**REFORMING WORLD ORDER THROUGH HUMAN REFORMATION:**

**A PERSPECTIVE THROUGH RELIGION**

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**Introduction: the Order of Disorder**

As the contemporary world prides itself for achieving the highest rate ever of development in human history, it also grapples with unprecedented problems that besieged human life and planetary existence. Developments and achievements that should make life so sweet and comfortable for one and all, the human world as well as the non-human world, now seem to have soured up, causing not only discomfort but also downright misery in some cases. There are disorders everywhere – locally, nationally and globally - in individual and in family life, in politics and economics, in social and religious life, and in nature and the environment too, and aggression, violence and conflict seem to be the rule, not the exception. Why have we come to this state? How have we come to be what we are now? Where has the world gone so wrong?

To begin with, and as acknowledged by many analysts, all these problems are human created, that human beings are not behaving properly and not acting as they should. But for human beings to know how to behave and to act as human beings, they first ought to understand what a human being is and what being a human being is all about. In general, modern education does not explain adequately what human beings are, at best only that human beings are the product of evolution, thus identifying and relating human beings only to the physical realm. But human beings are not just physical existence – there are the matters of the human mind and psyche, the human emotion and sentiments, of behavior and conduct – how are these to be understood in the comprehensive context of a wholesome human being.

However, religions – all religions without exception – do explain in depth what human beings are and how they should live and behave, how they should regard and relate to one another and also how to relate to the non-human beings. When the modern generation marginalized religion, and in some cases, even threw out religion from their lives completely, they therewith also threw out the comprehensive definition of human being and with that too they lost the comprehensive knowledge on how to live appropriately, and how to behave and act properly, and how to become a wholesome human being.

**Human Reformation**

In the wake of these human created problems, it is necessary therefore to reflect, and there from, to understand once again what human beings are, how to become proper human beings, how to relate to one and all, the human and the non-human; in brief to re-learn yet again the ABC of being human beings. This is the basic essentials needed for human reformation, and indeed the world today truly needs human reformation since all the problems abound are human created. Human beings have to once again become the responsible and conscious custodians of existences that they are meant to be, to embrace all existences, the human and the non-human as a part of themselves, to appreciate that everyone and everything are inter-dependent upon each other, and that everybody and everything can live side by side healthily, harmoniously and happily with each other.

If human beings fail to reform and to get back on track, then the future will be even bleaker than it is now, and catastrophe and destruction awaits everyone. In brief, in order to bring back order to the disorders, human beings must reform, must transform themselves into the type of human beings they are meant to be and ought to be. Only when human beings can become what they are meant to be and can function as how they ought to function can they then embark upon repairing the damaged orders of existences, of human existences and of other existences too.

**Superstructure of Relationship and Inter-Dependency**

Today human rights are so much talked about and demanded but yet not as much attention is paid to human roles and human responsibilities. However, human beings do not only have rights but they also have roles and responsibilities. Moreover, non-human existences too have their rights, roles and responsibilities. In fact, not only should we understand and appreciate the fact that all existences have rights, roles and responsibilities but that every existence, including human beings, are inter-related to one another and are also inter-dependent upon each other. Every existence falls into and fits into a super-scheme and a superstructure of existences, a cosmic order of existence and a cosmic inter-relatedness and inter-dependency.

Although many may not agree with such terminologies for these are religious terminologies, but the understanding among the religious and the non-religious thinkers is quite similar, namely that human beings have responsibilities towards the world of nature. The tsunamis, the earthquakes, hurricanes, typhoons and floods across the globe, not only shock and terrify people but these should also cause people to ponder on the power and possibilities of natural catastrophes, of global disasters and planetary disorder.

Yes, these are natural disasters in the sense that these are acts of nature, yet acts of nature are also responses to how people have treated the world of nature – the raping of forests and disruptions of wildlife, the destructions of natural habitats and the upsetting of the ecological balance, the eroding of mountains and the barricading of rivers, the interference with the atmospheric equilibrium – to list out a few. These, in essence, are actually injustices done to nature and are exploitations of nature’s rights. In the human world, when injustice is committed upon a person, the person will seek reparation through the legal and judicial systems, and when such is denied or is non-existing then the person will seek revenge. As regard to nature, there is no court of justice for nature to bring their cases up against those who exploit them; thus nature now, like human beings who are denied rights and justice, resorts to revenge and random retaliations.

Indeed injustice, in whatever form and to whosoever, will lead to retaliation. Sadly, retaliations are also unjust because retaliations are often random acts of revenge, hurting those who are uninvolved and innocent. Revenge often lead to more revenge and more retaliation, and so a vicious cycle of revenge and retaliation developed; and this is what the world is witnessing today - in the human world as seen in the social upheavals and political discontents; in the natural world in the form of natural disasters and catastrophes which are escalating in momentum, in intensity and in volume. It is as if the world today has reached a point of no return and is heading towards self-destruction.

**Human Beings - Constituents and Nature**

Because injustices in the human world and in the world of nature lead to horrifying consequences, religions, all religions, lay out how people ought to behave appropriately to each other and to the world of nature, teaching people to regard each other as part of themselves. Along this line, religion starts by explaining what a human being is, how to become a proper human being and how to behave accordingly. Religion also explains human nature, the positive and negative traits in human nature, and gives guidance on how to transform the negative into positive so that the end product will benefit the person and all others too. Religion therefore starts with teaching and nurturing the individuals on what to be and how to be, and then on roles and responsibilities, rights and duties. As the individual has rights and has roles and responsibilities towards others, others likewise too have rights and also have roles and responsibilities towards the individual. Thus, religion starts with focusing on the individual, albeit, the nurturing of the individuals, to help the person become a good, wholesome, comfortable, confident, contributory and productive person. Since individuals are units of society, or the fabrics of society, therefore if individuals behave appropriately and function properly, then the whole society will be in good order; thus Confucius beautifully and rightly said, “Good individuals make good society”[[1]](#footnote-2).

Most religions, though not all, define human being as a being with body, mind and soul[[2]](#footnote-3). By this definition, a person therefore possesses the physical, the intellectual and the spiritual constituents[[3]](#footnote-4). Moreover, most religions insist that all these constituents need to be duly attended to and be developed accordingly and that no constituent should be overlooked or be disregarded totally. This is true even if some religions do give more attention to one or to two of the constituents, such as giving more attention to the spiritual constituent than to the intellectual and the physical, or to the spiritual and intellectual constituents but not as much attention to the physical. This is because religions that emphasize strongly on spirituality regard the intellectual and the physical constituents as instruments to serve and to perfect spirituality and as such, the latter two constituents are disciplined and groomed to help in the perfection of spirituality. If any one of these constituents is not given the proper attention, the person will not become a wholesome person. Such a person will not be at peace with himself or herself and will not feel comfortable with other people or with all else too.

In the context of those religions that see a person as having body, mind and soul, these religions regard that a person have physical, intellectual and spiritual needs. In this modern time, the physical needs are generally given a lot of attention to enable a person live a comfortable life. Likewise, the intellectual needs too are well taken care of, with various means of acquiring knowledge available to those who want to acquire knowledge and skills. Indeed, contemporary society has achieved the highest level of intellectual development and knowledge acquisition ever in human history. Logically speaking, such a society with such a high standard of physical and intellectual achievements should be living in bliss and happiness, peaceful and contented. However, the realities on the ground show otherwise for one sees in advanced countries violence and aggression, abuses and exploitations, poverty and deprivation, injustice and disorders, even suicides and mass killing, and even economic wellbeing is also not secured despite all the sophisticated philosophies and theories of social sciences and economics.

In the perspective of religion, these unhappy situations are seen as the effects of an imbalanced development of the individuals, and since individuals are fabrics of society, thus society too is affected by this imbalanced growth. In particular, the spiritual needs of the individuals are not given as much attention let alone equal attention, as the physical and the intellectual needs of the person, and consequently of the society as a whole too. It is not surprising therefore that there are some among the modern persons who are suffering a restlessness of sorts, a general discomfort and even discontent with life. These are actually symptoms of a spiritual void, that is, a feeling of emptiness or hollowness in the inner being of the person. To fill up this void, such persons may resort to external stimuli such as drugs and alcohol, and even living a hedonistic life style with wild entertainments - all to pacify their feeling of emptiness and restlessness. However, all these stimuli are external and are artificial and they wear off fast and easily, leaving behind an even deeper void, a more intense feeling of emptiness, of loneliness and even of despair. In modern understanding, these symptoms are regarded as psychological symptoms, often expressed as “depression”, and are often given psychiatric treatment.

In religion, these are psycho-spiritual symptoms and are addressed through psycho-spiritual treatments, through spiritual procedures and techniques, and through the rituals and the rites of the religions. Hence, for the people of religion and spirituality, the spiritual need is attended to by spiritual performances and by linking up with Divinity through the rituals and rites. Communicating with Divinity and performing the rituals and spiritual services pacify the spirit, and the person feels spiritually uplifted, and thus is emotionally and psychologically appeased and fulfilled. As such, the people of religion do not need external stimuli to quench their spiritual thirst. Rituals and spiritual procedures of religions are therefore not mere mechanical performances or mere technical movements but they are actually means through which psycho-spiritual wholesomeness and wellbeing are developed and strengthened.

With spiritual strength and stability, the people of religion will be able to take whatever comes in life, and address these accordingly. They do not despair when situations become challenging and they do not become euphoric when good things come their way. They will sympathize and empathize with those who are suffering, knowing that perhaps one day such may visit them too. When a person is spiritually fulfilled and psychologically appeased, the person becomes a comfortable, wholesome person. A wholesome person is comfortable with himself and with all others too, with the human as well as the non-human, and others also are comfortable with the person.

All religions also regard human beings as possessing both positive and negative traits. The negative traits are not negative *per se* because these can be turned into positive traits that can produce positive results. Religion guides a person to turn the negative traits into positive energy, and some religions even guide a person to eradicate the negative traits altogether. Thus, for instance, the negative trait of anger can be transformed into positive energy, such as into passion to promote good courses and to fight injustice. If uncontrolled, anger is potentially destructive, to the person and to others too. As such, all religions have guidance on how to control and pacify negative traits, and to transform these into positive energy.

**Conclusion: Being Good and Doing Good**

Thus, in the ultimate, religion not only works to nurture a person to be a good person but also to assist a bad person, or a potentially bad person, to transform into a good person. This person will thus be at peace with himself and will not be a menace to others. On the contrary, this person will be contributory and productive to himself and others, performing duties and responsibilities accordingly. In so doing, the person will be respected by others, and will gain place of dignity in the society. Therefore, religion is not just about being good but is also about doing good, and indeed, to be religious is to be good and to do good. Hence, religion not only relates and connects the individual with Divinity but also connects the person with all others too, with human as well as the non-human existences.

1. In fact, this saying of Confucius represents the social maxims of all religions [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Buddhism does not uphold the concept of body, mind and soul classification but believes that a human being is made up of 5 Aggregates (*skandhas*). Also, Buddhism does not believe in existence of the soul (*anatta*). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Some religions regard the intellectual as part of the spiritual constituent, thus according to these religions, a human being is made up of the spiritual and the physical only [↑](#footnote-ref-4)