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Оригинални научни рад

UDK: 316.74:2(410)

316.334.3:2(410)

**INVESTING IN THE 'FAITHFUL CAPITAL' AS A MEANS TO
SOCIAL CHANGE AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION
(BRITISH CONTEXT WITH SOME GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS)**

Introduction

The concept of the 'faithful capital' signifies a renewed understanding of faith in action and actions in faithfulness to the tradition that people believe and belong. A robust 'return to religious faith' and 'resurgence of faith' convey an astute rootedness, affirmation of identity in one's faith, a conquest for space and social mobility in the public domain. The tendency of return of religion and a sense of return to religion into the secular realms and their manifestations portray both a possibility of an investment in that 'faithful capital' for social change while un-channelled religious fervour may be starkly counterproductive and lead to balkanisation of society that religious traditions campaign to foster.

The religious landscape of Britain has changed tremendously over the last 50 years since the primary migration of the South Asian communities both from East Africa, Kashmir and other Northern parts of India. Primary migration processes have made unprecedented sociological changes in a definite way in the life of Great Britain. Some political and social critics are of the view that it is a blow back² dynamic which

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² Blowback" is a CIA term first used in March 1954 in a recently declassified report on the 1953 operation to overthrow the government of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran. It is a metaphor for the unintended consequences of the US government's international activities that have been kept secret from the American people. The CIA's fears that there might ultimately be some blowback

indicates a reverse colonisation process by the former colonies of the British Raj. The inner cities are a tapestry of world's cultures, religious traditions and languages. This monumental diversity visible and pronounced in all major and medium size cities have revolutionized the understanding of community, relationships, culture, religion and behavior permanently pushing all defined boundaries which Britain maintained as a perceived mono culture. Even though the non white population of Britain is less than 7% yet the impact of this visible presence of culturally, socially, religiously different communities more specifically settled in the inner cities have become the designers of a New Britain as they claim a Britishness hitherto unknown. It has almost become a political category in some quarters of the public domain in Britain. It is in this backdrop that the Faith in the City report (1985) was produced by the Anglican Commission on Urban Priority Areas, focused on the rapidly changing context of the inner city life of UK. Twenty years later but this time the Anglican Commission on Urban Life & Faith engages with the intense diversity of inner cities in its report Faithful Cities (2006)³ with key issues and debates of social cohesion and regeneration in the country.

Both reports provided evidence based material, analysis and direction for all interested in social change, political lobbying, dynamics of faith and spirituality. This essay while reflecting and acknowledging the fertile tapestry of faith traditions within UK, it argues that it is important to recognise, affirm, and enhance the user-led-faith-community work and their institutional infrastructure in the present inner city contexts. The communities rooted in different faith traditions are obliged therefore by their affiliation to faiths' inner vitality to search for new ways of being effective instruments of social change, spiritual revival and cultural resurgence processes in contemporary society. The paper critically challenges all faith communities to immerse and engage in socio-political, religio-cultural and inter-community bridge building if the 'faithful' wish to coexist in diversity or self annihilate in isolation.

from its egregious interference in the affairs of Iran were well founded. Installing the Shah in power brought twenty-five years of tyranny and repression to the Iranian people and elicited the Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution. The staff of the American embassy in Teheran was held hostage for more than a year. This misguided "covert operation" of the US government helped convince many capable people throughout the Islamic world that the United States was an implacable enemy.

³ See. <http://www.culf.org.uk/content> for extensive information on the report.

Market Economy, its Politics and Social Critique

Thatcherism⁴ in its hey days was characterized by a free market economy, monetarist economic policy, privatisation⁵ of state-owned industries, low direct taxation but conversely higher indirect taxation, opposition to trade unions through state regulation. Thatcherism modeled itself on the North American Reaganomics⁶ and its political direction in governance and international relations. The right definition involves a mixture of free markets, financial discipline, firm control over public expenditure, tax cuts, nationalism, 'Victorian values', privatization and a dash of populism. These have had adverse effects in poorer sections of society across the nations laying the foundation for globalisation of capital and financial speculations. The Thatcherites believed in economic liberalism and claimed in 1983 that "We have a duty to make sure that every penny piece we raise in taxation is spent wisely and well. For it is our party which is dedicated to good housekeeping"

Faith in the City report in 1985 made 61 recommendations: 38 of them to the Church of England, and 23 to the Government and Nation. The church as a faith community was asked to identify its "urban priority area" parishes. Interestingly, the report addressed directly according to Department for the Environment indicators relating to 1981 census data. From the recommendations to the Church of England six indicators identified were: levels of unemployment, overcrowding, households lacking basic amenities, pensioners living alone, ethnic origin, and single parent households.

⁴ It is the system of political thought attributed to the governments of Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990. Thatcher was unusual among British Conservative Prime Ministers in that she was a highly ideological leader and "Thatcherism" is characterized by decreased state intervention via the free market economy, monetarist economic policy, privatisation of state-owned industries, lower direct taxation and higher indirect taxation, opposition to trade unions, and a reduction of the size of the Welfare State. "Thatcherism" may be compared with Reaganomics in the United States, Reaganomics (which I refer to elsewhere in the paper) in New Zealand and economic rationalism in Australia. Thatcher was deeply in favour of individualism over collectivism. I interpret Thatcherite ideology also as a clever political imagination but that which resented political dissent and counter political imagination, and if such did exist, presumably was alluded to as Marxist or Communist which was an obsessive compulsive behaviour of many Western political leaders of the time. In my view such also lacked the political imagination for an alternative.

⁵ "From France to the Philippines, from Jamaica to Japan, from Malaysia to Mexico, from Sri Lanka to Singapore, privatisation is on the move...The policies we have pioneered are catching on in country after country. We Conservatives believe in popular capitalism—believe in a property-owning democracy. And it works!" Speech to Conservative Central Council by M. Thatcher(15 March, 1986).

⁶ . It refers to the economic policies promoted by Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1989 in the US. The four pillars of Reagan's economic policy were to: a) reduce the growth of government spending, b) reduce marginal tax rates on income from labour and capital, c) reduce regulation, d) control the money supply to reduce inflation. The economic policies enacted in 1981, known as "Reaganomics," were similar to those of supply-side economics and advocated free market. The policies aimed to reduce the growth of government spending through tax cuts, as well as reduce regulation and inflation. However, there is no conclusive evidence supporting to what extent they were achieved.

The Recommendations to Government and Nation were specific - taking in the rate support grant, the urban programme, levels of overtime working, community programmes, supplementary benefit, child benefit, the taxation system, ethnic records, housing availability and allocation, homelessness, "care in the community", Law centres and law enforcement. Hence, the incumbent government was directly challenged to deliver and in fact Thatcher seemed to have said that the report was Marxist in its analysis and that it lacked a certain British liberal thinking. But to her amazement many defended the report as being forthright in its approach and analysis of the existing social and economic condition of British society. In my view the report provided through its social and poverty analysis of some crucial areas where the faith communities could involve themselves as active catalysts in civil society for genuine social change and political maturity. These propositions in fact provided fresh thinking and political imagination to the British public who were in some measure were disgruntled about the iron fist of the incumbent political leadership had found solid alliance with the Washington politics of the Regan administration. An alternative thinking was being proposed by this courageous report for alternative political critique when the Westminster's political slogan was that there is no alternative (TNA) which in my view was the first indication of total political obstinacy in epic proportion of the Thatcherite era.

The report obviously caused immediate controversy in the political corridors of Westminster. An unnamed conservative cabinet minister was reported as dismissing the report - before it was published - as 'pure Marxist theology' and another conservative MP claimed the report proved that the Anglican Church was governed by a "load of Communist clerics". According to David Sheppard, the late Bishop of Liverpool, although the report was loudly 'rubbished' by some senior conservative politicians, these attacks had the benefit of making Faith in the City famous. The report triggered extensive public and media debate regarding Thatcherite political ethics, urban decay, the modern role of governance of the first sector⁷ and relevance of the Church as a faith community and the growing divide between rich and poor in 1980s Britain. As a result of this report the Church Urban Fund (CUF)⁸ was created in 1988, subsequently by 2005 it raised and distributed more than 55 million Sterling Pounds to over 4400 local faith related initiatives in the poorest areas across the country.

⁷ The first sector is the national level of administration (in the case of USA, India or Australia, is known as the federal level) and the second sector is the local government (Municipality or Commune like in some of the Scandinavian countries) and the third sector is the voluntary and the community groups (this specific sector has a strong impact on policy development and political critique particularly in Britain). The third sector is acutely key to the political imagination that is being discussed in this paper. This sector is what gives energy to the civic rights of the people as it indicates a healthy practice of democracy and people's engagement at the grassroots even though it is most feared by those in power at all levels.

⁸ See. <http://www.cuf.org.uk/> for a comprehensive understanding of the ethos of the Church Urban Fund.

Faith in the City report imitated discussion across the nation and a movement within the Church. It showed that common concerns could be harnessed for common good. The 2006 Faithful Cities report takes seriously the social, religious and political activism of faith communities in the same inner city context as a response and a continuation of the quest to identify and articulate the religious resurgence and spiritual fervor. In my reading the Faithful Cities report implicitly points towards two movements in contemporary society in Britain. The first movement is a sense and a direction embroiled in a Return of Religion tendency. Secondly it's a movement clamouring to Return to Religion. These are two distinct movements but related to each other, each with several and sometimes contradictory agendas overlapping each other, requiring an analysis and be reviewed from within the wider debate on religion and its relevance to modernity and its multi disciplinary discourses.

Some Global Political Implications

I wish to indicate two comparably significant movements of return of religion and return to religion⁹ in the context of political arrangements and their future in modern societies? Are such movements worth taking seriously or what directions may be pursued in investing in them as social and political catalysts for change and community cohesion?

In the last twenty years, major and medium size cities right across Western, Northern and Southern Europe have dramatically changed their demography, ethnic, religious and cultural landscapes permanently. Recent geopolitical developments and deployment of terror as a means of redress alongside counter mechanisms to arrest the situation with the politics of war on terror campaign have considerably relativised all known methods of governance, political imagination, civil liberty and community relations. These global scenarios have posed new and severe challenges to all religious traditions, cultural moorings and democratic forms of life across not just Europe but the world community at large. No nation, no polity, no community is spared of their impact.

⁹ These two movements indicate; a) *Return of religion* is a religio-socio-political tendency bringing religion and its symbolism to the public domain as an assertive view of defining those individuals and communities giving them identity and political space. It is in this context that certain individuals and small groups of people belonging to those traditions mobilise their 'link religion' as a political tool to redress grievances to the extent of usurping political power at local, national levels with international consequences. b) Secondly, *return to religion* has also developed a tendency within the same tradition to revisit the core of its primordial message laying emphasis on the vastness of its specific spiritual and its ability to emulate people and elevate them as sensibly functional individuals and communities. However, the most used, misused and perhaps abused (in)famous word 'fundamentalism' in my view falls in between these two movements edging its infectious impact on each of them pushing their bound its boundaries to be misunderstood than understood (I also further explain the same in the text below to further indicate the crucial distinction between the two movements and their inner affinities and almost divided loyalty to notions of 'fundamentalism'.

The community behaviour, cultural forms and other social and political relations are rapidly changing and the responses on the part of some communities are obviously not as rapid as the programmed changes put before them.

These two key movements can easily be recognised right across the globe among many other aspects of globalisation processes. The two movements seem to be taking place concurrently, face to face and side by side. The first movement or the tendency is a public display of Return of Religion, which is about groups of highly motivated individuals thinking that their religious affiliations as the ultimate point of reference that may give them not only identity and meaning, but also more specifically as a means to redress grievances. In the closing decades of the 20th century, religion re-emerged as a contentious issue in country after country. Samuel Huntington observed: "The late 20th century has seen the global resurgence of religions around the world"¹⁰ Karen Armstrong, reiterates that "One of the most startling developments of the late 20th century has been the emergence within every major religious tradition of a militant piety known as 'fundamentalism'... this religious resurgence has taken many observers by surprise"¹¹ The second is a general tendency or a movement of several religious traditions to Return to Religion in terms of rejuvenation of their pristine teachings, revisiting their core message, rooting the communities to understand a code of conduct among its membership in a new way as a positive approach to spirituality, portraying its capability to provide a comprehensive character formation. To consider that religion is not a source of conflict but a resource for transformation, influencing social and even political change.

The new wave of religious activism is driven by serious believers of many faiths - Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and others - all of whom are incessantly opposed to many of the values commonly accepted by 'modern secular society'. Two examples can be cited here. First, it is well-known that the re-election of George W. Bush Jr. in 2004 to some extent was determined by the pro life/pro choice debate, and the Roman Catholic voter base with heavy influence by the Catholic lobby of the United States seemed to have joined their regular rivals of Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions all over the nation to support single issue- pro life agenda. Secondly, both the ultra orthodox Jews and the conservative Muslim Ulema and their other fellow Muslims came forward in solidarity to oppose the Gay Pride Parade in December 2006 in the streets of Tel Aviv setting aside their perpetual rivalry that they maintain towards each other. Though their specific beliefs and the worldview in most instances are diametrically opposed to each other yet they share the ultimate goal of restructuring and ordering society on the basis of their scriptural beliefs and practices

¹⁰ See. Huntington, S., *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, Touchstone, NY, 1996 p. 64.

¹¹ See. Armstrong, K., (2000) *The Battle for God*, HarperCollinsPublishers, London, p. ix.

to conform to specific norms and jurisdictions. Whether this is the right approach or the best method of such restructuration of society and sense of community is yet to be judged in the face of political militancy and sometimes expressed via heinous and violent ways remain controversial, enigmatic and morally problematic.

Religion and the Politics of the Secular Project

French researcher Gilles Kepel, in his book *The Revenge of God*, has carefully documented this largely unexpected turn of events. The simultaneous appearance of fundamentalist religious movements on a global scale has major implications for the 21st century,¹² which according to Huntington, 'is dawning as a century of religion' that some fear and therefore should be marginalised. Society is witnessing a major shift in the course of human history, and is moving along a path no longer parochial but alarmingly global, thus seemingly unmanageable as if everyone has lost its grip and sense of direction.

Secular leaders and scholars have been surprised by the return of religion, because they put their faith in the assumption that modernization would lead to secularization and to the decline of religion. This idea - the so-called 'secularization theory'- is widely accepted in academic and political circles seemed untenable. It assumes that as societies modernize and become more secular, religion will wither away as an archaic and useless branch of knowledge. Their assumption was that if religion became irrelevant, and human beings became more reasonable, they would dwell together in peace and happiness in a modernized world and they thought that religion was irrational and should be made redundant.

However, human history did not follow this 'reasonable' path to a secular utopia. The closing decades of the 20th century provided a massive falsification of the idea. Peter Berger, one of the world's leading sociologists of religion, says "that modernization and secularization will lead to a decline in religion; instead, we are witnessing a massive upsurge in religion around the world".¹³ This resurgence of religion has also played a part in an increasing number of violent conflicts around the world. Secular intellectuals and the elite have been shocked by this development, because it is proving that their fundamental assumptions about human beings and human society are wrong. The modern secular notion that religion is archaic and irrelevant has caused many to overlook the importance of religion in human affairs.

¹² See. Kepel. G., (1994) *Revenge of God: Resurgence of Islam, Judaism and Christianity in the Modern World* (trans.) Alan Braley, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 1-12.

¹³ See. *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, (1999), (ed.) Berger, P.W., William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, p. 6.

As a result, they have been taken by surprise with the return of religion. Berger reiterates that “those who neglect religion in their analysis of contemporary affairs do so at great peril”¹⁴ as there is sufficient evidence to indicate a robust and a definitive return of religion. But what is it that has spawned the modern revival of religion to robustly campaign for a critical appraisal of secular society and its agenda? It is a view that the collapse of the ideological camps (led by the US and its allies & the USSR and its satellite states) which flourished during the cold war, the challenge of the post structural deconstructionist epistemology on the highly esteemed mega narratives (Judeo-Christian & Islamic) and the post modern thinking in every sphere of life; demand that something new emerge in the midst of confusion and apparent disorder. It was clear that a new wave of consolidating the disintegrated views, ideas, patterns of logic, rationality and forms of life were in the making. Political ideas, social movements, economic gaps, democratic deficits, national and tribal rivalries and internal frustrations of communities had to be articulated through some medium. Religion, in my view was the popular, available and the most accessible vehicle which with such aspects could find viable reincarnation and a renewed expression. Religion and its social critique posed a formidable challenge to the rapid and accelerated movement of the globalization of the agendas subscribed by the financial and trade institutions. The opposition to the G8 and WTO summits, from Seattle Washington to Prague and Genova if not directly yet was implicitly connected to a yearning and a quest for an alternative ideology. This ideology has taken several manifestations from an anarchist approach as some would like to describe, to the Greens, or to some disgruntled Marxists according to some others. But a serious vacuum had to be filled, harnessed and maintained. The return of religion somewhere down the line was able to fill the vacuum both for better and for worse. For better it did collect a colossal voice and valor in drop the debt campaign, stop the war campaign, and currently for the fairtrade¹⁵ and livesimply campaigns led by the faith communities. For worse it has viciously built networks of terror in the name of religion and portrays religion as a means to redress grievances. Religion is being used to mobilize people to attain political goals and populism, driving the political motif for a social contract between the ruler and the ruled via religious sectarianism right across faith traditions with

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 18.

¹⁵ It is a organized social movement and market-based approach to alleviating global poverty and promoting sustainability. The movement advocates the payment of a fair price as well as social, environmental and ethical standards in areas related to the production of a wide variety of goods. It focuses in particular on exports from ‘developing countries’ to ‘developed countries’, most notably handicrafts, coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, bananas, honey, cotton, wine, fresh fruit, and so on. Many supermarkets at least in the UK have subscribed to the principles of it even though the public is a bit vary of their commitment to ‘real fairtrade’ by them as they boast annually each of their profits in millions of Sterling Pounds. Fair trade proponents include a wide array of international religious, development aid, social and environmental organizations such as Oxfam, Amnesty International, and Caritas International to name a few.

newly found rivals. Both these aspects of the current manifestation of religion are at the centre of debate and perennial controversy. It seems to me that it will remain there for a long time to come as a defining and a defiant category.

Investing in 'Faithful Capital' as Returning to Religion?

The second movement that surfaces from within the Faithful Cities report, in my view is a public sense of a return to religion which is a spiritual revival that is identifiable right across faith traditions. It has taken place at different levels, increasing the number of groups focusing on the primordial religious experience of those gone before, revisiting the scriptural moorings and more charismatic manifestations of spiritual self understanding. The academia, the researchers, data analysts, social planners, economists and political theorists are baffled, astounded by the levels public display and revivalist plethora within all faiths from Curiciba to Colombo, London to Lima, Konya to Kanyakumari, Accra to Agra. This global sense of religious revival, sociologists like Peter Berger clarifies as bestowed on the adherents a new form of identity close to home. He ratifies that "People are making more choices in everything, from lifestyle to sexual identity. It's not surprising if they are making more choices in religion, and the era when religion was determined solely by accident of birth is over".¹⁶ Perhaps Berger refers to both movements as new manifestations of religious fervour and resurgence.

The two movements, the return of religion and return to religion are two distinctive sides of the coin as one feeds on the other. The examples are many but the question remains what political or social change this faithful capital can bring to this century. Of these movements what the stakeholders and other institutions should invest, in my view, is not necessarily the return of religion but return to religion where energy and resources are of high calibre that could be deployed to order society and communities and to give direction to political re-structuration and developing democratic forms of governance. A Return to religion agenda provides an ethic both in conduct and behaviour, culture and politics, business and trade, as it has the capacity to revive each of these civilisational motifs to change attitudes to effect social and political change. This specific thought then obviously evokes the political imagination of the masses to create a space perhaps for a third movement.

¹⁶ See. *Biblical Recorder.org/content/news/2002/02/14*, sighted on 03.04.2008, an informative article on the rationale of new religious movements. Several interviews, testimonies are well cited.

A Third Movement

It is a fact that the within both these movements there is a common trend that is overtly self focus and could unpalatably ignite selfhood, proclaiming a 'holier than thou'¹⁷ position and a strong flavor of chosen-ness, and even a sense of supremacy in the very act of these returns. The religious revivals and the return of religion to the civic life even though are more pronounced yet there are serious deficits in these returns as they are yet to harness the revitalised community energies. One such starkly obvious deficit is that the religious resurgence in a specific tradition, instead of emulating the universal appeal of that tradition would tend to particularize its uniqueness and its manifestation in sectarian repositioning, tribal nuances and behaviors, then unknowingly denying the very basic tenants of its universality and its core spiritual values.

The adherents of faith traditions as considered in the 2006 Faithful Cities report, as faithful capital be most appropriately invested to further develop the much dented social capital caused through economic deprivation, abject poverty, lack of resources, inaccessibility to information and other dominant socio-political categories which have penetrated communities through globalised financial capital and its marriage to the market-pronged economy. This global scenario should neither be undermined nor over emphasized. Globalism in whatever manifestation requires checks and balances as it operates in a given context. It seems to me that even some democratic forms of structures have failed to monitor the sweeping impact of globalization especially on less economically viable communities. It is logical that one aspect of return of religion in socio-anthropological terms is a natural means to redress grievances and it has obviously created an ideological front to preserve an identity motif as perhaps religion is found to be the only available *modus operandi* to counteract the unwarranted socio cultural penetration by various manifestations of Globalisation. The politics of return to religion has devised its own specific *modus operandi* as a religio-spiritual revival to face up to the new challenge of homogenization¹⁸ and secularity to their

¹⁷ This expression used specifically to denote a position that claims an exclusively defined agenda, as basic as that one's scheme of thought is superior and conclusively imperative over and above the *other*. The tendency of *return of religion* indicates some strands of this position which has not yet delivered its fruits towards community cohesion and coexistence that contemporary society desperately needs.

¹⁸ This specific concept signifies a tendency of 'all eggs in one basket mentality' which in fact is a post modern characteristic whereby one reduces the significance of difference in society. Some communities resist the top down processes that treat them to become one in the whole. In fact some of the reasons for today's conflicts are the attempt and the treatment of smaller communities to subscribe to the majority will of a given context. See *Ethno-religious Nationalism in the face of Cultural Universalism: An Analysis of the Sri Lankan Sinhala Buddhist Claims to Order Society*, Hettiarachchi, Shanthikumar, *Philosophical Perspectives on Globalisation*, (ed), Cam, P., Ibana, R. A. & Van Duc, P., APPEND Philosophy Series: Vol.5, Korean Commission for UNESCO, The Asia-Pacific Philosophy Education Network for Democracy, 2006, pp. 171-187. I discuss here extensively the consequences of the homogenisation processes forced by globalisation as a complete disregard of the contextual ethnic, religious, cultural make up of people as a recipe for disintegration and conflict.

communities. The result has been a response with volcanic social protests to these winds of change both in revitalizing (return to religion) what was basically receding to archaic forms and the other gathering momentum (return of religion) in repulsive acts of violence. Both are justified by groups as the only available means to respond to the cultural, social, political and economic assault on their communities. This confrontational atmosphere has created a fear psychosis and uncertainties around the globe not just of violence that we see on electronic and printed media but by very drastic changes taking place too much too quickly in every sphere of life.

The third movement which I recover in these dynamics is the options proposed by two groups who have imaginatively initiated to invest in this faithful capital which can effect authentic social and political change based on each of their spiritual heritages. The Thai Buddhists with their concept of Sufficiency economy and the Roman Catholics of UK who have proposed livesimply campaign.¹⁹ Both these options by the Thai Buddhists and UK Catholics, in my view enhance and affirm the concept of the faithful capital that is echoed in the 2006 Faithful Cities report even though both campaigns by their own right have independently proposed their own strategies for their specific audiences in each of their particular countries but with a global appeal. Both in fact have subsequently enthused beyond their own geographical boundaries because of the sheer nature of the message behind the campaigns. Their propositional for sufficiency economy and an invitation to livesimply is a powerful message which contain economic, social and political implications for how the market functions, consumption is manipulated, finance is regulated and basically how life is robotic without being noticed by many. The two campaigns propose that there are many alternatives (TMA), a counterpoint to the Thatcherism and Reganomics and their disciples.

Sufficiency Economy & Livesimply campaigns and their Political Implications

Thailand Human Development Report 2007 on Sufficiency Economy and Human Development, published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was the result of a year-long collaboration between Thai and international experts,

¹⁹ Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) is one of the UK's leading development and relief organisations that works in partnership with organisations in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe. It declared a *livesimply* project calling people to re-examine present lifestyles, both individually and as a community highlighting the Forty years after the publication of Pope Paul VI's encyclical, "On the Development of Peoples" (*Populorum Progressio*), see more details in <http://www.progressio.org.uk/livesimply/AssociatesHome2/92990/livesimply/> sighted 03/04/2008. The campaign captured the imagination of many and drove many to redirect their practice of faith, theology and spirituality. Also it posed serious political critique of the shameful levels of consumption patterns driven by the market-economy with less or no for the majority who have bear amnesties for survival in the developing world.

and the contribution of many Thai officials and academics committed to bringing Sufficiency.

Thinking Economics with a wider audience

Thailand's Answer to Globalization UNDP Report hails it as 'Thai Middle Path',²⁰ a key to fighting poverty, coping with economic risks, and promoting corporate social responsibility. Sufficiency Economy philosophy is based on the principles of moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity. Sufficiency Economy is a set of tools and principles that help communities, corporations and governments manage globalization – maximizing its benefits and minimizing its costs – by making wise decisions that promote sustainable development, equity, and resilience against shocks. As such, the Sufficiency Economy is a much needed 'survival strategy' in a world of economic uncertainty especially in the face of recent credit crisis, US recession and environmental threats. This report explains what Sufficiency Economy means in practice: For communities, Sufficiency Economy principles are fundamental to empowerment and building resilience. It further reiterates that "this is a set of tools that can be used by governments, civil society and individuals to work towards sustainable growth, environmental protection and a better quality of life for all".²¹

For governments, the Sufficiency Economy is central to alleviating poverty, promoting good governance, and guiding macroeconomic policies to immunize against shocks. The report argues that rather than invest in large-scale top-down initiatives to combat poverty, governments should support communities in their own self-help schemes, conserve the environment, promote sustainable development, and maintain a stable macroeconomic course that minimizes risks. The report points out that corruption is the enemy of all these efforts, and that the poor and vulnerable are often the first victims of poor governance. Sufficiency Economy is based on a comprehensive religio-social understanding of the Noble eightfold path of Buddhism as a radical response to the rabid greed (tanha) which is being promoted with a consumption-based-economy. The report and its practical programme are deeply critical of both the dominant economic mechanisms and its political agenda that sweeps through many traditional and conventional means and methods of resolving local issues with local tools. Sufficiency economy is both user-devised and user-led schemes of thinking and an operating system. It provides a self analytical methodology as every stage of its

²⁰ This notion of a middle path is not just a Thai concept as it has its roots in Buddhist scheme of thought and teaching on ethico-social conduct of oneself and communities. For this reason the Thai proposition was immediately plausible to the Buddhist world and was logical to anybody who was willing to further read the report that was produced and adopt its recommendations which had a universal appeal. See. *Thailand Human Development Report 2007* <http://www.undp.or.th/resources/nhdr.html>

²¹ See. *ibid.*

operation is under community scrutiny; hence accountability and transparency are in built if not juxtaposed within the delivery plan and the recipient agenda.

The second is the *livesimply* campaign mooted by the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) in England during the Lent 2006, proposing a radical way of living and bases its roots in the Christian Gospel imperative to look hard at peoples' lifestyles and to choose to *livesimply*, sustainably and in solidarity with the poor. I am suggesting that sufficiency economy demands that communities and individuals begin to *livesimply*. *Livesimply* is a radical way to live and fundamental to social change while it provides a sharp political critique to the dominant political decision making processes on market provision. When communities have more than what they really need on their doorsteps yet opting to buy simply to store and to consume, then it causes a severe economic imbalance with levels of consumption causing unmanageable social disparities. Living simply could save us from becoming impoverished by wealth, or consumed by consumerism and able to form a social conscience and a consumption ethic which in my view is a healthy political engagement that communities can opt for.

The false beliefs which emanate from some myths in communities include the idea that more is better: that there is no such thing as enough, that people will be happier with the newest model or latest fashion and that the more financial security people have the more secure they will feel. But what these myths effectively do is to place peoples' source of happiness or security outside of themselves, on exterior goods or items, rather than drawing from their inner source of true happiness and true security, therefore impoverishing their inner life and sense of spirituality and meaning.

Perhaps the *livesimply* challenge is therefore a welcome challenge, a message which communities are ready to listen and respond to. It is a challenge that instead of HAVING MORE that they can BE MORE.²² But they have to be aware that the *livesimply* challenge is counter-cultural and perhaps politically subversive depending on the context. It goes against the very sacred myths of society in which people have got used to. The supermarket doctrine to buy one get one free, two for the price of one, everything one wishes is under one roof etc are powerful slogans of the market doctrine. Communities, faith traditions, their institutions are on a cross road with

²² This position of *being more than having more* is fundamental to many religious traditions. Liberation theology of the 1960's into the next two decades which emerged out of the South American Christian praxis within very oppressive political systems, managed to revisit their Judeo-Christian scriptures and recapture what the Thai Buddhists who also have revisited their Buddhist tradition to seek a meaningful way of determining their future. The ardent position of the 'preferential option for the poor' (*livesimply*) of the South American Christian churches was indeed politically provocative that it shook the foundations of traditional scripture reading and application within the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church. The Latino Christian witness brought about a unique critique of the sinful structures and infused fresh air for both theology and Praxis.

superstores, superstars, celebrities, supermen and world policing that have taken control of them and the people whom they serve and cater. These are icons of a society that take people seriously as long as they are ready to spend. Spending, lending, crediting, investing, financing have altered communities permanently. People need an alternative worldview which teaches them how to draw from their own inner wells of happiness and security to resist the powerful attachment to myths of materialism, consumerism and wealth.

In this way livesimply campaign helps create a world in which human dignity is respected and everyone can reach their full potential where peace is no longer a pursuit but a state where people realize the joy of living. This would be true progress, worth and precious more than economic growth alone. Economic growth is only sustainable when that very growth is able to form human communities as architects of their own future alongside a redeeming roadmap for the battered mother earth neglected for so long in the name of progress.

This is why the livesimply challenge needs a deep spirituality to sustain itself even though has sprung from a spiritual tradition. Otherwise it can be reduced to cosmetic niceties – our actions look good and meaningful but fail to reach a deeper sanctum where true transformation, leading to a real change in lifestyle, is possible.

The livesimply challenge is not only an individual challenge but a challenge which requires community involvement. It needs a community of believers, a faithful capital that is ready to be engaged not in old ways but opting to live in new ways, with a different set of loyalties and values for their happiness and fulfillment.

Conclusion

Religion is back on centre stage and will remain as a major a player both locally and globally. The religion and state debate, religion and politics discourse will continue with conflict and violence edging the very core of religion and what it stands for. The secular project and its own campaign to privatize religion will also continue to marginalize religion and beliefs from public and secular realms. However, the assault on religion may not be a feasible agenda as the present wave of revivalism is phenomenal. It is assessed that at least five new church groups are initiated every week in Africa, A Muslim imam, a Hindu priest, or a television preacher somewhere in the globe is addressing to fervently listening congregations. Religion has become not just a set of dos and don'ts any more. God and the Absolute, heaven and Hell, Here and Hereafter, are but a reality that is capable of giving people something to

live for and for some others to die for, communicating contradictory views on religion and spirituality, return of religion and return to religion, a faithful capital. Is it worth investing in it?

Therefore, religion in whatever manifestation is also faced with severe challenges. If religion has returned then its purpose must be for renewal and fresh expressions, as it is unsustainable if these returns are in their old form. The world has moved on and is moving perhaps without direction and these returns of religious fervor have a fundamental responsibility to shoulder community formation and the future of humankind. These returns of religion are no longer Asian, Arabian, Orthodox, Chinese, Western, Jewish, American or African alone as they have reached the global theaters in full force. The religions however numerous they too are interdependent as expressions of deeper yearning of humanity. Religions independently and with callous historical rivalries are doomed to decay and corrupt as any other human institutions if they do not self examine and are not self critical. Today's religions in my opinion are challenged not so much by the secular but by the very adherents who seek meaning and spirituality. If they cannot find it within they will find it elsewhere. Gone are the days of religious pomp and pageantry, as people would demand their religious institutions to be active participants in the creation of safer communities, campaign for ecological improvement, trade justice, sustainable development with appropriate technology, global economic justice and improved governance. If these double returns by religions are not able to respond to the very existence of people and the planet then these religious traditions would this time be made redundant by their own devotees and followers. If salt has lost its saltiness, it is good for nothing except to be thrown away. There is a challenge out there, religions can remain inactive in isolation, reactive in violence, enthusiastic for popularity or they can be proactive, engaged and be alive, prove that religion in both private and public realms can make a difference, able to change, change for better, better society and a cleaner planet, claiming that it's a faithful capital, hence worth investing in it.

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Abstract

Shanthikumar Hettiarachchi

INVESTING IN THE 'FAITHFUL CAPITAL' AS A MEANS TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND POLITICAL IMAGINATION (BRITISH CONTEXT WITH SOME GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS)

Faith in the City report (1985) by the Anglican Commission on Urban Priority Areas focused on the rapidly changing context of the inner city life of Great Britain. Faithful Cities report (2006) by the Anglican Commission on Urban Life & Faith addresses key issues and debates on social cohesion and regeneration in the country. Both these documents provide evidence based material, analysis, political imagination and direction for those interested in socio-political change.

This paper acknowledges the fertile tapestry of faith traditions within the UK. It argues the importance of recognising, affirming, and enhancing the user-led-faith-community work and its grassroots institutional infrastructure in the present inner city contexts. The communities rooted in different faith traditions are obliged therefore by their affiliation to the faiths' inner vitality to search for new ways of being effective instruments of social change, spiritual revival and cultural resurgence

in contemporary society. If the 'faithful' wish to coexist in diversity, there is a clear option, either to engage in socio-political and religio-cultural life, and be a part of wider society, or face self marginalization in isolation.

The concept of the 'faithful capital' signifies a renewed understanding of faith in action, and actions in faithfulness to the tradition that people believe and belong. A robust 'return to religious faith' and 'resurgence of faith' convey an astute rootedness, affirmation of identity in one's faith, a conquest for space, and social mobility in the public domain. The return of religion in public and secular realms and its manifestations portray both a possibility of an investment in that 'faithful capital' for social change, while un-channeled religious fervor may be starkly counterproductive and lead to balkanisation of society that the very religious traditions campaign to foster.

Key Words: Religion, Globalist agenda, civil society, urban living, politics, social change, community critique and mobilisation.

Резиме

Шантикумар Хетиарачи

**ПОДРШКА КОНЦЕПТУ „ВЕРСКОГ САВЕСНОГ ГРАДА“ КАО СРЕДСТВУ
ПРОМЕНЕ СОЦИЈАЛНИХ ПРИЛИКА И ПОЛИТИЧКЕ ВИЗИЈЕ
(ОСВРТ НА БРИТАНСКУ СРЕДИНУ СА НЕКИМ ГЛОБАЛНИМ
ПОСЛЕДИЦАМА)**

Истраживање Англиканске комисије за приоритетна урбана подручја са насловом *Вера у граду* (из 1985. године) односило се на питање брзих промена у контексту живота у градовима Велике Британије. Истраживање Англиканске комисије за градски живот и веру са насловом *Верски савесни градови* бави се кључним питањима и дебатом о социјалној кохезији и регенерацији у земљи. Оба поменута документа су заснована на доказаним материјалима, анализама, политичкој визији и упутствима за оне који се интересују за друштвено–политичке промене.

У овом чланку се има у виду плодна испреплетеност верских традиција у Великој Британији. Заговара се значај признавања, афирмације и подстицања верских заједница „преданих раду за своје кориснике“ и њихових изворних институционалних инфраструктура у контексту живота у савременим градовима.

Заједнице укоренење у различитим верским традицијама имају, стога, у складу са својим поимањем унутрашње виталности њихове сопствене вере, обавезу да трагају за новим модалитетима како да што делотворније утичу на промене социјалног стања, духовно оживљавање и културно уздизање у савременим друштвима. Ако „верници“ желе заједно да живе са својим разликама, то је онда јасна опција, без обзира на то да ли она значи да се они ангажују у друштвено–политичком и верско–културном животу, постајући део ширег друштва, или се, пак, окрећу самомаргинализацији у изолацији.

Концепт „верски савесног града“ полази од обновљеног схватања вере у акцији и акције у верности традицији да људи верују и припадају. Робусни „повратак религији“ и „уздизање вере“ показује чврсту укорененост, афирмацију идентитета у вери, освајање места и социјалну мобилност у јавном домену. Повратак религије у јавну и секуларну област и његове манифестације одсликавају, са једне стране, могућности инвестирања у тај концепт „верски савесног града“ ради промене социјалних прилика, јер би, са друге стране, религиозни занос који није каналсан могао да буде контрапродуктиван и да води ка балканизацији друштва које ова кампања верских традиција настоји да сачува.

Кључне речи: религија, глобалистички програм, цивилно друштво, урбани живот, политика, социјалне промене, критика у оквиру заједнице и мобилизација.