constitution and the TJR Act. The document has also been questioned in terms of its access to Kenyans and not using accessible language. Implementation of the recommendations has also been criticised since with lack of funds some implementation efforts have been paralysed.

The report, however, did speak about the need to expose historical injustices that needed to be unravelled in pursuit of reconciliation in Kenya. It also highlights human rights violations that are critical and in need of attention. The report is praised for taking a keen interest in children and youth and treating them as a special group of victims and allowing them to be participants in the TJRC process.

About 2000 statements were collected from children, and they detailed many types of injustice against them. Women were also a special group of focus and the report brought to light the historical injustice suffered by them in the last 45 years.

The hearings for women were special in that they were gender restrictive. This allowed the women to share some personal experiences, like sexual violations and gender-based violence, without fear.

One recommendation in all the issues raised was that the State should ‘acknowledge and apologise’, especially by the office of the president, police and chief of the defence forces. This is critical because it opens up a door for healing and reconciliation. It is an important starting point for any kind of reconciliation even in personal relationships.

My worry remains in how often such commissions should be held. I feel 45 years is a long time to wait and such a delay can strain efforts for reconciliation. It is now almost 10 years since the release of the report and, without a doubt, most of the things highlighted in the report remain as issues.

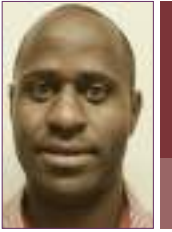
The trend in the eras covered in the four periods in the report from the colonial era through to the era of the late president Mwai Kibaki imitates a common trend of ‘the government eating its own people’.

It is also important to reflect on investments made for such commissions and the output, especially in following up the recommendations. Without government commitment and lack of political will, it becomes an expensive and fruitless endeavour at promoting national reconciliation.

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A SUCCESSFUL BATTLE BETWEEN SELF-INTEREST AND SELF-SACRIFICE IN **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**



As a Christian community leader at my home parish, using reconciliation in resolving conflicts between people affected by individual differences and lack of trust has been an important and attainable tool. **It has helped in restoring damaged human relationships, both in families at a smaller scale and on a larger scale, like the community and the village.**



Reconciliation is very fundamental. We cannot achieve growth in our human interactions unless we can reconcile with one another. The necessity of reconciliation arises from the fact that every human being is fragile.

As human beings, we are prone to intentionally or unintentionally hurting one another. This fragility makes human beings demand reconciliation to make relational progress with one another.

As a Christian community leader at my home parish, using reconciliation in resolving conflicts between people affected by individual differences and lack of trust has been an important and attainable tool. It has helped in restoring damaged human relationships, both in families at a smaller scale and on a larger scale, like the community and the village.

In families, the most recurring situations have been domestic violence between couples. In the community, the major issues include land wrangles and accusations of witchcraft. But reconciliation has helped in healing the hearts of affected individuals and bringing back togetherness. It has resulted in harmonious and cordial human interactions.

Reconciliation has given new meaning to damaged relationships. It yields a purposeful and meaningful human relational encounter that focuses on the needs of the other as well as respect. In this encounter, each party in a dispute carries a duty to protect the rights of the other; it promotes peace with the other

and nurtures justice towards the other. This makes reconciliation more important in conflict resolution.

On the contrary, reconciling two parties in conflicts has been hard to achieve. This shows that reconciliation is not an easy task. Hanoi-based teacher Danssinh Nguyen Vo said, “Reconciliation usually takes longer to achieve. It is never an easy task that awaits a quick solution.”

To achieve reconciliation, you need to have virtues like patience, perseverance and persistence together with a positive mind and determination.

What makes it take a long time is that, sometimes, resistance to reconciliation springs from the heart. This resistance comes in the form of a battle between preserving self-interest versus self-giving towards the other party.

I have met people who confuse reconciliation with forgiveness. Some victims of violence have been opting to let things go without informing the abuser. In forgiveness, one party can achieve forgiveness without the awareness of the other party. Divinity professor John Oliver Nelson said in his book, ‘Dare to Reconcile’, that reconciliation means walking and marching together again. This demands the awareness of both parties.

In other words, reconciliation demands both the victim and perpetrator to come to each other so that they may resolve the issue together. Both parties have to extend a hand to each other so



that they can have a synodal walk. This aspect of coming together makes reconciliation tougher than forgiveness. This is because to reach a synodal walk, one needs to overcome a conflict between self-interest and self-sacrifice.

Reconciliation occurs when both parties transcend their selfish motives, egoistic desires and power relations in favour of giving oneself to the other party. It can be said that reconciliation is a hard-won battle between self-interest versus self-giving. Self-interest in both parties propagates self-fame, power and the need to remain alone. It fights the feelings of powerlessness in front of the other party. Such self-oriented feelings bring repulsion to self-giving which moves towards re-modelling the damaged human relationships.

Reconciliation from experience is a conversion of hearts from selfishness to a level of self-sacrifice. It is when both parties in conflict take a straight turn from selfishness to otherness.

While selfishness accommodates attitudes of self-sufficiency (I have what is enough for me), self-reliance (I can survive without the other) and self-confidence (much trust in oneself), self-sacrifice makes a shift to acts of humility and helplessness.

As a result, the individual acknowledges that he or she needs others for his or her survival. He or she goes beyond oneself and recognises the needfulness of the other person. All these feelings lead to overcoming the pride that comes deep from one's heart. It is pride that shows one that he or she is sufficient. Some good

attitudes are needed to achieve reconciliation. These can be attitudes that enhance self-giving so that acceptance to meet the other is reached.

In conclusion, reconciliation is an achievable project in our societies in moments of human conflict. From experience, it is very important to bring back societies and individuals that are in disharmony together. However, it takes a long time. It demands the pursuer to encourage both the victims and abuser to express how they feel whenever they think about reconciling with one another. This will help the pursuer to point at, and challenge attitudes that are selfish. Thereafter, they should embrace attitudes that enhance self-sacrifice. Once the attitudes that foster self-interest have been overcome, this leads to the embracing of the greater values which allow people to live and work together. Thus, reconciliation is the outcome of winning the battle between selfishness in one's heart and accepting to sacrifice his or her intentions for the sake of walking together again.

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WHEN TO TALK ABOUT RECONCILIATION?

REFLECTIONS ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE





From a Christian point of view, we like to speak in these situations about reconciliation. Reconciliation with oneself, with other people, with the environment, and with God. We know from experience and tradition that the process of reconciliation is necessary for coping with the consequences of conflict and for survival after trauma and shock. However, reconciliation is a challenging concept, and it is more a way than just a single moment of decision.

Ukraine is very close to Austria, which is just 600 km away. And so is Bosnia, just 400 km. Distances in Europe are short, compared to Asia. Before I joined the Jesuits, from 1992 to 1999, I worked for the Austrian Red Cross. I did a lot of travelling in Bosnia, during and after the war. Just recently, in February 2023, I went for three days to Ukraine, together with our Provincial Fr. Bernhard Bürgler SJ, to visit the five Jesuits in Lviv.

In Ukraine, I felt that talking about reconciliation would be inappropriate. On the day we arrived, the city of Lviv (750000 inhabitants plus 250000 internally displaced persons) was bombarded with cruise missiles. The whole day we could hear sirens in the city, and at lunchtime, we heard the explosions. How could we possibly talk about reconciliation when violence was so prevalent?

My experience in Bosnia in the 1990s taught me the importance of peace, of a peaceful solution to conflicts and of reconciliation. But what can we do during an ongoing armed conflict between States?

On an abstract level, most people accept conflicts as a part of life, and unavoidable. Conflicts take place in families, in relationships, at work, between organisations and businesses, and among States. Usually, situations of conflict are messy. The distinction between victims and perpetrators is not always clear-cut. Emotions go high, and there is no obvious solution at hand.

Most people in the world have no direct experience of war, and this is good news. But most people know about domestic violence, from their own families or neighbours. When conflicts are ongoing, when do you start talking about reconciliation? When you hear that a woman is beaten up in the neighbouring flat, what do you do?

In Ukraine, I felt that talking about reconciliation would be inappropriate. On the day we arrived, the city of Lviv (750000 inhabitants plus 250000 internally displaced persons) was bombarded with cruise missiles. **The whole day we could hear sirens in the city, and at lunchtime, we heard the explosions. How could we possibly talk about reconciliation when violence was so prevalent?**

Here are five suggestions:

1. Know the situation. Travel there, if possible. Speak with people. Read. Even learn about military issues.
2. Involve yourself in relief work. We all have ways and means to help. Organise accommodation for refugees. Raise funds for medical aid. Use your contacts with authorities to support displaced people. Organise a small language course or a concert.
3. Be near the victims of violence. Where you stand depends on where you sit. Try to stand with the victims. Speak up when victims are blamed. Console as Jesus did. "Observe how Christ, our Lord, fulfils the office of consoler and compare it with how friends are accustomed to console each other." (St. Ignatius, Spiritual Exercises, 224)
4. Keep your soul free from hate and resentment. Know your blind spots. Have partners to talk with.
5. Pray for peace and reconciliation. Ask God how such a situation could occur. Get into a deep conversation with Jesus about what you see, think and feel.

Here are five things to avoid:

1. Do not sit on the fence when victims need your support. Staying silent helps the perpetrators. Do not mix up victims and perpetrators, when the evidence is clear.



2. Do not advocate appeasement. Demand a court for the perpetrators. And compensation for hurt and damage.
3. Avoid generic comments which are below your intellectual standards, e.g. about geo-political views. Know history. Read articles. Use several sources of information. Do not advocate imperial thinking (like 'legitimate spheres of influence').
4. Do not think that this has nothing to do with you. The suffering of others is affecting us. "Ignorance is bliss" is not an acceptable strategy for Christians. Neither is "Leave me alone."
5. Do not underestimate the strength of religious beliefs, church structures and civil society. They are near the people, at the grassroots level, and belong very often to an international network.

The war in Ukraine is a dark shadow in my life. It is difficult for me to live my normal life as if nothing were happening some few kilometres away from where I live. I try to cope with my emotions and inner tensions by using my means to help the victims of this war.

When I asked the people in Ukraine about what we should pray for, their answer was clear: For a just peace, for the freedom of our country, and for the dead.

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND



Political talks in the early 1990s led initially to paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 and to a proposed settlement which has become known as the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement signed on April 10, 1998. **The citizens of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland subsequently voted by a large majority in favour of accepting the Good Friday Agreement.**



In August 1987, I started theology studies in Toronto, Canada. The troubles in Northern Ireland had been ongoing since October 1968. Canadians often asked me about these troubles.

Would they lead to a full-scale civil war? Would they come to an end anytime soon? Was there any possibility of some kind of settlement emerging? My answer was along the lines that the only way forward that I could see was having a regional government in Northern Ireland based on power-sharing between those who identified as wanting to remain in the United Kingdom and those who aspired one day to live in a united Ireland.

This was along with a good working relationship between the governments in London and Dublin. At that time, Northern Ireland (the six counties in the north-east of the island) was being ruled directly from London. There had been a short-lived power-sharing regional government in 1974 but it had failed within months because of a workers' strike fuelled by fears that a proposed Council of Ireland would lead to Northern Ireland becoming part of a new united Ireland which pro-British unionists did not want.

The change came sooner than I had then predicted. Political talks in the early 1990s led initially to paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 and to a proposed settlement which has become known as the Belfast or Good Friday Agreement signed on April 10, 1998.

The citizens of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland subsequently voted by a large majority in favour of accepting the Good Friday Agreement.

We have recently marked the 25th anniversary of that agreement. It has led to peace, to a silencing of guns and has created structures that respect the diversity of views in society and which offer a path forward guaranteeing respect and justice for the two main traditions here.

One of its most important components is its emphasis on parity of esteem between those who see themselves as British and Unionist (wanting to remain in the United Kingdom) and those who see themselves as Irish and Nationalist (wanting to be part of an all-island Irish state). The agreement acknowledges that people within Northern Ireland are free to identify as British or Irish.

It invokes the principle of consent. Northern Ireland is to remain within the United Kingdom as long as the majority want that and there is to be no change in the constitutional position without the consent of the majority.

Part of the genius of the Good Friday Agreement was its analysis of the totality of relationships in terms of the three strands: the internal one in terms of Unionists and Nationalists, the north-south strand concerning relations between north and south (between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) and the east-west set of relationships between Ireland and Great Britain.

One of the strengths of the agreement is that it is not a settlement in which the winner takes all. **It is one in which each participant gets something now and maybe has the hope of getting something more in the future as long as this is by cross-community consent.**



One of the strengths of the agreement is that it is not a settlement in which the winner takes all. It is one in which each participant gets something now and maybe has the hope of getting something more in the future as long as this is by cross-community consent. Previous models were, often, predicated on the idea of a Unionist or Nationalist victor getting everything they wanted and the minority just having to accept that.

Important items being voted on in the regional parliament (known as the Assembly) need cross-community backing for them to be passed. The political parties have representation in the regional government (known as the Executive) in proportion to the number of seats they have in the Assembly.

The working out and implementation of the Agreement have not been without difficulty. A delay in decommissioning of weapons held up

the effective functioning of the executive in its earlier years. Disagreements about the handling of grants for a renewable heat initiative led to a three-year suspension of the institutions in 2017. And currently, the institutions (Assembly and Executive) have not been up and running since February 2022 because of opposition to trading border arrangements for Northern Ireland in the wake of the United Kingdom's decision to leave the European Union.

There have been times when the Assembly and Executive have functioned well. Many were surprised at how two former political opponents (Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness) worked so effectively as First Minister and Deputy First Minister. Individual ministers in carrying out their remit have earned respect not only among their supporters but also in the wider community. The local population has liked having their politicians exercising ministerial office rather than having it done by a government

The Good Friday Agreement has brought peace and a model for a stable and just government. **The challenge now is to get all the parties to engage with the process and agree to vote in a Speaker for the Assembly and then proceed to the appointment of ministers for the Executive.**



minister appointed by London as it happened in the days of direct rule.

The Good Friday Agreement has brought peace and a model for a stable and just government. The challenge now is to get all the parties to engage with the process and agree to vote in a Speaker for the Assembly and then proceed to the appointment of ministers for the Executive.

The stumbling block at the moment is that one of the political parties fears that the post-Brexit trading arrangements have created an economic border with the rest of the United Kingdom that threatens Northern Ireland's constitutional status within the United Kingdom.

The recent Windsor Framework document agreed between the UK government and the European Union has sought to address this. There is hope that there may be progress on getting the assembly and executive up and running later in the summer. Meanwhile, there is much frustration among the other parties at the delay in appointing ministers who will need to make important decisions in health, education, finance, infrastructure and justice.

The Agreement has brought us peace and the possibility of a just government. Has it brought us reconciliation? It contributes to it, but reconciliation is a much larger task which will take a longer time. One very challenging issue is how to deal with the legacy of the violence of the past.

In a quarter century of violence, over 3,700 people lost their lives. More than 47,000 were injured and many carry the life-changing scars of that time. How do we come to terms with

the past? How can there be healing and justice for those who have lost loved ones?

There is currently no agreement on this. The London government has legislation providing for an amnesty before the Westminster parliament. It is opposed by all the parties. This is one thing on which they all agreed but for different reasons. Finding a way of addressing this issue would help to advance reconciliation. This calls for creativity, compassion and respect.

But some groups and individuals have worked hard at promoting reconciliation in their local areas. Much of this happens quietly behind the scenes where people meet with persons from other parts of the community and create a space in which it is possible to tell their own story, express their hopes and fears and be heard with respect.

In recent years, I was interested in the comments of two friends of mine about how institutions in which they work could proactively seek to promote reconciliation. A teacher in a school noticed how the photograph of a religious leader in the front foyer might be more appropriately situated in the school chapel or assembly hall so that the foyer might be a neutral space for all entering and especially for those from traditions other than his own.

The other was from a religious minister who commented to me that even though he felt a deep personal loyalty to the flag sometimes flown at his church, he believed it better not to fly it on days when persons from a variety of political and religious backgrounds would be attending services in the church. On those occasions, he felt it important that the church



be experienced as a neutral space which is welcoming to all. These observations highlight the kind of sensitivity needed if reconciliation is to be actively and fruitfully pursued in local communities.

There is, in the wider society in Northern Ireland, a strong desire not to return to the violence of the past. However, there is still a fear that if the current impasse went on for too long, it runs the risk of creating a political vacuum in which violent incidents might occur. Such incidents can lead to reprisal attacks which could initiate a spiral of violent incidents.

The best antidote is to have effectively functioning political institutions. That is why it matters that an Executive (regional government) is appointed as soon as possible.

The recent silver jubilee of the Good Friday Agreement reminded us of the big changes which we have witnessed since it was signed. No longer do people wake up to hearing the

morning news of yet another killing. The days of no warning bombs in stores and bars are now consigned to the past. The success of the agreement is to be seen in those who now walk the streets and get on with their lives who would have died violently if peace had not come. We all owe a debt to creative politicians who came up with the elements of the agreement and took risks to convince their party colleagues and supporters to back it.

We are also indebted to public servants, community leaders, members of churches, trade union officials, those involved in industry and agriculture and ordinary people living in their neighbourhoods who had a vision of how things might be different and worked hard to bring about change.

The challenge is to build on this foundation. There is always the temptation to take the peace for granted and to become complacent about ensuring that it is consolidated.

As well as those who self-describe as unionist and nationalist, we now have an increasing number who would describe themselves as 'others' and they must be recognised and given their place as we journey into the future. To keep the peace process on course, it matters greatly that the two sovereign governments in Dublin and London work well together.

It strengthens the momentum towards maintaining peace when it is perceived that they are both singing from the same hymn sheet. There is always the danger that some people in Dublin and London feel that the Northern Ireland issue was successfully addressed in the Belfast Agreement and that the problems have been resolved.

The 1998 Agreement was indeed a crucial development, a key moment. But its implementation is a work in process that calls for ongoing attention and support.

Tom Layden, SJ shares his reflections on the 25th anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. He works in the Ecumenical Ministry in Belfast.





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A Psychotherapist's Perspective on Reconciliation and Peacebuilding



For the past 50 years, truth and reconciliation commissions have served as useful tools to expose atrocities after a major societal rupture or conflict. **Within that structure and process, we can also gain an understanding of the psychological mechanisms that have established Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as an effective peacebuilding tool.**



Most psychotherapeutic traditions encourage the patient to confront that which is perceived as intolerable, often those thoughts and feelings that are born out of a host of experiences which can be loosely defined as trauma. But these experiences of trauma – whether that be injury, loss, or deprivation – require not just confrontation, but also, ultimately, the capacity for ‘reconciliation’.

It is in this experience of reconciliation – via the slow, steady immersion in the challenges of communicating about and organising difficult dynamics – that the individual attempts to make compatible the seemingly irreconcilable dynamics that disrupt or even fracture their psychological world.

What is the product? Ideally: an altered but now more integrated and coherent psychological self that is perhaps better prepared to metabolise opposing or contradictory feelings, thoughts or beliefs about the self, of others or the world at large.

This is easier said than done. Indeed, the product of successful reconciliation – integration and coherence – is hardly achievable in a short period, and requires considerable courage and persistence. Perhaps most daunting for those who have experienced psychological or physical injuries perpetrated by another is the necessity to confront one’s experience of fear, powerlessness, and shame.

In psychotherapy, through the action of articulating the related thoughts and feelings and being understood and accepted by another human being, one experiences a restoration of basic humanness and dignity.

Shame is thereby neutralised and discharged via the therapeutic exchange; the individual feels empowered as a result. Perceptions of danger and lack of safety are not erased but perhaps reintegrated to imagine the possibility that an empowered self can safely confront a forever altered psychological landscape. The landscape may still be fraught but is now navigable and increasingly coherent.

But how does this ‘intra’personal formulation apply to the experience of ‘inter’personal reconciliation that is so fundamental to finding and maintaining peace among groups, communities, nations, and states?

As an example, when a group of individuals inflict injury upon others with impunity, how can these individuals continue to peacefully coexist after the conflict has ended? How does one hope to be able to integrate these communities to manifest a coherent society in the future?

For the past 50 years, truth and reconciliation commissions have served as useful tools to expose atrocities after a major societal rupture or conflict. Within that structure and process, we can also gain an understanding of the psychological mechanisms that have established Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRCs) as an effective peacebuilding tool.

Typically, TRCs focus on providing victims and/or their descendants with a forum in which they can testify to the abuse, oppression or violence that have impacted them and their communities. While the individual psychotherapy patient is called upon to expose their experiences within the context of a therapeutic dyad, TRCs ask those who have experienced atrocities (and often those who have perpetrated these acts) to expose those experiences to the public at large, sometimes on a national scale.

Through public testimony, the nation or community must both confront the reality of the acts that were perpetrated and acknowledge and bear witness to the resulting products of such traumas - fear, shame, and humiliation - which so often lead to the perpetuation of conflict.

Similar to the experience within individual psychotherapy, a therapeutic exchange is embedded within the TRC process. Primarily, those who suffered experience the validation and restoration of dignity through others bearing witness to their truth-telling. This is empowering to those individuals who have previously felt powerless.

Shame is thereby discharged, both on an individual basis but also, and perhaps more importantly, en masse. For those who were



This act of psychological rebalancing effectively neutralises the combustible nature of the contradictory and intolerable positions of perpetrator and survivor, thereby allowing for, if not a restoration of friendly relations, at least a path forward towards communal co-existence and a more integrated and coherent future.



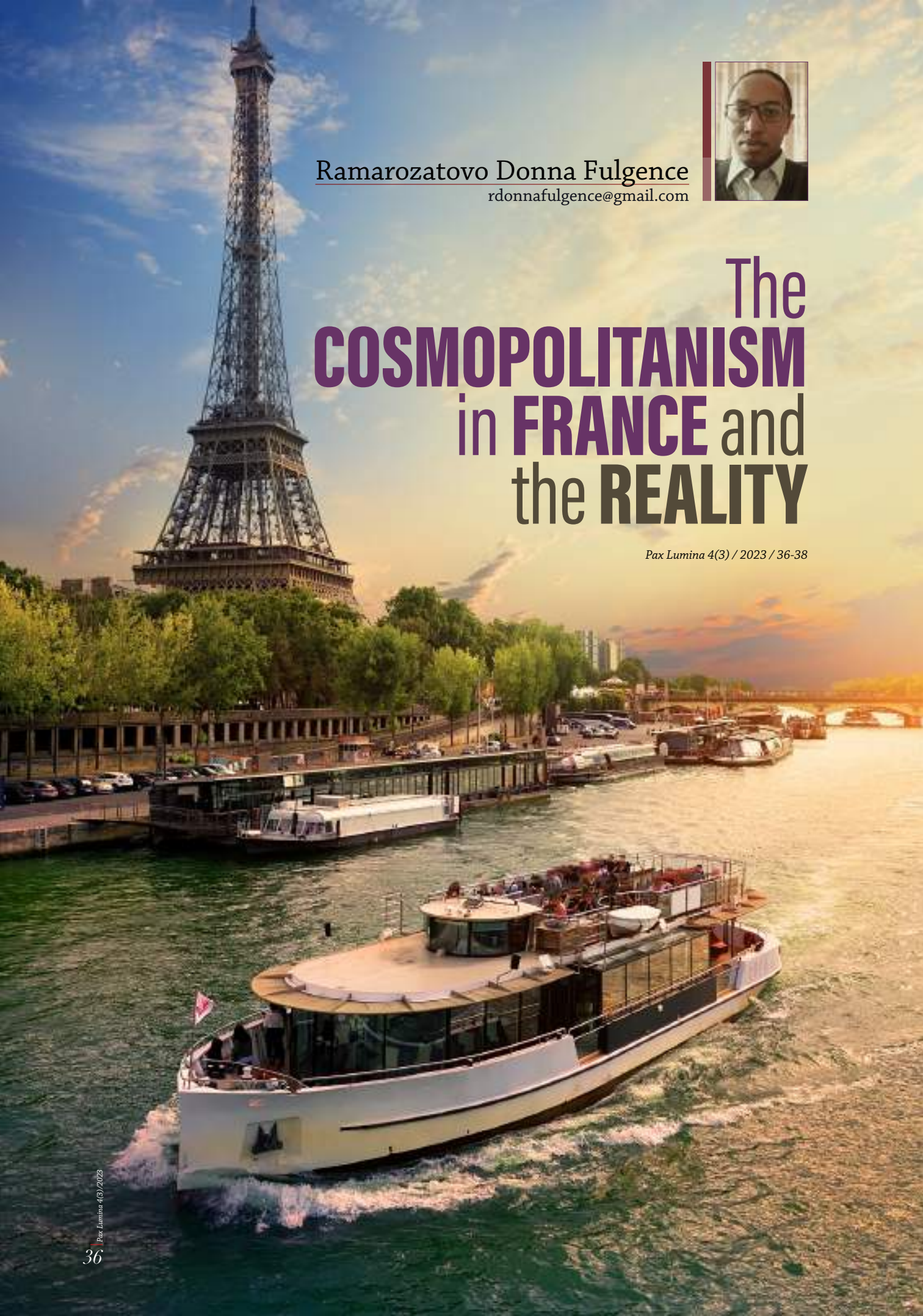
perpetrators, these public exposés facilitate their confrontation with shame and bring about a forfeiture of power that previous circumstances of impunity had unjustly supplied.

This act of psychological rebalancing effectively neutralises the combustible nature of the contradictory and intolerable positions of perpetrator and survivor, thereby allowing for, if not a restoration of friendly relations, at least a path forward towards communal co-existence and a more integrated and coherent future.

It is perhaps idealistic to imagine that the TRC processes can or will be available to almost any community that has been impacted by major societal ruptures. In the majority of cases, this may not be realistic. That being said, appreciating the psychological underlayment of reconciliation on both an individual and community level can potentially offer alternative means of peacebuilding, whether that be on the micro or macro scale or derived from the recent or more distant past.

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The **COSMOPOLITANISM** in **FRANCE** and the **REALITY**

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France has always been a cosmopolitan country, not only because of its geographical location but also because of the voluntary or involuntary immigration of other peoples. It is on the latter that I would like to reflect.

How can one speak objectively of the French reality when one is a foreigner recently living in the country?

Cosmopolitanism is already complicated due to the diversity of cultural, religious, and ideological perspectives. This cosmopolitanism reflects the democratic values of this country, whose motto is liberty, equality, and fraternity. In other words, France wants to be a country of tolerance, non-discrimination, and respect for human rights.

If this motto applies to all residents in France, not just the French, the integration of foreign immigrants into the society would appear to be simple because equal treatment is promoted. But reality sometimes confirms that 'all men are equal but some are more equal than others.'

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Somehow it is the dignity of the people, to whom this culture belongs, which is ignored. This is why many people come forward to assert their rights, but many others are unable to do so for a variety of reasons.

If France was in Africa, or India, and continues to mark its important presence in certain former colonised countries, it was of course in search of its well-being. Today, many people from these countries want to come to France for their desire to live a better life. Are they still welcome? The conditions for obtaining a long-stay visa have become more and more strict.

In other words, the requirements are not the same for those who come from rich countries and for those who are from poor countries. The influx of young people from developing countries is often considered a threat or a heavy burden for a host country. Indeed, it is the economic agents who have more possibilities than the others. And maybe it is normal if France and other European countries restrict the entry of non-economic agents. Furthermore, experiences show that it is easier for men to obtain a visa than for young unmarried women. On the other hand, France's access to its former colonies is still easy.

Indeed, we cannot welcome everyone, but if France does not have the capacity, it could offer the means to enable the people of the colonised countries to stay home. I think that granting



Indeed, we cannot welcome everyone, but if France does not have the capacity, it could offer the means to enable the people of the colonised countries to stay home. **I think that granting independence to a country is not a once-and-for-all gift, but it is a question of supporting it until it is truly independent.**



Independence to a country is not a once-and-for-all gift, but it is a question of supporting it until it is truly independent.

You must develop a just relationship. That is, you must find a happy medium for mutual gain, because the life of an exploiter and slave owner is unfair, as philosopher Hannah Arendt argues, and the need for having it can become the austere route of control, as philosopher Paul Ricoeur says.

African countries must not be seen as places of exploitation or having valuable reserves. They must be treated as sovereign. Because sometimes the relationship seems marked by all kinds of imperialism (whether economic, political, or diplomatic). This creates a paternalistic attitude towards 'poor' countries. It is necessary to revitalise the sense of ethics in politics; it is to consider the other as one with inalienable dignity or sovereignty.

Faced with certain situations, the reparation of certain injustices must be necessary. 'Give everyone their due.' How much does France owe to these countries where it once exploited or continues to exploit in one way or another? It is very striking to find France coming to the aid of Ukraine in particular or to have talks with Russia so that it leaves Ukrainian soil and respects the sovereignty of Ukraine.

France realises that it is not good to monopolise others or to harm its autonomy. But if we turn our gaze to Africa, why does France not leave there? If we are only talking about the case of Madagascar, why does France not cede the islets in the Indian Ocean, 'scattered islands', which legally belong to Madagascar?

It is true that French aid for African countries has not been lacking since colonisation until now, but instead of liberating the people, it has become alienating. It is not at all for development but from the outset for the defence of French interests in these countries. The help offered is minimal compared to the interests claimed in return. What to say or what to do? The normalisation of relations between France and certain African countries is, thus, required for symmetrical relations.

In the end, I borrow a few sentences from philosopher Rene Descartes to question everything I have just said, because when reading reality, "I may be wrong and it may only be a little copper and glass that I take for gold and diamonds. I know how prone we are to misunderstand what concerns us..."

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LET GO AND GROW WOMEN AND FORGIVENESS



Are women more forgiving? We are too tempted to agree. However, this sounds to be a rudimentary inquiry from a scientific gender perspective, **more so, when exploring its emotional correlates for men and women and how one's life is impacted by them.**



One of the most celebrated universal religious teachings is associated with forgiving those who wronged you or rendered injustice to you. It is often hailed as the path to the divine and the supreme expression of kindness. The gracious smile on any deity's face communicates the same: I have forgiven your sins.

Modern psychologists emphasise letting go of the wrongdoings of others to stay healthy. Anger, vengeance, revenge, forgiveness, and empathy are interconnected concepts. So are their relationships with the ability to control anxiety, the feeling of loneliness, and negative emotions. Studies suggest that it is a much more complex construct, often dispositional and influenced by power imbalances, and therefore, gender differences.

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While some studies suggest that the propensity to forgive has gender dimensions, there is no conclusive evidence for that being an inherent gender-differentiated trait. Probably, we must rephrase the above question in different ways to understand the process in different contexts and their relation to the emotions associated with them.

Our social conditioning imposes certain behavioural patterns on both genders. It may be, then, more relevant to ask if women are expected not to be condescending and show more agreeableness, or if it is learned behaviour.

There is an added layer of social unforgiveness to a woman's unforgiveness when the offender is a male, especially a relevant person. Social desirability bias is related to forgiveness, which may moderate the link between affective traits and forgiveness. Contrarily, there exists societal unforgiveness for women's misdeeds. However, this article does not touch upon those circumstances where unforgiveness is used as a weapon, to oppress the underprivileged.

The recent horrid attacks on females, in retaliation to unrequited love or due to the breakup of relations and honour killings for the sake of upholding caste supremacy demand a study of aggressive, vengeful, and angry



Females are more stressed after interpersonal transgressions. In most circumstances, the enormity of losses, **both in material and intangible terms would be severe for women.** Individuals need to cope with them, forgiveness being a relatively easier prosocial act that saves them from social seclusion.



reactions – a complete absence of forgiveness – and, their causal factors, especially, those exhibited by the males involved. We have also seen raping a woman in revenge as a statement of unforgiveness to an offender related to her.

Based on recent research women show more propensity to forgive since they want to maintain relationships, stay connected with others and prevent themselves from falling into depression. A decisive factor in the propensity to forgive is empathy which women have acquired in a greater measure.

It might well be some form of defence mechanism that removes the obstacles in the path of peaceful existence they need for stability in life. Loneliness pushes them to reconciliation while men need not behave similarly. They can react by evaluating the rationality of their decision, weighing the injustice involved, and in the worst cases, dragging it to an irreparable end with much less emotional turbulence than how women may deal with it.

Loneliness is positively associated with the propensity to forgive among women, whereas it is negatively correlated with men. Why women generally pardon their spouses' infidelity or the physical abuse of alcoholic husbands is very much influenced by the socially prescribed behavioural norms as a viable means (questionable though) to ensure the prospects of a long-lasting relationship that will not endanger the future of children and the family's financial security.

Such regressive justifications would only widen the imbalances in gender justice. Across various societies, wives sacrifice more for marital

satisfaction than husbands. Their failures and wrongdoings might be seen as disturbing the harmony with others and damaging their positive self-portrait.

Being caught in an unfavourable power equilibrium may further put pressure on women to let go of even serious offenders which would eventually push them into harder exploitative conditions. Unilateral forgiveness is thrust into a toxic relationship, which the victim may hardly realise. That is when the elegant and noble concept of forgiveness erodes its purpose. A judicious, but not blind, application of the concept will foster growth and better clarity of the future.

Females are more stressed after interpersonal transgressions. In most circumstances, the enormity of losses, both in material and intangible terms would be severe for women. Individuals need to cope with them, forgiveness being a relatively easier prosocial act that saves them from social seclusion.

Women and men need different interventions in facilitating forgiveness. Females need more self-forgiveness interventions, releasing anxiety, and more open expression of negative emotions.

Males, on the contrary, work on emotion regulation, especially, on controlling anxiety and anger, though, their aggression and expression of anger are sanctioned and accepted by society at large. Dads are less forgiving than moms. This differential is used as an effective tool in disciplining kids.

Males enjoy the privileges of a higher authority of justice even in a family set-up while moms

Interestingly the women's model of releasing anger and anxiety through forgiving is an inevitable and desirable trait for society for its peaceful coexistence if practised with prudence. **In spiteful situations, the victim need not forget the injustice meted out, but he or she can forgive, because of the resultant positive outcomes and the healing of memories of the harm.**



advocate forgiveness when it comes to meting out penalties to children. These images are deeply imprinted in our perceptions from childhood, which later distorts our value systems.

However, stretching this into all types of men-women relationships is common and serves only to exaggerate the women-has-to-bear-it-all norm. If it is an emotional need for women to forgive, a man's unforgiveness may be condoned based on the application of justice and rationality in his decision-making. But if he has higher self-esteem, he is more likely to forgive than a woman having the same level of self-esteem.

Interestingly, the women's model of releasing anger and anxiety through forgiving is an inevitable and desirable trait for society for its peaceful coexistence if practised with prudence. In spiteful situations, the victim need not forget the injustice meted out, but he or she can forgive, because of the resultant positive outcomes and the healing of memories of the harm.

Forgiveness is increasingly being promoted in workplaces. Business is more about building relationships, collaboration, and teamwork among various stakeholders. Any embitterment with one of them will have far-reaching repercussions that eventually inflict financial costs too, the same way as women suffer in disturbed relationships and transgressions.

Hanging on to bitterness and hatred creates stress disorders, affects the immune system, and causes depression, anxiety, neuroticism, and premature death, according to research by Dutch scholar Manfred F.R. Kets de Vries, whereas forgiveness improves spiritual and psychological well-being, lowers anxiety levels, stress, blood pressure, and risk of alcohol and substance abuse and cardiac issues. Nothing helps in resolving conflicts like condoning past harm and beginning with a clean slate, as found in effective leadership.

If at all some levelling up is needed in this trait between the genders, we can certainly say that men need some lessons from women in showing more empathy, building stable relationships, believing in the power of healing rather than inflicting pain, reconciliation with the diversity of human thoughts and nature, and restoration of positive emotions. The burden of the past need not stonewall our pleasant journey to the future, be it at home or the workplace.

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CRUCIAL CONVERSATIONS A CASE STUDY





“T*he single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place”*
– George Bernard Shaw.

‘Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High’ by Kerry Patterson and et al. is a book that has greatly influenced my life. In this article, I will share how I handled a tough conflict using techniques from the book. By doing so, I avoided quitting my job out of frustration and instead developed a lifelong friendship with

the individual responsible for my frustration. I hope some of my learnings resonate with you to impact your life positively. A crucial conversation is a discussion between two or more people where 1) stakes are high, 2) opinions vary, and 3) emotions run strong.

Common examples are,

- Giving the boss constructive feedback.
- Asking a friend to repay a loan
- Asking your quick-tempered spouse to share household chores.

My dire need for crucial conversation arose a decade ago while leading my first project. Since it was an important project for my company and my first time being a project lead, it was a big deal for me. But while I was putting all my efforts into meeting the execution timelines, my colleague Evan who worked alongside me was delaying multiple milestones by weeks.

Even after three months of voicing concerns, he refused to cooperate, leaving me anxious about how the stakeholders would perceive my leadership abilities. I confided in my manager, who, instead of giving me direct advice, suggested I read the ‘Crucial Conversations’ book. I was sceptical that a pre-written book could help me with my unique situation, but I tried it because my alternative was switching teams out of frustration.

In this article, I will share how I handled a tough conflict using techniques from the book. **By doing so, I avoided quitting my job out of frustration and instead developed a lifelong friendship with the individual responsible for my frustration.**



From the very first chapter, the book resonated with me. I'll discuss the key lessons that influenced me to take action.

Refuse the Fool's Choice

Initially, Evan was receptive to my feedback, but eventually, our interactions turned confrontational. After several semi-hostile meetings to align on the project timeline, I deemed any further discussion to achieve my goal would only happen at the expense of permanently damaging our relationship.

The Fool's Choice is the term used in the book to describe this dilemma of deciding whether to stay silent and maintain a relationship or speak up and risk ruining it. The book explained I could instead present my brain with a more complex problem, 'How can I successfully deliver the project on time (what I want) and avoid creating bad feelings between Evan and me (what I don't want).' I did just that.

Focus on What You Want

There's a story in the book about two teenagers fighting over their urgency to go to the bathroom. They fight for 25 minutes, a duration within which both could have used the bathroom numerous times.

I, too, realised that even though my original intentions were to complete the project on time, many a time, it had degenerated into proving Evan was wrong and retaliating for the distress he caused me. My reactions came out

as silent fuming or subtle touches of sarcasm, negatively impacting our teamwork and causing further delays.

Work on Me First, Us Second

"The first step to achieving the results we want is to resist believing that others are the source of all that ails us" - 'Crucial Conversations'

After discovering my behaviour was hindering my goal, I understood the need to work on myself first. Furthermore, the only person I could fully influence to bring about a change was myself.



Over the years, I have observed and partaken in many crucial conversations. I am confident that one can learn to handle them in a manner that fosters deeper trust and respect.

When I became an engineering manager several years later, I was praised for my humility and influence. From a hostile teammate to an empathetic boss is a giant leap.





Dialogue

It is the free flow of meaning between people. Each of us enters a conversation with our own opinions, feelings, and experiences about the topic at hand. This constitutes our personal pool of meaning. Dialogue happens when everyone freely and openly contributes to a shared pool of meaning, with which one can better understand the reasoning behind others' proposals and arrive at a solution that satisfies everyone.

Upon reflection, I had to admit that there were instances where I imposed my views on others, which made it difficult for them to participate. On the other hand, there were also times when I didn't speak up at all.

Establish Mutual Purpose and Mutual Respect

Having a mutual purpose or shared goal establishes common ground, even when there are differing opinions. In my case, Evan and I cared for the successful delivery of the project, even though our definition of success varied. Underneath the differences, I admired Evan for his knowledge and tenacity. Acknowledging it made me feel a sense of kinship towards him.

Silence and Violence

I learned how to recognise silence (masking, withdrawing) and violence (controlling, verbal attacks). These are the two default behaviours of people when in conflict. I also learned how to keep the dialogue going through these unfavourable reactions.

Equipped with these convictions, I set up another meeting with Evan rooted in sincerity. Firstly, I apologised for my previous behaviour. Then, I shared my thoughts on the importance of releasing the initial version of the project early. At first, he reacted with hostility, which I knew came from distrust, so I kept at it, patiently asking for his perspectives on project success and what might be hindering it. We ran out of time but agreed to hold a follow-up meeting.

During our second meeting, I immediately sensed a warmth between us. It seemed as though we were both looking forward to it. Evan shared that his view of success is delivering the highest quality work for which the timeline needs to be revised. He was also worried about lacking knowledge of the new technology, leading to slower iterations. We took actions that met both of our goals, including hiring a consultant on the new technology, and reasonable revisions to the timelines.

Finally, the project was a success, and we celebrated. Looking back, it was more of a celebration of friendship than of the project.

Over the years, I have observed and partaken in many crucial conversations, and, I've witnessed confident that one can learn to handle them in a manner that fosters deeper trust and respect. When I became an engineering manager several years later, I was praised for my humility and influence. From a hostile teammate to an empathetic boss is a giant leap. This book was instrumental in that transition.

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RECONCILIATION IS POSSIBLE

THE MARAD EXPERIENCE



The first task, then, was to prepare the ground for intervention for which GOs initiated conciliatory talks with the leaders of both groups. **It was, of course, challenging as several individuals and organisations were claiming to represent the communities in conflict.**

Marad is a fishing village on the Arabian coast, about 12 km from Kozhikode in northern Kerala, South India, with a mixed population of Hindus and Muslims. There is a strong bond of interconnectedness among them as they confront the challenges of sea fishing together.

All the same, there were occasional bickerings between them, most often on insignificant issues, and the same used to be resolved locally. With the introduction of communally-oriented politics, the radicalisation of religious communities became a notable feature of Indian politics. Marad was no exception.



In 2001, there occurred a minor altercation between a few fishermen on the question of New Year's Day celebrations which was settled by local elders. However, due to political and communal interference, it developed into a communal conflict in 2002 in which five people were killed – three Muslims and two Hindus.

Further violence occurred on the beach on May 2, 2003, resulting in the killing of nine people: eight Hindus, and one Muslim. Militant Hindu organisations sprang into action and vowed to avenge the death of the Hindus. Sensing large-scale retaliation, all the Muslim families in Marad, nearly 500, took refuge in relief camps or the houses of relatives.

The State government made several attempts to bring the Muslims back to their homes but all those attempts were thwarted by the threat of violent retaliation. The government found itself helpless. It was at this juncture that the Chief Minister sought help from Gandhian organisations (GOs) in resolving the crisis.

STAGES IN THE WORK FOR RECONCILIATION

Establishing Rapport

After due deliberations, the GOs decided to take up the responsibility. The first task, then, was to prepare the ground for intervention for which GOs initiated conciliatory talks with the leaders of both groups. It was, of course, challenging as several individuals and organisations were claiming to represent the communities in conflict.

The Hindu community was well-organised and had accepted leaders, but not so the Muslims. There were recognised and unrecognised organisations among the Muslims and there was no coordination among them. However, representatives of GOs held separate and combined discussions with leaders claiming to represent Hindu and Muslim communities at the end of which it was agreed that all the Muslim families who left their homes in Marad would be brought back. Leaders of the Hindu community assured that no one from their side would obstruct this process. The responsibility of facilitating their return would vest with the GOs.



The GOs wanted the police force to be stationed outside the village to oversee the law and order situation without interfering in the process of resettlement in any manner. This was accepted by the government and adhered to in letter and spirit.

This was important for the GOs in two ways. If the assistance of the police forces was accepted in the resettlement process that would give the impression that the GOs were not acting independently but being hand in glove with the government. It would also raise questions about their political neutrality and undermine the credibility of the GOs.

Facilitating the Return

The return of the Muslim families to their houses was, of course, not smooth. The responses of the Hindu community members were mixed: ranging from hearty welcome to raging anger. There were instances of warm and tearful hugging of returning neighbours and also cases of strong protests, threats and abuses.

The Gandhian volunteers who accompanied the returning residents intervened to pacify the angry ones. The tactic was patient listening, requesting forgiveness and mercy, gentle persuasion and also reminding them of the promise made by their leaders. There was no attempt to convince or stop by argument. On the contrary, the accompaniers tried to reach the head through the heart. This facilitation succeeded in pacifying the anger to a great extent. Within a few days, the settlement was complete without any major untoward incident.

The Healing Process

The successful resettlement of the Muslims was hailed as a great achievement by all. But for the peace activists, it gave no reason for complacency. They knew that the road ahead was hard and steep. Marad was a fuming volcano. It could erupt at any moment. The slightest provocation from either side could upset a fragile reconciliation. So, it was necessary to understand the undercurrents and develop appropriate strategies for a comprehensive peace action. This involved peacekeeping, and peacebuilding.

Shanti Sena Camp

Consequently, a Shanti Sena (Peace Brigades) camp was opened in the area to systematically carry out the work of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. The camp worked continuously for three months. It consisted of about thirty volunteers at any time along with some senior leaders.

The resources – materials and money - required for maintaining the camp and carrying out the work were donated by the public. The government offered to meet all the expenses for running the camp, but the offer was politely turned down by the GOs. The logic was that accepting financial support from the government might invite bureaucratic interference. This would be detrimental to the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding. Throughout the three months when the camp functioned in Marad, there was no dearth of resources. Similarly, the government machinery – both the police and the civil service – extended full cooperation.

Peace Initiative

Mahatma Gandhi's 'Constructive Programme' provided the paradigm for the Marad peace initiative. Based on this programme the peace volunteers developed a programme of action.

The camp formulated and followed its schedule and discipline which included, among other things, morning and evening prayer, reporting and regular evaluation of the day's work and planning for the next day.

Work in the community included regular/daily house visits and conversations with the

The Gandhian volunteers who accompanied the returning residents intervened to pacify the angry ones. **The tactic was patient listening, requesting forgiveness and mercy, gentle persuasion and also reminding them of the promise made by their leaders.**



members of families. During house visits, the volunteers listened to their stories and shared their anguish. Some of the houses were substantially damaged while others were in dilapidated condition.

Many had genuine grievances and did not know what to do for their redress. They were afraid to approach authorities. In all such cases, the volunteers made positive interventions in all possible cases. That helped in ameliorating their living conditions which, in turn, resulted in building trust between the volunteers and the people.

Also, the volunteers talked about the need for accepting and respecting the cultural and religious diversity of the locality. It was not difficult to convince them of the need to live in harmony because that was what their past was before the eruption of violence. The volunteers quoted from the Holy Quran and the Vedas to convince them that it was a value common to their religions.

Conversations on topics like this were carried further to the level of group discussions. Topics included environmental protection, coastal regulatory zones, disaster management, and traditional versus mechanised fishing. These



topics were politically neutral and through them, both Hindus and Muslims could identify their common concerns and interests and realise the need for living together in peace and harmony. They realised that they shared a common fate and therefore, tolerance and cooperation were necessary for survival.

Such group discussions were organised in different parts of the affected areas. Initially, the response was poor and discouraging. But the volunteers persisted and the attendance improved gradually and such gatherings helped in reducing communal tension and improving mutual tolerance and respect. This could be gauged from the composition of the audience.

Initially, Hindus and Muslims had refused to sit together in public functions. But gentle persuasion helped in improving the situation and the gatherings became interreligious. Through group conversation, the communication gap which was a mark of the communal divide narrowed down and gradually improved.

In Marad, the main occupation of the people is fishing but fishing cannot give full employment. Therefore, the Shanti Sena members decided to devise some programmes which would help them find some gainful employment.

Three members of the Shanti Sena had expertise in umbrella-making, book-binding and soap-making. They trained some villagers, particularly women, according to their interest and preference. Local support groups, consisting of traders and merchants, provided the raw materials for production and purchased the products in bulk.

Together with improving the economic condition of the villagers this also helped considerably in easing the tension that prevailed in Marad and its neighbourhood. Villagers started talking

Work in the community included regular/daily house visits and conversations with the members of families. **During house visits, the volunteers listened to their stories and shared their anguish. Some of the houses were substantially damaged while others were in dilapidated condition.**



about their common interests and began to see more clearly the need for living in peace and harmony and they shared their perception with the Shanti Sena volunteers.

Winding up the Camp

By the end of three months, it was decided by consensus to wind up the camp because outsiders needed to step out to let the flow of life in the region take its natural course. It was agreed upon that the police camp will function as a regular station. They would be vigilant and will not allow the situation to drift. The withdrawal of the peace camp was a quiet event.

The Present Scenario

It may be said that Marad remains quiet and peaceful for now. Is the calm only on the surface? Only time can answer that question. In the absence of adequate and well-organised follow-up work, the situation may drift and violence may erupt again.

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RECONCILIATION IN **SHANTI SADBHAVNA MANCH**



One of the strategies for reconciliation has been to organise events for all communities in the village to dine together.

Consequently, tribals, Dalits, and other communities of different faiths, who often quarrel over trivial matters, began to have meals together and realise the need to reconcile their differences and unite and live in peace and harmony for their development.

The Indian Social Institute has established hundreds of peace clubs, known as Shanti Sadbhavna Manch, in 142 schools and 140 villages in the States of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The peace clubs in schools are known as Shanti Sadbhavna Vidyarthi Manch, and the peace clubs in the villages are known as Shanti Sadbhavna Nagrik Manch.

There has been a lot of conflict transformation by promoting a culture of peace, unity and trust-building among various social groups in these regions due to the efforts of 42 peacebuilding facilitators. Wherever there have been conflicts, efforts were made to restore peace through the reconciliation of groups and individuals engaged in the conflict. I would like to highlight some of the efforts made towards reconciliation in conflict-prone situations and regions.

Reconciliation through Dining Together

The largest community in the Kandhamal district of Odisha is the Kandha tribe. However, the socio-economic and political landscape of Kandhamal is dominated by its second-largest community, the non-tribal Pana caste. The previous civil unrest and communal tensions in 1986, 1994, 2001, 2007 and 2008 in the district had created animosity between communities in even small villages like Bondaguda, Janjhore and Dahu.

One of the strategies for reconciliation has been to organise events for all communities in the village to dine together. Consequently, tribals, Dalits, and other communities of different faiths, who often quarrel over trivial matters, began to have meals together and realise the need to reconcile their differences and unite and live in peace and harmony for their development.

During the unprecedented Kandhamal riots that occurred in 2007 and 2008, thousands of Dalits and Adivasis belonging to the Christian minority community became victims of the violence in the Kandhamal district alone. More than 600 villages were ransacked, 5600 houses were looted and burnt, 54000 people



The objective of the 'Shanti Bhoj' was to remove mutual mistrust and promote togetherness and unity. All households contributed two handfuls of rice, one handful of pulse and some potato. **A common 'khichdi' was cooked by men and women together. Before eating, principles of peaceful living, harmony, brotherhood, constitutional values and equality were emphasised.**



were left homeless and over 100 people were killed, including disabled and elderly persons, women and children.

A large number of people suffered severe physical injuries and mental trauma. While there are reports of a few women being sexually assaulted, many more such victims were believed to have been intimidated into silence. About 295 churches and other places of worship, big and small, were destroyed. Another 13 schools, colleges, and offices of several non-profit organisations were damaged.

About 30,000 people were uprooted and lived in relief camps and continue to be displaced. During this period, about 2000 people were forced to renounce their Christian faith. More than 10,000 children had their education severely disrupted due to displacement and fear.

Despite the passage of time, since August 2008, the situation has not improved much. Under these circumstances, the Shanti Sadbhavna Manch peace facilitator took the initiative to bring some of the religious leaders together in Balliguda, a small town in the Kandhamal district, to discuss ways to build up an amiable environment.

Some of the members from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal also participated in the meeting. It was decided to keep meetings at the village level and ask people to celebrate festivals together wherein all the religious and caste communities come together to showcase their traditional and cultural events.

Communities came forward and danced, sang, played instruments and dined together. People learned how their communities were interdependent. The communities have now



decided to celebrate one such inter-religious meeting and programme every year and create a peaceful and harmonious environment.

Reconciliation in a Property Dispute

In the village BarkiBadhal, in Pakaribarama Block of Nawada District in Bihar, two brothers Ashok and Anil (names changed), had a dispute over property and money. The issue escalated to the level of registering an FIR at the police station.

At a meeting organised by Shanti Sadbhavna Manch peace facilitators, it was found that the reason for the dispute was that the younger brother, Anil, was told that he would be given an amount of Rs. 5000, which was less than the appropriate share at the time of partition of their ancestral property between the two brothers.

The elder brother, Ashok, confirmed that he had agreed to pay Rs. 5000 to the younger brother as his share of the ancestral property. There was reconciliation between the two brothers due to the mediation of the peace facilitators.

In the beginning, an oath was administered to both brothers that they would accept the

decision taken in the meeting. The land of 22 katthas was also divided amicably. It was agreed that both of them will work together for the transfer of registration papers and share the expenses. After this successful resolution of the dispute, both the brothers tore off the FIR paper, and agreed that they would not act against the interest of the other. Both brothers hugged each other and agreed to live in peace and the village hailed this positive settlement of the property dispute.

Reconciliation through 'Shanti Bhoj'

On May 20, 2022, in the village Chandipur, Block Warisaliganj, Nawada District in Bihar, a 'Shanti Bhoj' (Peace Feast) was organised by Shanti Sadbhavna Manch peace facilitators. The objective of the 'Shanti Bhoj' was to remove mutual mistrust and promote togetherness and unity. All households contributed two handfuls of rice, one handful of pulse and some potato. A common 'khichdi' was cooked by men and women together. Before eating, principles of peaceful living, harmony, brotherhood, constitutional values and equality were emphasised. As a result, the participation of women in village activities has increased, and people who were divided into two groups have now come together.

These efforts of reconciliation by Shanti Sadbhavna peace facilitators at the grassroots level reveal that there is a need for a large number of peace facilitators who enjoy the credibility and the confidence of the local community to resolve disputes, **prevent conflicts and bring about reconciliation between conflicting communities to ensure that peace and harmony prevail throughout the country.**



In the village of Chandipur, there was discrimination in the past as only one social group was getting benefits from government schemes. This has been resolved and all are benefitting now. Earlier, people used to stop talking to one another because of trivial issues. Now, they eat together and participate in social work activities with enthusiasm.

Reconciliation between Two Caste Communities

In the village, Mahuliat and Kawakol Block, Nawada District in Bihar, a Saraswati idol immersion procession was taken out after Saraswati puja. The boys of the Ravidas community were dancing, singing and playing.

Meanwhile, some boys of the Yadav community entered the crowd to dance and started singing obscene songs. When a boy from the Ravidas community objected, the Yadavs got enraged and started using derogatory words. Other boys of the Ravidas community also protested against the singing of obscene songs. Then, the boys of the Yadav community started pelting stones. A stone hit the head of a man from the Ravidas community, and his forehead got injured. This turned into a fight between the members of the Yadav and Ravidas communities.

The Ravidas community planned to go to the police station to lodge a complaint. Then the Shanti Sadbhavna peace facilitators met some people of the village and decided to work towards reconciliation between the two communities and resolve the issue peacefully by mutual dialogue.

A meeting of all the villagers was held on Sunday, February 5, 2017. In the meeting, both parties were heard and it was decided that the Yadav community would bear the treatment expenses of the injured man of the Ravidas community. The Ravidas community agreed not to file an FIR or a police complaint. Both parties agreed to give a message of brotherhood to both communities and peace was restored through reconciliation.

These efforts of reconciliation by Shanti Sadbhavna peace facilitators at the grassroots level reveal that there is a need for a large number of peace facilitators who enjoy the credibility and the confidence of the local community to resolve disputes, prevent conflicts and bring about reconciliation between conflicting communities to ensure that peace and harmony prevail throughout the country.

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TOWN HALLS IN OSNABRUCK AND MÜNSTER

SYMBOLS OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION





The Author in front of the Town Hall at Münster

How did the Town Halls become Symbols of Peace and Reconciliation?

I was wonderstruck when I noticed the tagline ‘Osnabruck - The City of Peace’ inside the Town Hall during my recent visit to Germany. The Town Halls in Osnabruck and Münster gained international significance in European history as a result of the five-year European Peace Congress, which led to peace in Westphalia in 1648.

‘Peace in Westphalia’ is the collective name for the two peace treaties signed in the cities of Osnabruck and Münster. The treaties signed in the Town Halls between May 14 and October 24, 1648, ended the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and brought peace to the Roman Empire. It brought to an end one of the most destructive wars in the history of Europe which had killed approximately eight million people.

The Roman Emperor Ferdinand III, the Kingdoms of France and Sweden, and their respective allies participated in the treaties. The treaties also ended The Eighty Years’ War. This was a prolonged struggle for the independence of the Protestant-majority Dutch Republic (the modern Netherlands), supported by Protestant-majority England, against Catholic-dominated Spain and Portugal. In fact, Europe had been shattered by both the Thirty Years’ War and the Eighty Years’ War, exacting a heavy toll on money and lives.

Osnabruck was a place of negotiation for the Swedes, the envoys of the emperor and the Protestant estate, while the envoys of France, the emperor and the Catholic estate met in Münster. Both the Protestants and the Catholics demanded a place of negotiation where the envoys were able to practise their respective religions. The proximity of the two towns enabled a fast exchange of information.

They also had adequate infrastructure to accommodate all of the delegations from the estates and neighbouring European countries. The Chamber of Peace in Osnabruck’s Town Hall played an important role in the negotiations. The Treaties were ceremonially signed, sealed and

The treaties are not to remain as monumental idols but as symbols of peace and reconciliation between nations and their people. **They should remain both a mission and driving force in promoting peace.**



finally proclaimed from the steps of Osnabruck Town Hall on October 25, 1648. This significant day is observed as the Osnabruck Day of Peace every year.

The Town Hall in Osnabruck was heavily damaged during World War II. After the War, the council and city administration strove to rebuild the Town Hall as a symbol of Peace on the 300th anniversary of the 'Peace of Westphalia' on October 25, 1948.

It is said, Europe starts with Osnabruck-Münster peace treaties. The Peace of Westphalia recognised the full territorial sovereignty of the member states of the empire. Under the peace settlement, some countries received territories or were confirmed in their sovereignty over territories. It initiated modern diplomacy, involving the modern system of nation-states.

Along with the territorial changes, an unconditional amnesty to all those who had been deprived of their possessions was declared. Most important was the religious/ecclesiastical settlement of ensuring religious toleration to Calvinians and Lutherans in the Holy Roman Empire.

How significant are the peace treaties for contemporary times? There had been several treaties of peace down the centuries. But in recent decades, the terms of peace and reconciliation are mostly understood in connection with the peacekeeping ventures of the United Nations.

Since World War II, the UN has helped end conflicts and foster reconciliation by conducting successful peacekeeping operations in several



countries. However, despite the UN interventions, wars and violence continue in several parts of the globe. For example, the almost paralysed UN Security Council could not make any significant intervention to date in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war or the conflict-ridden Middle East or in North-Eastern Africa.

Rather than limiting peacekeeping goals to maintain ceasefires in conflict zones or stabilising situations, the UN should empower its structures towards sustainable peacebuilding. The treaties are not to remain as monumental idols but as symbols of peace and reconciliation between nations and their people. They should remain both a mission and driving force in promoting peace.

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ANKUR KALA

A SYMBOL OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Ankur Kala is both an organisation and a movement which gives hope and dignity to marginalised women through economic and social empowerment. Drawing inspiration from Mother Theresa of Calcutta and Brother Roger of Taizé, France, a group of artisans and I, who belong to Howrah, Bengal, initiated this movement in 1982 in response to a growing need to motivate marginalised and destitute women to break free from the shackles of poverty and oppression. We wanted to empower them to become economically self-reliant.

For the past 41 years, despite all our different cultural, religious, and political ideologies, we have been working, praying, and eating together as one large joint family. How did we succeed in doing this with such harmony year after year for well over four decades?



Drawing inspiration from Mother Theresa of Calcutta and Brother Roger of Taizé, France, a group of artisans and I, who belong to Howrah, Bengal, initiated this movement in 1982 in response to a growing need to motivate marginalised and destitute women to break free from the shackles of poverty and oppression.



We believe that we are all unique and beautiful, richly diverse, but created by one common Creator. Diversity becomes a threat only when we do not understand and respect one another. At Ankur Kala, we made a conscious decision to respect one another and to do all activities together by focusing on what is common among us.

Therefore, in our interfaith prayers, we do not address our Creator by any particular name but simply as Prabhu or Ishwar, Father, or Mother of the entire human race.

We refer to this as Universal Spirituality. Our prayers are, often, centred on peace, unity, love, and caring for one another beyond our geographical limitations. We read from various Holy Books. No images of any goddesses or gods are used. Instead, there is a beautiful Diya or candle and flowers.

Akbari Mashi used to work in our canteen and would bring her two little children, Neelam and Azad as there was no one to take care of them while she was at work. She worked for a good number of years. But as she grew older, her son and husband passed away.



Our prayers are often centred on peace, unity, love, and caring for each other beyond our geographical limitations. **We read from various Holy Books. No images of any goddesses or gods are used. Instead, there is a beautiful Diya or candle and flowers.**



While working in the canteen, she would join with much zeal in our interfaith prayers and common meals. A few years later, Akbari Mashi died peacefully and her daughter wanted to have her mother's fortieth day 'namaaz' with all of us at Ankur Kala despite her relatives opposing this. We had the most beautiful prayer as one community on this memorable day. Unforgettable, indeed!

In Ankur Kala, over the years we recite Psalms in the Bible each day in Bengali. It has become a favourite prayer among all our women. During the 'Amphaan' cyclone, one of our women Sudipta, a Bengali Hindu, who lives in a remote village beyond Sonarpur started praying Psalm 91 along with her family throughout the night.

It was reported that she and her family miraculously escaped while most of the houses around were badly damaged. Her entire family was deeply touched by this miracle. There are many more similar cases.

For the meals, we have only vegetarian food so as not to offend the religious sentiments of anyone. On the other hand, we celebrate and participate in each other's festivals. For example, during the month of Ramadan, our Muslim sisters have the choice of going



home earlier or breaking the fast in Ankur Kala, especially if there is an urgent order to complete. Often, all of us help in the preparation of the Iftar meal when the fast is broken after sunset and even join in the sharing of this sacred meal.

What is also special about Ankur Kala is that we try to listen to the other's views. For example, together we commemorate the act of Jesus washing the feet of people and observe various pujas and fasting days of Hindus. We listen to one another with great respect without questioning or judging. This makes us more aware of each other's cultural and religious practices.

Diversity in inter-faith, class, caste education, colour, age, language or none of these has become a barrier among us. Instead, we draw a lot of strength and appreciation for one another which, in turn, empowers every one of us and contributes greatly to living with dignity.

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A UNIQUE ART

FROM A **WOUNDED STATE**

The Basohli miniatures originated when Raja Kirpal Pal, the ruler of Basohli, invited a group of Muslim painters from the Mughal court of Emperor Akbar to his kingdom. **These painters brought with them the Mughal art style, which was a blend of Islamic and Hindu artistic traditions. The painters, in turn, adopted and incorporated this style into a new and unique visual language, which came to be known as ‘Basohli painting.’**



Recently, the Jammu and Kashmir government showcased hundreds of rare and ancient Basohli paintings at the Dogra Art Museum, Jammu in a bid to popularise it.

The Basohli paintings from the Kathua district have obtained the Geographical Indication tag following approval by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development on April 3, 2023.

Basohli paintings flourished in the Indian hill states during the late 17th and 18th centuries. The art takes its name from Basohli, a town in the Jammu region. This town is believed to be the cradle of various Pahari (hilly area) paintings. It gave birth to a unique style of miniature paintings that witnessed a fusion of mythology and traditional folk art. Known for their bold, bright colours and intricate use of gold leaf, the paintings have a unique style that can be distinguished from other regional Indian painting styles like Mughal, Rajasthani, and Pahari.

History of Basohli Painting

The Basohli miniatures originated when Raja Kirpal Pal, the ruler of Basohli, invited a group of Muslim painters from the Mughal court of Emperor Akbar to his kingdom. These painters brought with them the Mughal art style, which was a blend of Islamic and Hindu artistic traditions. The painters, in turn, adopted and incorporated this style into a new and unique visual language, which came to be known as 'Basohli painting.'

The earliest dated Basohli paintings are illustrations to Bhanudatta's Sanskrit work 'Rasmanjari', known as



Poojamma 4(3)/2023

the 'Chittarasamanjari', which were commissioned by Raja Kirpal Pal in 1693 and completed one year after his death, in 1694. The paintings were made by the artist Devidas.

During the patronage of Raja Bhupat Pal (1678-1694), the Basohli school flourished, and many notable works were produced. Under his rule, the painters evolved a distinct stylistic manner of painting that was marked by exaggerated features, elongated eyes, and angular outlines.

The paintings are unique in terms of their vibrant hues, which were created by extracting colours from natural sources like

rocks, plants, and minerals. The colours are bright and bold, and a combination of red, yellow, green, and blue are commonly used to create a striking contrast.

Themes and Subjects

The miniatures depict a wide range of themes and subjects taken from classical Indian literature, mythology, and fables. Stories of Lord Rama, Lord Krishna, and other divine figures are prominent, as are episodes from the ancient epic, the Mahabharata. The Basohli school also depicted scenes of love and romance, the royal court, and everyday village life.



The miniature painting is an excellent example of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India. **There is a need to save this heritage art. It is a unique art form that has preserved the traditional artistic style, techniques, and themes of the region.**





The term 'Rasamanjari' translates to a bouquet of flowers. In the ancient text on music, dance, and theatre called 'Natyashastra', Bharat Muni outlined nine emotions or rasas. These include Sringara (love), Veera (courage), Karuna (compassion), Adbhuta (wonder), Hasya (humour), Bhayanaka (terror), Bibhatsa (revulsion), Raudra (anger) and Shanti (tranquillity).

Bhanudatta wrote the 'Rasmanjari' in the 16th century, focusing mainly on the Sringara rasa and depicting the actions of Nayaks (male protagonists) and naiyakas (female protagonists) in love. The text provides a detailed account of the emotional, sexual, and romantic behaviour of these characters and has inspired countless paintings.

One of the striking features is the use of gold leaf. It is extensively employed to highlight the borders, garments, and jewellery of the figures. This creates a sense of opulence and grandeur, adding depth and dimension to the works.

Another defining characteristic is the bold, elongated eyes of the figures. It is believed that this distinctive style originated from the artists' practice of exaggerating the eyes to emphasise the emotional intensity. The elongation also allowed the artists to express various moods and emotions.

The miniature painting is an excellent example of the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India. There is a need to save this heritage art. It is a unique art form that has preserved the traditional artistic style, techniques, and themes of the region.

Manoj A.R. is the Senior Sub-Editor of Ezhuthu Magazine, published by LIPI, Kochi.



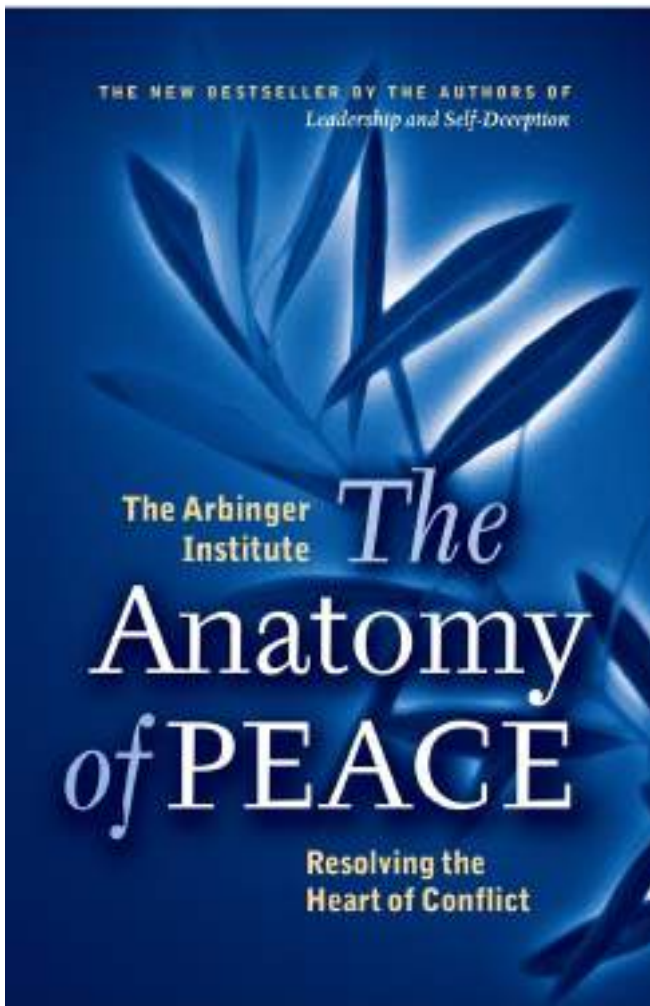


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BOOK
REVIEW

Pax Lumina 4(3) / 2023 / 66-68

The HEART of PEACE vs the HEART of CONFLICT



‘**T**he Anatomy of Peace: Resolving The Heart of Conflict’ was authored by The Arbinger Institute in 2006. The Arbinger Institute is a global training and consulting firm that helps individuals and leaders transform their inner minds and receive an exceptional breakthrough.

This exceptional book presents war and conflicts at personal, professional and global levels, and they teach us how to reach a peaceful resolution by attaining a heart of peace.

The book is a fictionalised version of the peace-conflict resolution. The book points out conflicts at home, workplace, and sometimes, global issues have the same root cause. The vicious cycle of war and conflict begins in the heart.

The outward wars around us started because of an inward war that went unnoticed: someone started seeing others as objects, and others used that as justification for doing the same.

**This is the germ and germination of war.
When we are carrying this germ,
the end result is wars.**



What if conflicts at home, conflicts at work, and conflicts in the world stem from the same root cause?

The book contains concepts and fables with numerous day-to-day examples from personal and workspaces ranging from patterns of conflicts to peaceful resolutions.

A group of parents arrive at Camp Moriah to correct the behaviour of their children. The camp begins with a two-day orientation for the parents where they learn about building healthy relationships, followed by a sixty-day camp for the children. They are taught to have a heart of peace, the importance of acknowledging the others' point of view and are invited to learn how to resolve a conflict.

The Turkish Sultan Saladin (1137-93) ended centuries of the vicious cycle of war, by attaining a heart of peace. There is always free will to choose the heart of peace or a heart of conflict. Sensing fears and burdened by desires, we often ignore the principles of being a human being.

Saladin chose a heart of peace. He did not massacre the Christian pilgrims. Instead, he provided them with a safe passage and kept the city open. We see people through coloured lenses when we are at war within ourselves and have self-deception. We are full of prejudices, and attaining inner peace is the only go.

The four common self-deception boxes detailed in the book explains the biased views and self-justification attitudes we



carry around. “Better-Than Box”, “Worse-Than Box”, “I –Deserve Box” and “Must-Be-Seen As-Box”.

What if we systematically misunderstand the causes?

And what if, as a result, we systematically perpetuate the problems we think we are trying to solve?

Seeing an equal person as an inferior object is an act of violence.

The outward wars around us started because of an inward war that went unnoticed: someone started seeing others as objects, and others used that as justification for doing the same thing. This is the germ and germination of war. When we carry this germ, the end result is war.

In most of the conflicts, the random solution every one plans is to change the other party's opinion, thoughts or ideology, but this can intensify the conflict. The resolution of the problem is not conflict escalation, but the self-realisation that you could be wrong.

Conflict, Collusion and Escalation are the three dimensions of perceiving others which can, in turn, lead to a vicious cycle of bitterness and enmity. Fighting head-on to change the other parties' perceptions and thought processes can intensify enmity. Instead should invite the other party for a new change. A friendly approach and a belief that we are one with the other entity could lead to problem-solving and conflict resolution.

Every human face includes all others. This means I spite my face with every nose I desire to cut off. We separate from one another at our peril.

The book doesn't preach but it teaches us how to get out of the box, build supporting relationships, listen, learn, teach and communicate the issues tormenting the inner climate. The invitation to change using the steps in the Pyramid of Change can correct behaviours without any kind of animosity.

'Generally speaking, we respond to others' way of being toward us rather than to their behaviour. This is to say that our children respond more to how we are regarding them than they do to our particular words or actions. We can treat our children fairly, for example, but if our hearts are warring toward them while we are doing it, they won't think they are being treated fairly at all. They will respond to us as if they were not being treated fairly.'

Accepting others' perspectives is a real challenge during arguments, be it business partners, spouses or even children. 'When I see others as objects, I dwell on the injustices I have suffered to justify myself, keeping my mistreatment and suffering alive within me.



When I see others as people, on the other hand, then I free myself from the need for justification. I, therefore, free myself from the need to focus unduly on the worst that has been done to me. I am free to leave the worst behind me, and to not see only the bad but the mixed and the good in others as well.

'When we see people as "others" from the Lacanian point of view, we are harming humanity. Most of these conflicts arise due to the collusion of hearts. Denying that the other person can have an independent and valid perspective can perpetuate the conflict. We tend to put ourselves in the Victim Box, causing everyone to think in the same way, probably creating a false belief that the world is an unfair place.'

The book is a stunning piece of wisdom which could change the face of humanity. Arbinger's first book 'Leadership and Self-Deception' written before 'The Anatomy of Peace', had a profound impact on the mindset of readers in creating a healthy and productive workspace. The authors and members of The Arbinger Institute are oriented towards helping organisations, communities, individuals, families and those in the helping professions in resolving past trauma and conflicts.

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A DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY RECONCILES

A REVIEW OF THE FILM 'THE FIGHTER'

'The Fighter' depicts an utterly dysfunctional family of 10 and how they manage to make a living out of the boxing ring. **Set in Lowell, Massachusetts, it showcases a working-class neighbourhood in America, with all its struggles**

Reconciliation can be considered the act of restoring a fractured relationship while overcoming grief, pain, and anger in the process. According to clinical psychologist Karen Brounéus, it is a societal process that involves mutual acknowledgement of past suffering and the changing of destructive attitudes and behaviour into constructive relationships toward sustainable peace.

Reconciliation demands of us a journey in two directions – an inward one towards self-discovery, and an outward one towards recognising and forgiving others. It can be considered as a simultaneous intrapersonal and interpersonal exercise. To fully understand reconciliation, we must know how it differs from forgiveness, as the latter is only a part of the reconciliation process.

When we forgive someone who has wronged us, we don't necessarily reconcile with them. However, when we reconcile with someone, we have already forgiven them, as reconciliation without forgiveness is nearly impossible.



David O. Russel's 'The Fighter' is a 2010 American biographical sports drama about the infamous professional boxing brothers Micky Ward and Dicky Eklund. It stars Mark Wahlberg as Micky, Christian Bale as Dicky, Amy Adams as Charlene Fleming, Micky's real-life partner, and Melissa Leo as Alice Ward, the duo's mother. Police Sgt. Mickey O'Keefe plays himself.

'The Fighter' depicts an utterly dysfunctional family of 10 (Micky, Dicky, their seven sisters and their mother) and how they manage to make a living out of the boxing ring. Set in Lowell, Massachusetts, it showcases a working-class neighbourhood



The movie is a realistic depiction of interpersonal relationships among everyday folk and **how they reconcile their differences.**

in America, with all its struggles. We get a glimpse behind the exquisite, star-spangled curtain that Hollywood drapes over the country. Drug addiction is portrayed for what it is, a disease of circumstance, which sucks the life out of families and careers, and spits out a shell of a person.

The movie is a realistic depiction of interpersonal relationships among everyday folk and how they reconcile their differences.

Mark Wahlberg does a convincing job of playing the real-life Edward. However, he sometimes comes across as the stereotypical American – proud, not very bright but very determined. He is shown as someone who can't think for himself, or defend his opinion unless he has someone to back him up.

Christian Bale delivers a knockout performance as Dicky Eklund, one so good, it earned him the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor. He plays a crack addict eerily well – his physique, body movements and actions resemble that of a desperate addict. He spends most of his free time at a crack house with other addicts. His claim to fame is that he knocked out the boxing legend Sugar Ray Leonard, although many allege that Leonard merely slipped.

Melissa Leo and Amy Adams play strong female characters. Melissa plays Alice, a mother of nine who always reminds her sons that she knows the best. She is incredibly determined to make professional boxers out of her two sons but isn't motivated to find her adult daughters a job, as they are always together like a flock of geese.

She is frequently at odds with Charlene, Micky's girlfriend. Charlene, played by Amy, is Micky's motivator and in a sense, rescuer, as she teaches him to think for himself and to be confident in himself, and to stand up to his mother.

When we analyse the lead characters' interpersonal relationships, we find out that there is a lot of pent-up frustration among them. There is an unacknowledged sibling rivalry between the brothers, fuelled by Alice seeing Dicky as her darling son/ pride and joy, while Micky is the backup plan. For most





of the movie he looks up to Dicky and wants to be like him, but each time Dicky fails him (like causing the police to break his hand before a fight), they grow apart.

He also feels that Dicky effortlessly steals the spotlight from him with his mother's help. All this comes to a head when Dicky, after his release from prison visits Micky's training ring along with his mother. They cause enough of a scene that his trainer Mickey O'Keefe and Charlene leave in disgust.

The brothers' spar and Micky soundly defeats his brother. Alice immediately runs to check on Dicky and chides Micky, only to be sobered up when he tells her, "I thought you were my mother too", revealing how badly her actions hurt him. They hug and reconcile with each other.

While Micky and Alice reconcile, Dicky visits the crack house where he and his buddies smoked crack and bid his friends goodbye. We can consider this as him reconciling with his addiction and those that partook in that addiction with him. It is a sign that he has made peace with the past and intends to leave that life behind.

When Dicky apologises to Charlene, he admits that Micky needs her just as much as he thinks he needs him. This is another act of reconciliation, as both were at odds with each other, Charlene seeing him (and his mother) as a bad influence on Micky, and

While Micky and Alice reconcile, Dicky visits the crack house where he and his buddies smoked crack and bid his friends goodbye.

We can consider this as him reconciling with his addiction and those that partook in that addiction with him. It is a sign that he has made peace with the past and intends to leave that life behind.



Dicky silently agreeing when his mother and sisters call her a 'skank' and other names. They both agree to work together to help Micky.

Dicky also seems to acknowledge that he didn't knock Sugar Ray Leonard out, which can also be considered as a reconciliation of his ego with the truth. He seems to realise that while he had his moment in the sun, he chose to make nothing of the opportunity and that it was time for him to step back and help his brother win. He reconciles with his brother, accepting his demand of training with O'Keefe.

The climax shows Micky's victory over welterweight champion SheaNeary. There is a time jump of a few years, and Dicky credits his brother as being successful on his merit.

Roven Roy pursues his graduate studies in English and Media Studies at St.Xavier's College, Trivandrum.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pax Lumina 4(3) / 2023 / 72

Dear Editor,

The Pax Lumina is a high Impact Journal. I am highly impressed by the contents of May 2023 issue on Inequality..

Hardev Singh Virk, Punjab.

Dear Editor,

Treating unequal things as equals is the greatest crime that mankind can do. These are the words that always come to my mind when I hear or read the word "inequality." This edition has covered all the facets of inequality. Congratulations to the entire team.

Shruthi H, Trivandrum

Dear Editor,

Read the May 2023 issue of Pax Lumina. Wonderful work as always. It has been able to cover all dimensions of inequality well. Congratulations!

Nikhil George Joseph, Delhi.

Dear Editor,

Congratulations for the wonderful issue on "Dimensions of Inequality". I was happy to see articles from Syeda Hameed, Jean Dreze, et al. The issue captures various dimensions of economic, social, cultural, racial and gender inequalities in India and some parts of the globe.

Best wishes,

Denzil, Delhi

Dear Editor,

Gone through Pax Lumina on Dimensions of Inequality. Very inspiring articles. It's a wonderful magazine.

Regards,

Mariam Philip, MSc, PhD,
Additional Professor, Biostatistics,
NIMHANS, Bangalore.



Dear Editor,

The topic inequality is a great selection. But questions like why people are born in unequal footings always remain answerless? Why some people take birth in Somalia, while others in America?

Dr. Thomaskutty, Pala.

Dear Editor,

Thanks a million for Pax Lumina May 2023. And Congratulations to the team behind. As usual, a lot to read and study. And, of course, to act.

Regards,

Dr. M.K. George, Rome.

Dear Editor,

Dimensions of Inequality is an apt theme for the May 2023 issue of Pax Lumina!! Building capacity dissolves inequality to some extent. Not necessary capacity building can dissolve inequality. I think it will not dissolve but iron out, inequality will still be there. There are any number of people with great capacity, but they sometimes are the perpetrators of inequality. Yet capacity building is a needed tool in removing inequality. For example, our children whom we care for come from an unequal society. With our effort they now can be equal with their contemporaries! But I agree that capacity building will atleast remove some of the inequalities existing. Congratulations for the focus!

Joel Urumpil SCN, Jharkhand.

TASK FORCE ON PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

Traumas of the past continue to haunt human societies all over the world. Colonization, slavery, war and violence have created deep wounds in the minds and hearts of humanity for long. Healing of the wounded past and reconciliation have become the need of the hour. Resonating with the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus, and in response to Decree 1 of the General Congregation 36, the Jesuit Schools and Universities worldwide are committed to the mission of reconciliation with God, with ourselves, between conflicting parties, and with the creation. The IAJU Task Force on Peace and Reconciliation focuses on the role of Jesuit Universities and centres of tertiary learning in the mission of promoting peace and reconciliation.

Goal of the Task Force

- Mapping and networking among existing initiatives and the best practices on reconciliation in the context of Jesuit institutions.
- Providing tools to inspire sensitive and committed students in the mission of reconciliation and conflict transformation.
- Promoting transdisciplinary approaches to research, education and transfer of knowledge with those victims whom we serve.
- Stimulating the creative and critical interactions of Jesuit universities and centres of higher learning with other actors in the field of reconciliation.
- Inviting Jesuit universities and centres of higher learning to coherently reflect within their own organizations on reconciliation.
- Exploring the role of Ignatian spirituality in the process of reconciliation.
- Building learning communities of practice to improve our concrete actions (including advocacy) at the service of reconciliation.

Projects such as JesPRI (Jesuit Peace and Reconciliation Institutes), ReconciliaNet (Worldwide Reconciliation Network) and Geo-viewer are some of the major initiatives taken up by the Task Force. All are welcome to join this innovative and collaborative venture of promoting peace and reconciliation.

Task Force Coordinating Team:

Elías López SJ (Chair) | Jacques Haers SJ (Co-chair) | Camila Mantilla (Project Manager)

For details refer the following link

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PEACE AND RECONCILIATION NETWORK

Jesuit Conference of South Asia
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WE MUST
THEREFORE ACT
TOGETHER AS
A UNITED PEOPLE,
FOR NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION,
FOR NATION BUILDING,
FOR THE BIRTH OF
A NEW WORLD.
LET THERE BE
JUSTICE FOR ALL.
LET THERE BE
PEACE FOR ALL.

Nelson Mandela

